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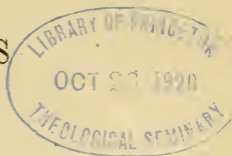








LECTURES



ON THE

DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY,

IN CONTROVERSY BETWEEN

UNITARIANS AND OTHER DENOMINATIONS OF  
CHRISTIANS.

DELIVERED IN THE FIRST INDEPENDENT CHURCH OF BALTIMORE.

BY

GEORGE W. BURNAP.

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"This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and  
Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

"He preached unto them Jesus and the Resurrection."

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TO THE  
CONGREGATION

WORSHIPPING IN THE FIRST INDEPENDENT CHURCH OF  
BALTIMORE :

SINCE the commencement of our connection you must be aware, that I have abstained almost entirely from the introduction of subjects of a purely controversial nature into the public instructions accompanying our social worship. It has been my first object to promote in you the great end of religion, a pure heart and a pure life, rather than to make you able advocates of sectarian peculiarities. The Lectures, to which you have been listening the past winter, are a deviation from this course. They were designed to meet the wants of the rising generation, who justly demand to know the reason of the faith of their fathers. To demonstrate to them that this faith is the religion of the New Testament, and not as it is represented "another Gospel;" that it is a sure foundation of hope, and a sufficient guide of life, was the object of those discourses. For the same purpose and in compliance with your desire, they are now given to you through the press.

That they may contribute something to "stablish, strengthen and settle you," to give you "all joy and peace in believing," is the humble wish and prayer

Of your friend and pastor,

G. W. BURNAP.

JUNE, 1835.

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## LECTURE I.

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### THE SUPREMACY AND SOLE DIVINITY OF GOD THE FATHER.

I CORINTHIANS, VIII. 5, 6.

FOR THOUGH THERE BE THAT ARE CALLED GODS, WHETHER IN HEAVEN OR IN EARTH (AS THERE BE GODS MANY, AND LORDS MANY); BUT TO US THERE IS ONE GOD, THE FATHER.

It was asked of our Saviour on a certain occasion, "Which is the first commandment of all?" in modern phrase, What is the most important fundamental principle of religion? He answered, "Hear, O Israel; the Lord your God is one Lord." Or, as it stands out in greater distinctness and sublimity in the Hebrew original of Moses, "Hear, O Israel; Jehovah your God, Jehovah is one."

He laid the foundation of religion in the Unity of God. His heaven-inspired mind saw more clearly than we can do, the dependence of the purity and integrity of religion on the recognition of one undivided Object of religious worship and affection. We, who see but in part, can perceive the same truth only through the medium of past experience. That has ever vindicated the transcendent wisdom of our Master. For there

has been scarcely an error in opinion, or a corruption in practice, in the Christian church, which has not been in some way connected with a violation of this great truth, that God is one.

In commencing, then, a course of Lectures on Christian Doctrine, I cannot do amiss when I attempt to lay, as he did, the foundation of religion in the Unity of God. But on the very threshold of our inquiries we meet a difficulty, we encounter what seems to us an opposite doctrine, that God is three persons. Before we make any progress, then, we must examine this doctrine. To this subject, therefore, our first three lectures will be devoted. And while we discuss the doctrine of the Trinity, let nothing which may be said be construed into disrespect, either for the understanding or the integrity of those who hold it. It is a doctrine for which the present generation are not responsible. It has been handed down to them by their fathers, with the venerable associations of antiquity; it is interwoven with literature and devotion, and thus has a sacredness in their eyes which takes the place of evidence, and almost precludes calm and dispassionate investigation. The duty of the present age is inquiry. Truth is paramount both to authority and sacred association. Our first allegiance is due to Truth. I invite all, then, to the discharge of a duty, when I invite them to follow me in this discussion. If they adopt my conclusions, in justice to their understandings I should hope it will not be on insufficient ground. If they fail to do so, they will at least exchange a faith derived from tradition for one founded on evidence.



In the course of these Lectures I shall frequently quote from the "Confession of Faith" of the divines at Westminster, and from the "Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England;" not from any unkindness towards those who profess these creeds, or with a design to hold them up to odium or derision, but merely because they contain the most formal and authentic statement of the doctrines I shall discuss, and because they are the public and acknowledged standards of large and respectable bodies of the Christian church.

The doctrine of the Trinity, as stated in the public symbols of faith, is this: "There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory." We object to this doctrine, that it is not taught in nature, that it is rejected by reason, that it is inconsistent and contradictory to itself, and finally, that it is not taught in Scripture, but is contradicted by it. Nature is one of the revelations which God has made of himself. There are abundant teachings in nature concerning one of these persons, the Father. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." Nature teaches no Trinity. It bears evident marks of being the work of one Infinite Mind. But concerning the second and third of these persons it is profoundly silent. Men are said to be without excuse if they do not glorify this one being as God. But they are not blamed for failing to recognize three persons in this one God. There is evidence in nature of one

agent, but not a trace of evidence of any plurality or division, whether of persons, or substances, or characters. No trace can be found that the universe was created by one person through the agency of another.

We object, in the second place, to the doctrine of the Trinity, that it is inconsistent with itself, and is, moreover, a contradiction in terms, and therefore cannot be true. The Scriptures assert that God is a spirit. But if this doctrine be true, he is three spirits. Person, if it mean anything, must mean a distinct mind, a separate intelligence, having all the attributes of a person, that is, must have its own independent thoughts, may be thinking one thing while every other mind in the universe is thinking something else. A person must have a distinct will of his own, may be willing one thing, while every other person is willing another thing. It must have a distinct power of action, may be doing one thing, while every other person or mind is doing another. These are the attributes of personality. If you say that the three persons of the Trinity have these, and have them equally, then they are indeed three persons. But if you claim this, you must bid adieu forever to the unity of God. Each of these three persons, having distinct thought, will and action, and all equally possessing the attributes of divinity, are, to all intents and purposes, three Gods. If, on the other hand, they have not these characteristics of personality, if they have not distinct thought, will and action, then they become three different names merely, for one Person, one Intelligence, one mind and will; and the doctrine of the Trinity entirely vanishes and disappears. The

three persons are only one person. Every-action and quality which will identify each to be a distinct Person, possessing independently the attributes of God, will prove that Person to be a distinct and independent God. Each of these Persons, in order to possess full divinity, must comprehend and take in the whole being of God, must be identically the same being with God. Then they are identically the same with each other. They are not three Persons, but one Person. Calling them three Persons then, is making a distinction where there is no difference. To make any ground of distinction between them, there must be something in one which is not in the others. That something cannot be a Divine attribute, or it would be common to them all. And a Divine Person cannot have an attribute which is not Divine, or which a Divine Person can exist without possessing. There cannot then, by any possibility, be any diversity or ground of distinction between three Persons, each comprehending the whole of the same Divine Being, and each possessing every attribute of God.

We are not satisfied with the way in which the doctrine of the Trinity is usually attempted to be proved. It is usually endeavored to show that there are three Persons who have Divine attributes ascribed to them, and one as much as the other. What is the legitimate inference to be drawn from this? If each of these three Persons has independently all the attributes of God, then each of these three Persons is a God. And the proper conclusion is, that there are three Gods. For if each of these Persons has all the attributes of God, among

which is independent and underived existence, then if two of them are withdrawn from existence, and from the universe, the third would still exist, and be competent to all the purposes to which three are. The legitimate conclusion then from the fact when made out, that each of the three Persons has all Divine attributes, is not that there are three persons in God, but that there are three independent Gods. If you deny that they could exist independently of each other, just so far you deny them individually to be God. You wish to prove humanity of three men. You go over all the attributes of humanity and prove them to belong to each. But when you have done, and have proved each to be man, you have proved each to be a man, and the three to be three men, but not one man. Their partaking of the common attributes of humanity does not prove them to be one man. So three Persons each possessing all Divine attributes, such as underived and independent existence and power, are three Gods, not one God. But there cannot be three Gods, why? Because it is contrary to the nature of things that there should be three Gods. Then it is equally contrary to the nature of things that there should be three Persons, each possessing independent Divine attributes. What is this, but saying you have gone through a course of argument, to prove that to be true, which when compared with first and self-evident principles, is found to be false, and cannot by any possibility exist? What are you then to do? You must either admit that there has been a mistake in your argument, or you must believe that contradictions, in some mysterious sense, may be true.

By doing this, you abandon every means and all possibility of distinguishing truth from falsehood, and of course all ground of reasonable belief in anything.

In order to prove each to be a Person, you must prove of each, separate action, involving separate will, thought and consciousness; without these you cannot prove personality. But all these are equally conclusive to prove each to be a separate Being. The Sender must be a different Being as well as a different Person from the Sent. To send is the act of a separate Being, not of a Person without a separate Being, because it implies separate thought, will and action. To be sent is the act of a Being; not of a Person without a separate Being, because that likewise supposes separate thought, will and action. To hold intercourse together, as the three Persons are said to have done, certainly involves three separate intelligences, with separate thought and consciousness. This, if it proves three Persons, must likewise prove three Beings, and three Beings, each possessing all Divine attributes, are three Gods.

In order still to sustain the Unity of God, it is not sufficient for you to say that there can be but one God, and therefore these three are one God. You must not only reconcile Trinity with Unity, but show them to be one God from the elements of their nature, as clearly as you proved them to be three Persons. In order to do this, you must prove them to be one Being. But in showing the three Persons to be one Being, you must deny of them the very attributes by which you proved them to be three Persons, such as separate action, con-

sciousness and will. So that when, as you suppose, you have proved the Trinity, but find that it is inconsistent with the Unity, the proper conclusion is, not that they are both true, for that is impossible, as they contradict each other ; but that the Trinity is false, and the reasoning which led to it, fallacious. For the Unity is a first principle, self-evident and therefore cannot be false ; the Trinity is a remote deduction, and therefore may not be true.

Every argument, such as separate action, involving consciousness and will, which can be brought to show that each is a Person, will be just as valid to prove that each is a separate Being. And every argument which is brought to prove that these three Persons are one Being, will be equally valid to prove that these three Persons are one Person under different names. So that every argument which goes to prove that God is three, disproves that he is one ; and every argument that proves him to be one, disproves him to be three. The whole controversy turns upon the use of words. It turns upon the distinction between a Person and a Being. The common idea conveyed by the word Person, is a separate, intelligent Being. When you say, that there are three Persons in God, you mean three Beings, or you must define the word Person. If by Person you mean Being, you assert there are three Gods, which is impossible ; if Person is used in any other sense, you must explain that sense. If you cannot do this, then it evidently has no meaning in your mind. You use words without ideas. You make a proposition which has no signification. In

other words, you make an affirmation which affirms nothing. The matter then is reduced to this, the proposition that there are three Persons in God, in the only sense in which it is intelligible is false, and if it is true in any sense, in that sense it is not intelligible, and if unintelligible, cannot be perceived to be true. It is impossible then, that it should be asserted from conviction, and as impossible that it should be assented to from a perception of its truth. Every argument that is brought to prove the three to be three Persons, will equally prove them to be three Beings, and of course will be valid just so far against the Unity of God. And any argument to show that these three Persons are one Being, is equally conclusive to show that personality has been improperly applied. If all the separate actions ascribed to the three Persons, are the actions of one Being acting in the three Persons, then the three Persons are nothing more than three names for three classifications of the actions of God. Personality repeated three times of one Being destroys the very idea and essence of personality, destroys all its intelligible meaning, and as far as that subject is concerned, makes it a word without signification.

A man demands my assent to the proposition, there are three Persons in one God. I ask him, what he means by person? I ask him, if he means a separate independent intelligent Being? He answers, he does not. He does not use the word in the common sense, but in a sense peculiar to this case. I ask him what that sense is? He cannot tell. You demand of me then, I answer, to assent to a proposition which con-

veys to my mind no intelligible idea, and, it appears to be equally unintelligible to you. We both, in reality, in assenting to it, assent to nothing but words, and if they convey to us no intelligible meaning, to us they are nothing, and we assent to nothing. Were these words in the Bible, then I might say that I believed they expressed truth, though I could not understand it. But not being in the Bible, or any words of the same import, I consider them the mere invention of fallible men. I cannot believe on their authority. So far from supposing them to be true, as I cannot understand them myself, and no one can explain them to me, I think it fair to conclude that those who framed them had no clear ideas.

Plurality in God then, is impossible, it is a self-contradiction. The attributes of God exclude plurality. Plurality of men, or of finite spirits, is possible. They may be multiplied without end, for they do not exclude each other. But one infinite Person, must necessarily exclude every other infinite Person. There cannot be two infinities of the same kind, whether of Beings or Persons, or things; for they must either exclude each other, or become identical. There can be, for instance, but one infinite space. For the same reason, there can be but one God in any sense. Neither can there be three Persons, each of them Supreme; for in affirming supremacy of one, you deny it of the others. So the doctrine of the Trinity, when analyzed, resolves itself into a contradiction, or rather a tissue of contradictions. One part denies what the other part affirms. In order to support the personality of each of the three Persons,



it must ascribe to them attributes which constitute them three Beings. To maintain the Unity of God, they must be proved to be one Being, and to make them one Being, those very attributes must be denied, which were necessary to constitute them three Persons. It may be said, it is a mystery. We answer, that it is a contradiction. A mystery may express truth, but a contradiction cannot, for it affirms and denies the same proposition.

It follows inevitably from the self-evident principles we have just developed, that any division of God into three Persons, I mean which is real, and not nominal only, necessarily involves the consequence that each of these Persons must be imperfect. Deity, from its own nature, is one whole. Any imaginable division of it destroys its very nature. Any division of Deity cannot be Deity, whether you call that division person, or by any other name. In order to identify the three Persons of the Trinity, some separate or exclusive actions must be attributed to each, and of course denied of the others. Is it not evident that if the appropriate acts of Deity are divided among three Persons, neither of them in his actions can be perfect God? One must be shorn of his glories, to adorn the others. If one created the world alone, then the other two did not create it. If one governs the world, then the others do not, and He is the only proper object of prayer. If on the other hand, they all do the same acts, and there is no diversity of action, then there is nothing in those acts themselves to prove that there is more than one Being or Person in all that has ever been done by the Deity.

Besides, when we have recognized the existence of one Infinite Person, such as the Father, or the first Person of the Trinity is universally allowed to be, is he not competent to all the purposes of Deity? Is anything gained by associating with himself two, or two hundred persons? They can do only what he was infinitely competent to do alone.

But it is said, that a Trinity is necessary to the economy of redemption. The atonement to be infinite must be made to God by an infinite Being. The Being to whom it is made is infinite, and the Being who makes it must be infinite. But the three Persons of the Trinity are infinite, not because they comprehend and are identical with three infinite Beings, but because each comprehends and is identical with one and the same infinite Being. Then if one Person of the Trinity make an infinite atonement to another, it must be by virtue of comprehending and being identical with the same infinite Being who constitutes the infinity of the Person to whom the atonement is made. So after all, it will be the same Divine and infinite Being, who makes an atonement, acting through one Person to himself, and receives it acting through another Person. Of such a scheme of atonement as this, I leave every one to judge.

No atonement can be made by a Being strictly and independently infinite, to a Being strictly and independently infinite, without involving the supposition of two independent, infinite Beings, and of course two Gods. This theory of atonement then, demands what even the Trinity cannot give it, two independent infinite Beings,

two Gods. The three Persons of the Trinity are not enough for it, for they are each of them infinite only by including and being identical with one and the same infinite Being. The same infinite Being must act in or through one of the Persons in making, at the same moment he is acting in, or through the other Person, in receiving it, which reduces it, you perceive, to a mere fiction. The common scheme of atonement is an impossibility. It requires more infinite Beings than there are in the universe to enact the parts supposed in it.

In short the more we examine the doctrine of the Trinity in its intimate relations, the more we shall find it full of inconsistencies and contradictions. And the moment we lose sight of one God, in one Person, the whole Deity becomes a riddle which puzzles the brain beyond all explanation. The doctrine therefore, is not found in nature, and is rejected by reason as an impossibility. If it is found anywhere, it must be a doctrine of pure revelation.

We hasten, then, to the scriptural argument. And here its best friends confess, that it is nowhere expressly taught. It is nowhere asserted that God is three in any respect. It is nowhere affirmed that he subsists in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, or that these three are one God. It is drawn as an inference from a very few detached passages. But we maintain that these very passages, which are said to teach it, contradict it, or are inconsistent with it. It is attempted to be proved from the form of baptism, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Is it here said that these

three are equal? Look at the very words themselves, by which those Persons are said to be designated, Father and Son. So far as these names express the relation which subsists between these two Persons, they signify that one is derived from the other. Can you consent that one of your Persons of the Trinity shall be a derived being, and of course not eternal? So far then, from being equal in power and glory, in this very passage which is brought to prove it, the very names and appellations imply inferiority of one to the other. What makes it still more decisive, Son is the highest designation of the second Person, where he stands in his appropriate connection as one of the Persons of the Trinity. But the mere fact of the names being placed in this connection, does not prove the Person to have Divine attributes. That would be taking for granted the very thing to be proved. We must go elsewhere to learn these attributes. Let us turn to the thirteenth chapter of Mark. There it is said, "Of that day and that hour, knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Then the Son is not God, for God cannot be ignorant of anything. It appears then, that the second Person, the Son, did not know when the destruction of Jerusalem was to take place, but the Father did. He was therefore inferior in knowledge to the Father, not equal, was not omniscient, was not God. Here the usual subterfuge, that he says this in his inferior nature, or as man, cannot be resorted to, to elude the force of this irresistible conclusion, for Son is the highest name or character he assumes, the very character and name he as-

sumes in the Trinity, "Father, Son and Holy Ghost," and must include, if any epithet can be supposed to include, his highest nature. If you say that the meaning of "Son" is not coëxtensive in these two cases, you must show that you are influenced to do so by some other reason than the fact, that if you allow the meaning to be the same, the doctrine of the Trinity is overthrown. If you say that "Son" does not include a Divine nature in one case, we have an equal right to say that it does not include the Divine nature in the other. If it is applied to his inferior nature in the one case, it may be in the other; and all argument in favor of the Trinity from the form of baptism must be given up, and the term "Son" and "Son of God," as proving anything concerning Christ's nature, must be forever abandoned.

Jesus was the Son of God, the whole Deity, not the Son of the first Person of a Trinity. "Seeing we have a great high priest, who is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." The "Son of God" died. The second Person of the Trinity could not die. "For if when we were sinners, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life." The "Son of God," the Son of the whole Trinity, cannot be a second Person in the Trinity. The "Son" spoken of in the creeds, cannot be the same with the "Son of God" spoken of in the Bible, for they have different fathers. One is the Son of God, the whole Deity, and the other is the Son of the Father, the first Person of the Trinity.

The Son of God was "made of a woman," the second Person of the Trinity could not be made of a woman, could not be "made" at all. "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." God sent his Son into the world. The second Person of the Trinity cannot be sent anywhere, for he must be by his own essential nature omnipresent, and fill all space. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

If he was not God, why baptize in his name? Why associate him with God in the form? The apostle says, that the Israelites "were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." Is Moses therefore God, or a Person of the Trinity? In the Old Testament it is said "the people worshipped God and the king." Was the king therefore God, because he is thus associated with him? The Israelites were baptized into Moses, as the prophet of God; could they not be baptized into Christ, as the only Mediator between God and man?

Another of the strongest passages in support of the Trinity, is the apostolic benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." "The love of God"—is there any intimation here that the word God is not used in its common signification, which comprehends the whole Deity? Is there any intimation that the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost are Persons in this God? Let us place these two Trinities under each other and compare them together. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son,

and of the Holy Ghost.” “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.” In the first place we observe, that the order is not the same. The second Person of the first Trinity is made the first Person of the second. The Lord Jesus Christ is made the first Person of the second Trinity. The Son is placed before the Father.

But even there, the Persons are not the same. The second Person of the second Trinity is God. Had the term been Father, then there might have been an identity between the second Person in the second Trinity and the first Person of the first Trinity. Not only are the terms different but the second Person of the second Trinity is God. God is not a Person of a Trinity at all. God is the whole Trinity not a Person in the Trinity. The Trinity is *in* God, and God, in whom a Trinity of Persons exists, cannot be one of the Persons in himself.

The form of benediction then, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost,” contains a strong argument *against* the Trinity, instead of being a strong argument for it. Not only is the subject of the second clause God—“the love of God,”—but the subjects of the first and third clauses are shut out of Deity by the particle *and*—“the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, *and* the love of God, *and* the fellowship or communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.” As it happens, by the comparison of another passage, we have the means of determining the relations of these two Persons, and

whether the Lord Jesus Christ be a Person in God or not. In our text it is said, "To us there is one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ." He is not God, then, or a Person in God, but a person entirely distinct. There is another passage which strongly confirms this distinctness in Ephesians. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all." The Lord Jesus Christ, who is thus so carefully distinguished from God, cannot be a Person of the Trinity, equal in power and glory. This benediction, then, entirely fails to prove the doctrine of the Trinity, and, taken in connection with similar passages, proves the very opposite. Then, as far as the third Person, the Holy Ghost, is concerned, this passage fails to make out even his personality. Communion, or common participation, does not agree with a person. It does correspond with an influence, gifts and graces, a state of mind to be enjoyed. Now these two passages are most relied upon by the advocates of the Trinity. And what do they prove? Three equal Persons in God? No! They disprove it, and are both inconsistent with anything except the simple Divine Unity.

There is a delusion, we fear, as to the relations of God and Christ to each other, produced by the appellations, Father and Son, applied to them. God is thought to be styled the Father with reference to the second Person, or the Son, in the Trinity. As if it were God the Father, in distinction from God the Son. But you will please to note that this latter phrase, however often it may be found in creeds and doxologies of human invention, is nowhere found in the Bible.



Christ is nowhere styled "God the Son" from the beginning of it to the end. But he is called the "Son of God." A son of God has not necessarily the same nature with the Father, or rather it is an impossibility that he should have the same nature. All derivation from him must be by creation. It is impossible in the nature of things that God should create another being like himself. Whatever being he creates, let him be never so exalted, must be derived, and dependent, and consequently can never possess full Divinity. God is called the Father, because he is the foundation of being to everything that exists. "He is the Father of spirits." He takes a paternal care over all his creatures, and therefore is called "The Father."

The term "Father" in the Bible, when applied to Deity, is co-extensive with the word God. It comprehends and represents, not one person of the Trinity, but the whole Deity. And there is not a single passage in which it can be shown to refer to a first Person of a Trinity. And here has been the mistake. Superficial readers of the Bible, having once been taught that Father stands for one of the Persons of the Trinity, instead of the whole Deity, have never examined whether this were its true meaning, or not. But let them take up the Scriptures again, and carefully scrutinize every passage in which this term occurs, and they will find that the Father always comprehends the whole Deity, and is the only Divine Person. "Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." Here God and Father are synonymous, and include the whole Deity to the exclusion of Jesus Christ,

for it is said "God *and* our Lord Jesus Christ." "That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here, likewise, Father and God are synonymous, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is not a Person of the Trinity, but the whole Deity. "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom." Here God and Father are also used as synonymous, and that Being is the God of Jesus Christ. One of the Persons of the Trinity certainly cannot be God to another. It can mean nothing else, then, than that Father is co-extensive with God, takes in the whole Deity, and that whole Deity is the God of Christ. Of consequence Christ can make no part of his own God. To escape this conclusion it may be alleged that this is said of his inferior or human nature. Then it will follow that the title "Lord" is applied to his inferior or human nature, for it is said "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and the title "Lord" as proving a superior nature in him, can never again be used.

We now come to a passage still more decisive: "One God and Father of all, who is above all." The Father here is not only used as synonymous with God, but declared to be the only God. The other Persons are of course excluded. Christ often in the gospels addresses God as his Father. A superficial reader, tinctured with this strange theory of three Persons, might suppose him to be addressing the first Person instead of the whole Deity. "O! my Father, let this cup pass from me." But when he examines further, he will find it is the whole Deity he addresses, for Christ commands his dis-

ciples to pray to the same Being, and the same Person, saying, "Our Father who art in heaven." But what is full to this point, is his message to his disciples after his resurrection, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." The Father of Jesus Christ, then, was not the first Person in the Deity, but the whole Deity, the same Being or Person who is the Father of Christians. Father and God are here, too, used as synonymous. The same Being who is our Father is Christ's Father, and the same Being who is Christ's God is our God. So that the term Father includes the whole Deity, and excludes Christ. You perceive, then, that the claims of the Father to be the one God, are not only supreme, but exclusive. How, then, can any man, or set of men, attempt to wrest the word Father from the only sense in which it is used in Scripture, signifying the whole Deity, and fix upon it a new meaning, the first Person of a Trinity?

When Christ is spoken of in connection with God, it is always not only with marks of inferiority and subordination, but he is expressly excluded from Deity. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, *and* Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." Jesus Christ in both these passages is spoken of, as not only inferior to God, but as making no part of him. Another striking proof of this is found in the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. Christ is represented as being made the head of a spiritual kingdom, the kingdom of the Mes-

siah, by God, who subdues all things under him, and makes him to triumph over the last opponent, Death. The resurrection completes his reign, and he surrenders his kingdom to God. "Then cometh the end when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son himself be subject unto him that did put all things under him, that God may be all in all." Is not the supremacy and sole Divinity of God the Father written in every line of this quotation? Can the Son be a Person of Deity equal to the Father, and of course have equal and underived dominion, when his having dominion at all is ascribed to the Father's having put all things under him? When he surrenders up his kingdom to God, it is not, you will remark, as one Person of a Trinity to another, but to the whole Deity, to God, even the Father. "Then shall the Son himself be subjected to him that put all things under him." Shall one equal Person of the Trinity be subject to another after the resurrection, through the boundless ages of eternity? Impossible! There must be a mistake. Son must mean something else than an equal Person of the Trinity. Besides, it goes on to say "that God may be all in all." That person cannot be God, who resigns his kingdom to God, "that God may be all in all." Son must then be, as it can be shown to be in the New Testament, an equivalent to Messiah. We learn, moreover, from this passage (what furnishes

a satisfactory explanation of much of the language of the New Testament respecting Christ,) that the apostles considered him, at least during their own age, and while miracles lasted, to exercise under God a subordinate agency in the establishment of his religion, such as he promised them when he ascended, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world," or of the age. Hence the form of their benediction, "Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." "I thank my God through Jesus Christ." Can anything be clearer than that Jesus Christ is here distinguished from God, and considered as only an instrument or Mediator? Jesus Christ certainly can make no part of that God whom Paul thanked through him. "Ye are Christ's and Christ is God's." Can one equal Person of the Trinity be the property of another? But God, when there is no intimation to the contrary, must mean the whole Deity. Christ is, therefore, the property of the whole Deity. Then he can make no part of the whole Deity.

But it may perhaps still be thought by some that the title, Lord, applied to Christ, proves him to be Deity, or an equal Person in the Deity. This word, however, has many meanings in the Scriptures. It may mean proprietorship, in the sense of Creator and Disposer. It may mean delegated authority, such as that of a Teacher, Spiritual Guide, Controller of the conscience. It may mean a mere appellation of respectful salutation between man and man. In which sense Jesus Christ is Lord of Christians, it will not be difficult to determine. Lordship in the sense of Creator and Disposer,

is in Scripture confined to one, the supreme and only God. Christ is our Lord only in the second sense, that of Spiritual Guide and Master, a sense not original, but delegated and ministerial. "Ye call me," said the Saviour to his disciples, "Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am." "God," says Peter, "hath *made* that same Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ." You perceive then, that the title, Lord, is applied to him in a sense altogether different from that in which the same title is applied to God, and inferior to it.

A few passages of Scripture are interpreted by some, erroneously we think, to assert that Jesus Christ was the Creator of the material universe. But even here his agency is only ministerial and subordinate. For it was only *by* the Son that God "made the worlds." Other passages are supposed to mean, without sufficient reason as appears to us, that Christ will judge the world in Person. But here too his agency is only subordinate and ministerial. "The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son." "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men *by* Jesus Christ."

We now come to an important topic, the object of worship. Worship strictly Trinitarian is impracticable. It is so, considered merely as a mental exercise. Three objects of worship in one object of worship, is an idea which cannot be formed in the mind, for it is a self-contradiction. While the mind thinks of the Unity, it must forget the Trinity, and while it thinks of the Trinity it must forget the Unity. So to address Unity in Trinity, is equally an impossibility. A new language

must be invented to correspond to it, a language which must discard from its parts of speech all distinction of number, or rather confound all distinction, and express at the same time, unity and plurality, and designate its objects, as at once, three and one. This idea of three-one, is so anomalous, that there is only one word in the whole compass of language which corresponds to it, and that word is Trinity. But this word, strange as it may seem, is not found in Scripture, nor was it invented till several ages after the New Testament was written. It was introduced with the doctrine it was intended to express. Unscriptural as it is, however, it has played a most important part in theology. It has bound together a mass of incongruous ideas, which but for this word, would have dissolved by their own mutual repulsion. The language of strictly Trinitarian devotion, could never wander beyond this single expression, Trinity. All other appellations of Deity must signify either one or many. If a singular form of address be employed, then only one Person is addressed, and the Trinity is lost sight of. If a plural form were used, and the three Persons addressed at once, the Unity is lost. Besides, such devotion, though justified and required by the Trinitarian theory, would be utterly shocking.

Three equal Persons in Deity are equally objects of worship. But in order to worship them at once, plural forms of address must be used. This however would reveal the revolting nature of the whole system. In order to escape this, those who worship by a form carefully constructed upon the model of the creeds, instead

of the suggestions of their own minds and the language of the Bible, address each Person in succession, "O God the Father of Heaven, have mercy upon us miserable sinners." "O God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us miserable sinners." "O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners." Although in this way, the shock of plurality of address is avoided, unity of idea is quite as effectually destroyed. Here are three objects of worship, not one object. It is true the attempt is afterwards made to unite them in one. "O holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, three Persons in one God, have mercy on us." But instead of uniting them, it introduces a fourth object. For certainly a Trinity comprehending the three Persons, must be quite as different from each, as they are from each other, and therefore constitute another and distinct object of worship.

Those on the other hand, who pray according to the suggestions of that "inspiration of the Almighty which giveth man understanding," and the impressions which are left upon the mind by the word of God, find their devotions directing themselves to one object and that object is the Father. But this they do in utter condemnation of their creed. Their creed declares, there are three Persons in the Deity, equal in power and glory, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, neither of whom has in fact, or ought to have in regard, any preëminence over the others. How can they then select one of these Persons and make him almost the only object of address? Why do they choose the Father in



preference to the other two? How can they reconcile it to their consciences, thus to defraud, if I may so speak, the second and third Persons of the glory due them, by not addressing them in their prayers till the very close, in a kind of doxology? It can arise from this fact alone, that all men at heart, hold the simple unity of God. The fact is, that the supremacy of the Father is so deeply impressed upon the Scriptures, that the mind cannot forget or overlook it. Though men may say in their creeds, that the second and third Persons are equal to the first, they do not worship them as if they were equal, for they do not address either of them as often or as exclusively as the first. A prayer which should begin by addressing Christ or the Holy Ghost individually, would sound strange and shocking even to the most determined Trinitarian, and yet if that faith were true, it would be just as proper, nay, as often required, as to address God the Father.

Do not even those who hold the Trinitarian creed, show by their language, that they at heart, believe in the supremacy of the Father when they pray? They thank the Father for sending the Son. Why not as naturally and as often, if the Son be equal with the Father, thank him for coming to the relief of human misery? They pray God to send them the Holy Spirit; would they do this unless they thought the Father supreme, and the Holy Spirit subordinate? If they thought the Holy Spirit equal and as much an object of prayer, would they not as naturally and spontaneously address themselves directly to him, and implore him to come?

The truth is, men have modelled their prayers more on the Scriptures, than they have on their creeds; and then they could not fail to remember there is not one single instance of a prayer or devotion being addressed to the Holy Spirit. They could not fail to remember, that in a large proportion of the places, where the Holy Spirit is spoken of, not even personality seems to be ascribed to it. It is represented, to be the power, or influence, or energy of God. In framing their prayers, Christians could not forget, that Christ commanded his disciples just before he left them, to ask nothing of him, when he should be exalted to heaven, but to pray to the Father in his name.

They could not forget that the apostles obeyed this command, and immediately after his ascension, so far from praying to a Trinity, they were heard to use these remarkable words, "Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is, grant unto thy servants that with boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thy hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done in the name of thy holy child Jesus."

But you say, that there are some passages of Scripture which would lead you to think there were three Persons in the Divine nature, and that Christ was one of those Persons, and the Holy Spirit another. There are other passages which seem to teach that God subsists in one Person, and that one Person is the Father. Both of them cannot be true. There is a Trinity or an Unity in the Divine nature. Now which is to be believed? In making up your mind there are these two

material considerations to guide you. The doctrine of the Trinity is not directly asserted in any of the passages which are brought to prove it. It is only inferred. It is drawn from them as an inference, which seems more or less certain to different individuals, and therefore may not be a true inference. The doctrine of the Father being the one and only true God, is expressly asserted in so many words. "To us there is but one God, the Father." Here the Unitarian doctrine is not inferred, but is in so many words asserted. The choice, therefore, is between inference, on the one side, and unequivocal assertion, on the other.

The second consideration is, that there are but very few passages in the Bible, where the doctrine of the Trinity is pretended to be contained, even by implication; whereas the Unity and supremacy of God the Father is the common and prevailing doctrine of the Scriptures, and the passages in the New Testament in which he is emphatically called the one or only God, amount to seventeen.

There is not a passage in the Bible which unequivocally asserts the Trinity. There are many which unequivocally assert the Unity. In order to reconcile Scripture with itself, either the passages which are thought to teach the Trinity must be explained in consistency with the Unity, or those which declare the Unity must have a sense put upon them which will not contradict the Trinity. Is it not more reasonable to suppose that the Trinity—which is an inference, merely, from a very few texts of Scripture—may be a mistaken inference, than to suppose there can be any mis-

take in the overwhelming majority of texts which unequivocally assert the Unity.\*

But the disadvantage of the doctrine of the Trinity does not stop here. There are difficulties in things, as well as words, involved in it. Taking the side that the Unity is true, then the only difficulties you have to encounter, are in the interpretation of a few words and sentences. In the thing itself there is no difficulty. That there should be one God in one Person, is all plain and reasonable, and intrinsically probable. It involves no mystery, or contradiction.

But taking the doctrine of the Trinity as true, there are not only all the difficulties in words which exist in those passages which assert that there is but one God, and the Father alone is that God, but there are diffi-

\* "Those passages in the New Testament in which the Father is styled one, or only God, are in number seventeen.

"Those passages where he is styled God absolutely, by way of eminence and supremacy, are in number three hundred and twenty.

"Those passages where he is styled God, with peculiarly high titles and epithets, or attributes, are in number one hundred and five.

"Those passages wherein it is declared that all prayers and praises ought to be offered to him, and that every thing ought to be ultimately directed to his honor and glory, are in number ninety.

"Passages wherein the Son is declared, positively, and by the clearest implication, to be subordinate to the Father, deriving his being from him, receiving from him his Divine power, and acting in all things wholly according to the will of the Father, are in number above three hundred.

"Of thirteen hundred passages in the New Testament wherein the word God is mentioned, not one of them necessarily implies a plurality of persons.

"To which may be added about two thousand passages in the Old Testament, in which the Unity of God is either positively expressed, or evidently implied."—*Grundy's Lectures*.

culties in things. A doctrine is asserted which is, in itself, essentially incredible. It is strange, unreasonable and contradictory. A Being is presented to our faith, made up of elements entirely inconsistent with each other, one and yet three, three Persons, and yet one Being, a Trinity, the first Person of which, in the ideas of all, has some sort of a preëminence over the other two, and yet either of the other two is of equal power and glory. One is Son to another, and yet as ancient as his Father. The first Person is said to do things by the instrumentality of the other two, and yet they have equal and original agency in all things with the first.

The second Person becomes so connected with a human soul, as to make one Person, and yet the human soul is ignorant of what is known to the Divine mind. This complex person, made up of the Divine and human mind, sometimes acts and speaks, and then is laid aside, and the human mind acts and speaks, all without giving any warning of such a change. Now we say, that such a doctrine as this so mystifies the nature of the Deity, so mingles and confuses the nature of things, so destroys the boundaries of the identity and individuality of mind or spirit, that it raises and encounters insuperable difficulties in things, becomes essentially inconceivable and incredible. The proposition that God is a Spirit, meaning one pure and underived mind, is possible, is conceivable, is probable, is agreeable to the analogy, reason and nature of things. But that God is a Trinity of Persons, is supported by no analogy, is inconceivable, contradictory, and incredible. So that, besides the difficulties in words, arising from the few-

ness of the passages in which it is found only by inference, and its contradiction to a much greater number of texts, where the Unity is expressly, and in so many words declared, it encounters and involves insuperable difficulties in things, the very things which it asserts. To overcome such difficulties in the nature of the proposition which it sustains, the number of passages in which it is found ought to be greater, and their meaning more plain, than those which declare the opposite. Whereas they are incomparably fewer, and do not in so many words declare the doctrine at all.

I appeal to all who hear me this night, if the great proposition with which we started is not fully made out, that there is but one God, the Father—that in the Scriptures undivided Unity and supremacy are ascribed to Him. He is the only Fountain of being, He alone hath immortality abiding in himself, the blessed and only Potentate, the only wise God, the only true God, our Saviour.

## LECTURE II.

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### THE SECOND PERSON OF THE TRINITY.

JOHN, XIV. 10.

“BELIEVEST THOU NOT THAT I AM IN THE FATHER, AND THE FATHER IN ME? THE WORDS THAT I SPEAK UNTO YOU, I SPEAK NOT OF MYSELF: BUT THE FATHER THAT DWELLETH IN ME, HE DOETH THE WORKS.”

THE Trinitarian system supposes a second Person in God called the Son, who became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, and joined with his human soul, made one Person with him. The truth of the whole system depends upon the truth of this hypothesis. To establish its truth therefore, you must identify and prove by proper evidence, the existence of such a Person in God, and such a Person in Christ. If that proof fails, the whole system falls. A course of argument then which shall show that there is no sufficient evidence of the existence of this Person will overthrow the system. The existence of God the Father is certain. The existence of one of Christ's natures is certain. The existence of a second Person in God and Christ is an hypothesis which may, or may not be true. If no trace of the agency of a second Person can be found in Christ,

and everything in him requiring divine power and knowledge appears to be the agency of God the Father, and is affirmed to be so, and referred by Christ solely to him ; then the supposition of any other Person besides Jesus of Nazareth and God the Father, becomes a *mere* hypothesis, unsupported by evidence, and disproved by all the evidence we have in the case.

The precise point then to which I wish to call your attention this evening is this, "Who was the Divine Nature in Christ? Was it a second Person in the Trinity, the Son, or was it the Father, the whole Deity?"

It is confessed on all hands, that there was a connection of Jesus with God, more intimate than that of any other being of whom we have any knowledge. It was observed by a well informed and keen-sighted contemporary, when beholding his miracles, "no man can do these miracles, that thou doest, except God be with him." That, we, all who believe in Christ, admit. The Trinitarian system maintains that there was a Divine Person, called the Son, the second Person in the Trinity, residing in Christ and making with him one Person. We believe the only Divine Agent or Person in him, which can be identified and proved by the least shadow of evidence, is God the Father the only Person in the Deity ; and the idea that any other Divine Person existed or acted in him, is made out to be a mere fiction of the brain.

The doctrine of the incarnation as it is called, of the second Person of the Trinity, so as to become united with the body and soul of an infant, and make one Person with it, we regard as an amazing imagination,



which they who assert do not feel the force of the language they use. Not only so, we feel it to be not only incredible in itself, but utterly at war with all the facts of the case, as stated in the sacred Scriptures.

The doctrine is thus stated in the Westminster Confession, the public standard of faith of the Presbyterian church of the United States. "The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God became man, and so was and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one Person forever."

"Christ the Son of God became man by taking to himself a true body, and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin."

It is thus stated in still stronger terms in the thirty-nine articles of the church of England, and which is the public creed of the Episcopal church in the United States.

"The Son, which is the word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that the two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us."

You will please to take notice of what is affirmed in these articles of belief; the Son, the very and eternal

God, of course then a Being who fills immensity and inhabits eternity, unchangeable in his being, who cannot for a single moment be included within any place, nor excluded from any, took man's nature in the womb of the virgin, so that two whole and perfect natures, the Godhead and manhood were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man, who truly suffered, was dead and buried. This proposition is to my mind truly amazing. That an infinite, omnipresent, unchangeable Being, should be enclosed with a human soul in the body of an unborn infant; and that this infinite Spirit, and this infantine soul, made one Person, is a proposition, which nothing but the fact of its having been held by men of sincere piety, and thus having been in some measure associated with our venerable religion, could induce us to treat with any respect. Abstractly speaking, the thing is utterly monstrous and incredible. It must require for its support, nothing less than a plain, categorical, unequivocal declaration in the word of God.

Before we admit it as true, we must examine the evidence on which it rests, and the evidence if there be any against it.

Let us then turn to the sacred Scriptures, let us examine the record of the birth of Jesus. The incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity, if it really took place, must be there unequivocally declared. The extraordinary circumstances which attended his birth are thus recorded by Matthew. The information conveyed to Joseph in a dream is this, "Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife;

for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us." Luke's account of the matter is this. "And the Angel said unto her, 'Fear not Mary, for thou hast found favor with God: and behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, 'The Holy Ghost, shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee, *therefore* also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.'"

This is the record, and is there the least intimation in it of a Trinity, three Persons in the Divine nature, is there one word said from the beginning to the end, of the incarnation of the second Person in the Trinity, an almighty and infinite Being? Is there one word said of the incarnation of God at all? Is there any intimation that this child should have more than one nature, that his person should be made up of one infinite, and one finite spirit? Is it not strange, that the angel

should have omitted so material a circumstance, as the incarnation of one of the Persons of the Trinity?

What then do these passages declare? Simply that God brought the infant Jesus into existence, in an extraordinary, instead of the ordinary manner, that the virgin conceived by miraculous power instead of the ordinary means. It is not pretended that parents produce the souls of their children. God is the Father of Spirits. He puts the soul into the body. And does it change the nature of the soul, whether it is put into a body formed by God by an ordinary process, or by miracle? Adam and Eve began to exist in a miraculous manner, their bodies were formed by miracle. Did that miraculous formation prove an incarnation of one of the Persons of the Trinity in them?

In the second place, I would have you take particular notice, that in consequence of this conception by the immediate power of God, “*therefore* that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.” Here then, Son of God is applied to Jesus, because he began to exist miraculously. In the same manner it is applied to Adam for the same reason. In the catalogue of the progenitors of Christ, it is said, “which was the son of Adam which was the Son of God.” The angel says nothing of this infant’s having two natures. He was to be called Son of God not upon account of his nature, but the manner in which that nature had begun to exist.

The words of the angel then, fail entirely to prove any plurality of the Divine nature, or any incarnation of the second Person. Not only so, they are directly

at war with it. To have corresponded with that hypothesis he should have said to Mary, "The second Person in the Trinity called the Son, is to become incarnate in the infant that is to be born of thee. Therefore he shall be called the Son of God." But on the other hand, he says, it is the infant's miraculous beginning that gives Jesus the title, Son of God. Affirming this, he denies the other. So according to the angel, Son of God, when applied to Christ, dates no farther back than his birth, instead of running back before all worlds. A name arising out of the circumstances attending the birth of a child, is carried back into the ages of eternity, and made to introduce confusion into the unity and simplicity of the Divine nature.

The only thing additional which Matthew mentions, is the coincidence between this event and one which is related to have taken place in the days of Ahaz, king of Judah. He was greatly distressed by the invasion of two confederate kings against his land. The prophet Isaiah is sent to him with a message of comfort, and tells him as a sign of deliverance, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel; for before the child shall know to choose the good and refuse the evil, the land, which thou abhorrest, shall be forsaken of both her kings." The child was to be called Immanuel, or God with us, or God is with us, why? Because he was to be an incarnation of God? No! Because God was to be peculiarly with his people. Does giving the name, God-is-with-us, make the child to which it is given God? Besides there is nothing here said of a Trinity, or a division in the Deity.

If it proved anything, it would prove the incarnation of the whole Deity. Besides the epithet Immanuel, if it proved anything, would prove two incarnations, one in the days of Ahaz, and one at the time of Christ. That God the whole Deity did, in a peculiar manner, manifest himself to the world through Christ, is what we all believe. God was peculiarly with his people, we all know, when he made through Jesus of Nazareth, his last and best revelation to mankind.

So you perceive the doctrine of the incarnation of the second Person in the Trinity, as stated in those articles of faith I read to you, utterly *fails* of support in that very part of Scripture, where we should most naturally look for it, in the accounts of the conception and birth of Jesus.

Let us then trace on his history. Is it supposable that an infinite God could be so joined to the soul of an infant and child, as not to have manifested his presence? Yet we hear nothing of it. The next we hear of Jesus is at twelve years of age. Then he displayed an uncommon maturity of mind and knowledge of the Scriptures, but nothing that we can fix upon as miraculous. The mind of Jesus, I have no doubt, independently of all miraculous endowments, was of the highest order. Everything about him seems to evince it. He was raised up by God for an especial purpose. He might then have been preëminently endowed. Much of the efficacy of his religion was to depend on the perfection of his character. He may therefore have had mental and moral powers far above those of mankind in general. What, or whether any miraculous action

of God upon his mind previous to his baptism took place, we are not informed, or whether he had any intimation of the office he was to fill. One thing however is certain. That is recorded of him at twelve years of age, which is utterly inconsistent with the supposition that the second Person of the Trinity made a part of his person. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." A person, who was already infinite in knowledge, could not increase in wisdom; and the second Person in the Godhead could hardly increase in favor with the whole Deity. If it be answered that it was the human nature, —then we ask, what kind of a connection of two minds in one person that could be, or of what advantage, in which there was no communication between them, if one did not know what was known to the other.

We now come to the ministry of Jesus. We have hitherto detected not one particle of evidence of the incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity in him. During his ministry, it was to have been expected that this Divine Person would have manifested himself, although he had not done so before. It was to have been expected, that it was for the sake of this ministry that he had become connected with the soul of Jesus. It was to have been expected that this Divine Person, clothed with omniscience and omnipotence, would have come forward to do and say those things, which belonged to the Messiah's office, but which were above the powers of humanity. We therefore examine his ministry, in order to discover, if we can, the agency of this Being.

We shall divide the ministry of Christ in this examination into what happened to him, what he did, and what he said.

We say, in the first place, that the events which happened to him are utterly inconsistent with the supposition, that the second Person of the Trinity dwelt in, and was united to his soul. Take for example, the events attending his baptism, and his induction into the Messiah's office. The Holy Spirit descended upon him. Something seems to have been communicated to him from above; not anything called forth, which was in him before. Is it not a striking fact, that his miraculous character should have commenced from this? Is it not strange, that the third Person of the Trinity should have been necessary to call into action the dormant energies of the Second? A voice came from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Could this whole transaction be intended to point him out as a Person of the Trinity to the Jews, who had not the least conception of any such division of God, or of any such Person; or was it to point out and designate him as the Messiah, by an appellation, which the Jews had long before appropriated to him whom they expected? Is "my well beloved Son" the manner in which one of the Persons of the Trinity would be expected to address another? But immediately after, we read, that "Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was *led by the Spirit into the wilderness.*" Now is it at all credible that Jesus, if the second Person of the Trinity made a part of him, should be filled and guided by the third? How



are we then to have evidence of the fact of the incarnation of the second Person, "the very and eternal God," if at the very point in the life of Christ, where he is expected to act, no action or manifestation appears; and the Holy Spirit does all which he would have been expected to do? We read that he was tempted. Can omniscience and omnipotence be tempted? Angels ministered to him. Would he need their ministry were he God?

It is worth while to compare the account given here of the origin of Christ's miraculous powers, with that which was afterwards given by the Apostle Peter. "God," says he, "anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." So Peter supposed and asserted that the miraculous parts of Christ's character, were to be ascribed to this unction of the Holy Spirit, and not to the second Person of the Trinity making a part of him.

We read on one occasion, when the ship he was in was like to sink, he was found asleep on a pillow. Could that be true of a Being, "who never slumbereth nor sleepeth?" But it is objected that it was his human nature that was sleeping. We turn to the original proposition with which we started. "The very and eternal God took man's nature, and Godhead and manhood were joined together in one Person, *never to be divided*, whereof is one Christ." If Godhead and manhood were joined together into one Person, Christ, never to be divided, he certainly acted as the Christ during his whole ministry. It must either be true that God slept, which is impious, or that these two natures

were divided, and the compound Person, Christ, ceased to exist. He was weary on the well of Samaria. Can Almighty Power be weary? His soul was exceeding sorrowful. Can God be sorrowful? He was in an agony. Can God be in an agony? The person then here spoken of as being weary, sorrowful, agonizing, excluded, did not comprehend the second Person in the Trinity. But this is contrary to all ideas of personality, and contradicts the fundamental law of this very union, that it never was to be divided.

But the great trial of this hypothesis comes when we read of his crucifixion. The boldest of the supporters of the two natures, is startled when he comes to the proposition that God died, or a Person of the Godhead. Most of them, therefore, evade this awful supposition, by saying, that the human nature only suffered. Then, according to this hypothesis, the Person Christ did not suffer at all, for the union of the Divine and human natures, which composed that Person was dissolved before the approach of death. Besides, he himself declared "it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." The suffering was as important as any other part of the mission.

Do we, then, go too far when we say that there is not the least shadow of evidence in the birth, the life, and death of Christ, that there was any such being as the second Person of the Trinity, who made a part of his person? Do not all the circumstances we have mentioned, negative such a supposition?

Let us next examine and see if we can detect any evidence of this Being in what he did. In the first

place, he prayed to God. Would a second Person of the Trinity, equal in power and glory, pray to the first? But it is said he prayed for an example. If he prayed for an example, merely, he did not want what he prayed for. He prayed insincerely. Would you have Christians imitate him in his insincerity, and pray merely to set an example to others?

But he prayed in secret, in the darkness and retirement of the night. He certainly prayed in earnest when he was in an agony in the garden. When he retired from his disciples and said, "O! my Father, let this cup pass from me." Is it said that he there prayed in his human nature? We answer, that this resort to the human nature must not be made too often, lest it beget the suspicion that the Divine nature, which was absent so often, and on such important occasions, might not have been present at all. The fact is, that the doctrine that there were two natures in the person of Christ, is not only utterly improbable in itself, but surrounded by innumerable and insuperable difficulties.

He committed his soul to God in the following remarkable words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Is this the act of a God? Do we detect in this any indication of the indissoluble connection of that soul with the second Person of the Trinity? It would have been safe, certainly, in such custody. I seriously ask you, when you approach the last scenes of the Saviour's life, in his sufferings, in his sorrows, is not all idea of an impassible, infinite Person making a part of him gradually dissipated? Is not the crucifixion of a God as far from being intimated by the narra-

tive, as it is altogether shocking to all our conceptions of the nature and attributes of Deity?

We now come, in the third place, to what he said. Would it be enough to disprove the second Person of the Trinity, very and eternal God, making a part of his person, never to be divided, if in the only person in which he ever spoke or acted, as the Christ, he should expressly, and in so many terms, deny his possession of every essential attribute of God, such as almighty and independent power, underived and independent existence, infinite and unlimited knowledge? If he should deny that his miracles were done by himself, and say they were all done by the Father? If he should say that all his miraculous words were given him by the Father, and of course not prompted and suggested by the second Person, who made a part of him, as is supposed; would all this explicit denial; "I can of mine own self do nothing." "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." "Oh, Father, I have given them the words which thou hast given me." "I cast out devils by the Spirit of God;" and at the grave of Lazarus, "I thank thee, Father, that thou hast heard me,"—would all this explicit denial avail to disprove the existence of such an infinite being as the second Person of the Trinity in him? No! It is all evaded by saying, that he said all these things in his human nature. We shall consider this evasion of the human nature by and by. In the meantime we observe that, if the Father, the first Person in the Trinity, did all that was miraculous in Christ, if he communicated to him all that he said and did, requiring Divine power

and knowledge, then there was nothing left for the second Person to do. He did and said nothing, never acted in any case of which we have any knowledge or intimation. We have then no evidence of his existence. It is a *mere* hypothesis.

But he spoke these things, it is said, in his human nature. Men do not speak in natures. They speak in persons. The pronouns, "I," "me," "myself," stand for and represent persons, not natures. And it is the very essence of this hypothesis, that Godhead and manhood were joined together in one Person, Christ, *never to be divided*. "I," "me," "myself," then, being personal pronouns, take in the whole Person, however many natures there may be in it. Whatever, then, he says of this "I," "me," "myself," must be true of his whole person. We have not the least intimation to the contrary in the whole Gospels. It will not do for a man to say "I cannot think," meaning, in his own mind, his corporeal nature, his body cannot think, because "I" takes in the whole person. What he says is not true, unless the whole person cannot think, because "I" takes in the whole person. He, then, who says "I cannot think," meaning by a mental reservation his body, and not declaring that he does so, equivocates, "palters in a double sense," uses language in such a way that, if it were to become common, would make it utterly impossible to tell what was meant by what was said.

It is a law of veracity, laid down in the most common books which treat of moral obligation, that to speak the truth, you must say that which is true in the

sense in which you know you will be understood by your hearers. To say that, which, without further explanation will mislead your hearers, without giving the explanation, is to equivocate.

Here was our Saviour daily appearing before the Jews, and acting and speaking in the person of the Messiah or Christ. This was the person which he sustained, and professed to be, throughout his whole ministry. To the woman of Samaria he said, when she spoke of the coming of the Messiah or Christ, "I that speak unto thee am he." Sustaining and professing to be the same person, he says, "I can of mine own self do nothing." Would he not be understood by his hearers to be the same person, and to mean the same person in both cases, if he gave no explanation, gave no notice that he changed the person? Had his hearers the least notice of his mental reservation of the human nature? He never gave the least hint in his whole ministry, of his double nature. He gave not the least intimation that he was an exception to the common laws of language, that he sometimes took in, when he used the pronouns "I," and "me," the second Person in the Trinity, and sometimes only a human nature.

Besides, according to the system we are contending against, the Godhead and manhood composing the one Person, Christ, after once being united, never were to be, and of course never were divided. In order to have these disclaimers of infinite power and knowledge true of the Person who spoke them, this union must have been dissolved, and the Divine Person withdrawn, just as often as he spoke in this manner. Now, besides

this being contrary to the express conditions of the creed we just recited, is it in the remotest degree probable? His disciples never understood him to have two natures. His cotemporaries never understood it. Hear what Cleopas says of him on his way to Emmaus, "Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet, mighty in deed and word, before God and all the people." Hear what Peter says, "God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Whence then came this hypothesis of two natures? It was an invention of aftertimes, when the doctrine of the Trinity had sprung up. It was invented to save and support another hypothesis, that there were three Persons in the Godhead. Christ did and said many things, which contradicted his having divine attributes, and which proved that whatever person or nature he then spoke in was not God. Then they said he must have some other nature or person in which he did not speak, which was God. So one assumption is brought to prove another assumption, and the other assumption to prove that.

Jesus not only never said that the second Person of the Trinity resided in him, and made a part of his person, but he never claimed the attention of mankind on that account. He demanded the attention and obedience of the world, because he was the Messiah or Christ, because the Father had sent him. When he raised Lazarus from the dead, he prayed audibly to God. And why did he so? "That they may believe" what?—that the second Person in the Trinity made a part of him? no! "that thou hast sent me," that is, that God

wrought this miracle in attestation of his divine commission and authority. "The works that I do, bear witness," of what? my Divine nature? no! but that "the Father hath sent me." "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ *whom thou hast sent.*" "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." It was not necessary certainly for more than one Person of the Trinity, possessing all divine powers, to dwell in him at the same time.

"My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." How could he say this, if a second Person of the Trinity made a part of his person? Does the second Person stand in need of the inspiration of the First? Where is then his omniscience? He said this, it may be replied, in his human nature. But this refers to him as a teacher, not as a man. Teaching was perhaps the highest office he performed. He taught then, if he did anything, as Christ, in his highest Person, or nature. And Christ, according to this hypothesis, takes in both Godhead and manhood. You must admit either that he taught without his Divine nature, and then we should have only human authority for what he said, or that his Divine nature, the second Person in the Trinity, was instructed and inspired by the Father. What are those Divine attributes which require instruction and inspiration?

"As the living Father hath sent me, and I live *by* the Father, so he that eateth me even he shall live by me." How could a Being of underived and independent existence say this, that he lives by the Father,



that is sustained and supported in being? In other words, how can an independent Being or Person be dependent? Is it answered that he said this in his human nature? Then let us finish the sentence. "So he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." That is, he that cordially embraces my doctrine shall have spiritual life through me. If "me" in this place means his human nature, then it follows that in his human nature he has the power through his doctrine of communicating spiritual life. For the same person that liveth by the Father, communicates spiritual life or holiness to his followers. The communication of spiritual life is the highest office of the Messiah or Christ, and must, if anything can, require the whole Person, the Divine, as well as the human part. But here it is said the Person who communicates it, lives by the Father, is a derived, dependent being. He says in another place, "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he *given* to the Son, to have life in himself." The son is then a derived, dependent being.

"When ye have lifted up," that is, crucified, "the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he," that is, the Messiah, "and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father hath taught me I speak these things." Is he not here speaking as the Christ or Messiah, and in that character declares that, the Father taught him all that he said? "And he that sent me is with me; the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him."

Does he here derive his sense of security, or his freedom from error, from the second Person making a part

of himself, or from the Father who was with him? Is not his language here, even in his highest capacity, that of the Christ or Messiah, the language of a being dependent for knowledge and favor on another?

“He that will do his will shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.” If God or a Person of the Trinity made a part of that “myself,” then this contrast between God and himself could have had no meaning. Does it not evidently imply that without divine inspiration, the person who speaks would have had no authority? Is not this then a virtual denial of the doctrine of the two natures?

But it is in vain to multiply arguments and quotations. I have said enough already, I hope, to convince every unprejudiced mind, of the utter impossibility of identifying or detecting a shadow of evidence of the existence of a second Person of the Trinity in Jesus. We have proved that he never did or said anything, or prompted Jesus to say or do anything, for we have proved by his own uniform declaration, that the Father was the only agent in all that was miraculous in him. It was by the Holy Spirit, or power of God communicated to him, that he did his wonderful works, because “God gave not the Spirit by measure unto him.”

What then becomes of the Second Person in the Trinity? It becomes a non-entity. We cannot trace him by anything that he has done in the heaven above, nor the earth beneath. He is not wanted for the assistance of God the Father, nor can we trace him in Jesus Christ. He is discovered to be a mere fiction, or phantom of the human imagination. It was begot-

ten then by carrying back the epithet "Son of God" into the ages of eternity where it did not belong, and making that to belong to the Godhead which was only applicable to Jesus the Messiah. Do you ask me, what then was the "Son of God, or the Son?" I answer, Jesus the Messiah was the Son of God. Do you ask why? I answer, I have already given one reason. I will now give you another. Son of God was a title which the Jews bestowed on their Messiah without any reference to his nature whatever. It was nearly synonymous with Messiah, or quite. Do you ask me how I prove this? Turn to the first chapter of John. There it is said, that Philip findeth Nathaniel, and saith unto him, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." It seems to have been no objection in the mind of Philip that the Messiah should have been indeed the son of Joseph, as he appears to have no knowledge of his miraculous conception. Nathaniel comes with this impression that he is the son of Joseph, and after witnessing in him proofs of miraculous knowledge, he exclaims, "thou *art* the Son of God, thou *art* the King of Israel;" not a Person of the Trinity, for nothing could have been more shocking to a Jew then and now, "but thou art the Messiah."

When Peter, convinced by his miracles, expressed his faith in his Master, he said, "thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." This is in Matthew. Mark, in relating the same transaction, affirms that Peter said simply, "thou art the Christ." This shows that 'Christ' and 'Son of God' were synonymous, for

if Son of God added any meaning, especially such a tremendous meaning as a Person of the Trinity, Mark would certainly not have omitted it. Otherwise one Gospel, which went to one part of the world, would have taught that Peter said, he was the Messiah or Christ, and the other that he was the Second Person of the Trinity. There is no reason to doubt then, that 'the Christ' and the 'Son of God' mean one and the same thing.

When Jesus was arraigned before the Jewish council, they asked him, "Art thou the Christ, tell us?" "Hereafter," says he, "ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of Power." They understanding him to say he was the Messiah, said all, "Art thou then the Son of God?" As much as to say, you admit then that you are the Messiah or Christ. Can anything be plainer then than that they are synonymous?

Let us now examine his own account of this matter. He was accused of claiming for himself by the appropriation of this title, precisely what the advocates of the Trinity now claim for him, an equality with God. And let it be observed, that this interpretation, which his friends now put upon his language, originated with his enemies. Did he admit that it was the true interpretation, that he was equal with God in any sense, as in truth and candor he must have done, were he really so? Would he who afterwards died to sustain the claim which he made before the assembled council of his nation, 'I am the Christ,' would he have shrunk from maintaining at any hazard that he was God or equal to God, had he been so in reality? Would he

have evaded the true inference by giving a wrong reason? Would the great Martyr to the truth, have evaded, instead of avowing such an all-important truth as his own divinity? Impossible! If the title Son of God had belonged to him as the Second Person of the Trinity, would he have put it off upon his divine commission, his having been sanctified and sent into the world? His words then, interpreted according to the common rules of candor and plain dealing, are a disclaimer either of this title being applicable to him as being a Person of God, or derived immediately from him. Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, I said ye are gods. If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken, say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest because I said, I am the Son of God!" One of the Persons of the Trinity sanctified and sent into the world by another! Impossible. Sending into the world cannot go farther back than his divine mission to mankind.

It is this expression, "Son of God," a title of the Messiah in the time of Christ and only equivalent to it, and so perfectly well understood at that time, which, handed down to after times, has led men's thoughts back into eternity and made the substratum of a Second Person in the Deity, against every principle of the religion of the Jews and every principle of reason and common sense.

When this substratum is swept away, by applying "Son of God" as it was first applied, then the Second

Person falls with it, and there remains to us "one God the Father," in one Person. In the emphatic words of Scripture, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."

It may now perhaps be asked how we interpret the first chapter of John. We answer, that it harmonizes with this explanation precisely. And it is the only explanation with which it will harmonize.

Is there one word in that chapter about a Trinity of Persons? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." It does not say was the Second Person in God, but was the whole God, the whole Deity. As well might you say that Eternal Life was a fourth Person in God. For John says in one of his Epistles, "that Eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested to us." "The Word was made flesh," not literally, because God, a pure spirit, either first Person or second, cannot become flesh or anything else, but dwelt in, or was manifested through a man; as you will find that flesh, when not contrasted with spirit, generally in the Scriptures stands for man, without regard to the distinction of body and soul. To this corresponds that expression which we chose for our text, "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" He never said "the Son or Second Person of the Trinity dwelleth in me," as he must have said, had the doctrine of the Trinity been true. He was the Son himself, in virtue, as we have seen, of being the Messiah.

We now leave it to all candid minds to say, if we have not made out the positions we laid down at the commencement of this discourse, that there is no evidence of the existence of such a Being as the Second Person of the Trinity in Christ. That we have indeed no evidence of the existence of such a Person at all. That the Father was the Agent, and the only Agent, in all that was miraculous in what he did and said. In so proving, do we lessen the dignity of the Saviour? Do we impair his divine authority? We humbly conceive we do not. We conceive that the Father, the whole Deity, dwelling in Christ, is fully competent to all the purposes for which a Second Person of a Trinity would be.

As to the preëxistence of that pure and undivided spirit, which was the soul of Jesus, that is another question entirely foreign to our present purpose. Let every one form his own opinion on that, as he finds evidence. Suffice it to have been proved, that it was not God, nor a Person of God.

Carry home to the study of your Bibles this simple proposition, that 'Son of God' and 'Christ' or 'Messiah' are équivalent terms, and were so in the time of our Lord, and the New Testament will be a plain, intelligible book, disencumbered of those embarrassments which made it a book of riddles. All that confusion and contradiction which arises from applying this term to the Godhead will vanish, and God will appear as he is, one Person, one Mind, one Spirit, "the blessed only Potentate, who alone hath immortality abiding in himself." The person of Christ will be relieved from all

embarrassment. That unaccountable union of incongruous natures will be made unnecessary, that incredible shifting and changing of person and natures, made necessary by the Trinitarian hypothesis, is removed, and we have him, one mind, one spirit, "Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins, so that he is able to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God through him." It relieves, and only can relieve, from utter inconsistency and contradiction, such passages as these, "The Son can do nothing of himself." "Of that day and hour knoweth not the Son." "The Father hath given the Son to have life in himself," and many others like them.



## LECTURE III.

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### THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

1 CORINTHIANS, II. 11.

“FOR WHAT MAN KNOWETH THE THINGS OF A MAN, SAVE THE SPIRIT OF MAN WHICH IS IN HIM? EVEN SO THE THINGS OF GOD KNOWETH NO MAN, BUT THE SPIRIT OF GOD.”

THE subject to which I invite your attention this evening, is the inquiry, whether the Holy Ghost or the Holy Spirit be a Person of the Trinity, equal in power and glory to the Father, or whether it be not the essence, or power, or influence of God, and no more to be considered as a person separate from him, than the spirit or soul of man is to be considered as a person separate from the man himself. To those, whose habits of thought had not been formed by any other traditional hypothesis, the passage we have just quoted might seem to be decisive of the point. For it expressly asserts, that the spirit of God sustains the same relation to God, which the spirit of man sustains to man. As no one would think of starting the hypothesis, that the soul of man was a distinct person, so we should sup-

pose no one would think of asserting, that the Spirit of God was a person distinct from God himself. But such a doctrine has been asserted. It is affirmed of it, that it is a Person distinct from God the Father, equally possessing all divine attributes, equal in power and glory, having distinct and original agency in the universe; of course entitled to an equal share of our worship, love and regard. This position we intend to discuss. But before we do so, we would remark, that much less is said on this point, than on the Deity of the second Person. It seems to be taken for granted, that if the Deity of the second Person can be established, there will be no objection to admitting a Third. We can sympathize with this feeling in some measure, for as soon as the simple unity of the Divine Nature is once broken in upon, we see no reason why we may not as readily admit three Persons as two. But then the wonder begins, why there should have been no more. There certainly can be no peculiar magic, or any especial sacredness in the number three. We can see no reason in the thing abstractly considered, and by one previously unacquainted with the subject, why there should be three Persons in the Divine Nature rather than five. But five Persons in the Divine Nature would be shocking. So, we reply, would three be shocking, were we not accustomed to it by long familiarity of sacred association.

Another thing is quite remarkable in this matter. There are many, who either have no distinct ideas of the Personality of the Holy Spirit, or who do not regard it as a Person, but still call themselves and claim

to be Trinitarians. How two Persons can constitute a Trinity, we confess ourselves unable to understand.

For ourselves, we consider it a matter of more serious import. An object of worship is not to be admitted into our minds without evidence, lest we give the peculiar glory of God to another. We propose, therefore, to consider what evidence ought to satisfy us of the existence and claims of such a Person upon our regard as equal with God the Father. He ought, in the first place, to appear as often and conspicuously, both in the Old and New Testament, as God the Father. He ought to have as much original and independent action ascribed to him. He ought to be as often worshipped by inspired persons. He ought, in a great majority of cases, when he is spoken of, to have a name and attributes which imply personality; and the places in which he is spoken of as an influence or power of God, ought to be very few in comparison to those in which his personality is implied, or understood, or expressed.

Now I would appeal to all who hear me, if when they turn inwardly to their own minds, they find among those ideas which they have formed from the Word of God, the same clear conception of personality when they think of the Holy Spirit, which they have when they think of God or Jesus? Is there not something extremely vague in your ideas? When you think of the Deity, do your thoughts as often fix themselves on the Holy Spirit, as on the Father? What can be the cause of this, but that the Scriptures, from which you derive your ideas of the Divine Nature, express on

every page in bold relief the personality of the Father, while they leave that of the Holy Spirit, in dim obscurity?

Next consider the very name by which it is called, *the Holy Spirit*. Is this the name of a person, or of a thing? It is in the original language of the New Testament in the neuter gender, and the pronoun which refers to it is *It*. Would this be the case were it a person? It is without a proper name. What being, what person is there throughout the universe, without a proper name to distinguish him from every other individual? "Jehovah," said God, that is my name." Jesus was the proper name of the Saviour. The Holy Spirit is not a proper name. Proper names, names of individuals, do not admit the article before them, unless to distinguish them from others of the same name or kind. Spirit is a general term, applicable to many separate existences, applicable to men, to angels, or devils, as well as to states and dispositions of the mind. Holy is an epithet apparently to distinguish it from other spirits which are unholy. Now does not this very language imply that there is no person intended by this expression? Besides, it is quite as often called "the Spirit of God." And whenever this is the case, the very words show that there is no personality intended, separate from God the Father.

In the next place, the Holy Spirit was never recognized as a Person by the Jews. This personality, if it really existed, must have been quite as necessary for their knowledge and recognition as ours. It would, one would think, have been made a subject of express

revelation. But we find that Moses was entirely ignorant of any such doctrine. He prays to but one Person, and commands the Israelites to worship but one. Especially is it singular, that the Jews should not have known this doctrine, as the very same action and office is ascribed to the Holy Spirit, in the Old Testament as in the New. We have the devotions of the most pious and enlightened Jews for many ages, and yet not one address to the Holy Spirit, nor one recognition even of his personality. And yet the men of modern days, to whom the language of the Jews has become a dead language, profess to discover in their sacred books a doctrine which was delivered to them in their vernacular tongue, if delivered at all, but which they never discovered. Maimonides, one of their most learned and judicious Rabbins, and one who had a most perfect understanding of the Old Testament, enumerates six different significations of the word spirit; the fifth and sixth of which are these. "It signifies the divine influence, inspiring the prophets, by virtue of which they prophesied." "I will take, says God, of the Spirit that is in thee and put it upon them. And the Spirit rested on them." "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." It signifies likewise will, design, purpose. "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him." "It is evident, therefore, that the word spirit, when spoken of God, is to be understood always in one or the other of these meanings." Such then is the disinterested testimony of a Jew, a partizan to none of the controversies which have prevailed among Christians.

If such a person then were a Person of the Trinity, and of course an object of worship, is it not utterly unaccountable that the world should have stood four thousand years, a revelation being made to man for a great part of that time, and mankind not have been taught one word upon the subject? Is it not utterly incredible?

In the next place, and what is complete demonstration, there is no instance, from the beginning of the Bible to the end, of any worship being paid to the Holy Spirit. We have in the Old Testament and the New almost innumerable acts of devotion, but not one prayer has ever been made to the Holy Spirit. Nay, we have occasional visions of the worship of heaven. But in none of them do we ever catch a glimpse of the third Person. We have a vision of Isaiah, in the sixth chapter of his prophecy, in the following remarkable words. "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims, each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." Do we here perceive any trace of a third, or even a second Person? "The Lord our God is one."

Another instance we have of heavenly worship is, in the Revelation of St. John. He beheld a door in heaven, and was caught up and heard and saw the worship. A throne was set in heaven and ONE sat on the throne. The hosts around the throne cry day and night; Holy,

Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty which was, and is, and is to come. Then “the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever; and cast their crowns before the throne saying, thou art worthy, O! Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” Is there any mention here of a second or a third Person? How can this be accounted for, if the Holy Spirit were a Person equal to the Father? Afterwards, while God is still upon the throne, Jesus Christ is introduced, in the form of “a Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world.” He is found worthy to take the book and open the seals, which when he has accomplished, the whole assembly break out in his praise, not as God you will perceive, for they praise him for entirely different reasons from those on account of which they worshipped God, who had created all things. “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” Here you perceive that Jesus is represented as an entirely different being from God. He is not on the throne, but a lamb before the throne, and is praised, not on account of divine attributes, but because he is found worthy to open the book of God’s designs, and make them known, and had redeemed the saints by his blood.

But where is the third Person, the Holy Spirit? If he be equal to God the Father, his glory ought to fill heaven and earth, his praise should be as much cele-

brated as that of the ONE that sat upon the throne. But in none of these visions can we catch the least glimpse of such a person, or of any recognition of him, or any worship paid to him.

Christians, I think, ought to reflect much and seriously, before they add the Holy Spirit to the number of the objects of their worship. How can they worship a third Person, utterly unauthorized by one single instance or example in the sacred Scriptures? There are many instances of our Saviour's devotions in the gospels. Making any supposition you please with regard to him, if the Holy Spirit be a Person, and entitled to equal honor and glory, possessing an equal share in the administration of the universe, is it not strange, that he should not have prayed to him? He certainly knew all the facts, and yet he prays, "Our Father who art in heaven." He instructs his disciples to model their prayers after a formula, which contains not the slightest allusion to the Holy Spirit. At one time, he says, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." At another, "Father, the hour is come." At another, "Father, glorify thy name." Who was the object of the adorations of the first Christians? Hear them worshipping immediately after the ascension of Christ. "Lord thou art God, who hast made heaven and earth;" not one word of adoration to Christ or the Holy Spirit. Who was the object of Paul's worship, who professed to be divinely inspired; "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus is to be acknowledged to be Lord, to whose glory? not the Father and the Holy Ghost, but of GOD the Father.



After all this entire negation of any worship to the Holy Spirit, is it not absolutely amazing that a community of Christians, who profess to derive their religion from the Bible, can be heard to pray in such language as this, "O! God, the Holy Ghost have mercy upon us?" Point, if you can, to a single passage of Scripture, in which such a petition can find the least shadow of a precedent or a justification. Here, then, is a new object of worship, unknown as such to patriarchs and prophets, to Christ and his apostles. Consider well, when you hear this petition, the commandment, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Examine your Bibles, and see if you can find any model of prayer, which contains such an expression as this; "O! holy blessed and glorious Trinity, three Persons in one God, have mercy on us."

I shall now offer to your consideration two passages of the New Testament, which seem to my mind expressly, and in so many words to deny the existence of any such separate omniscient Person as the Holy Spirit, a Person of the Godhead. It is said, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man," but the original goes farther; there the negation is universal, as it was plainly intended, there it is, "no one," no intelligent being, as the enumeration plainly interprets it, in the universe, except the Father. Could this be the case, if there were such a person in the Deity as the Holy Spirit, equal in every attribute, in knowledge to the Father? He certainly must have known as well as the Father, had he the same perfections. This declaration of Christ denies and disproves his existence.

The second passage is one in which Christ declares the fulness of his knowledge of divine things, together with the fact, that no one on earth at that time, fully understood his character, or comprehended the purposes of his mission. "All things are delivered to me of my Father, and no man," literally no person, no intelligent being, "knoweth who the Son is, but the Father, and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." Now neither of these assertions could be true, were there a third Person of the Trinity possessing omniscience, and an equal degree of knowledge with the Father. In making this denial of universal being, does he not deny the personality and Deity of the Holy Ghost? Words to this effect as it appears to me, could scarce be plainer.

In the next place, we say the Holy Spirit does not mean a person, because it is often spoken of as the essence of God himself, and not intended to be distinguished from him. It is spoken of as *his* Spirit, in a way which indicates its belonging to himself, as his property, in a manner entirely inconsistent with his distinct and independent personality. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence," that is, manifestly from thee; for he immediately adds, "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there." "But they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit." The same thing is in other places represented immediately of God himself. "Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies." "And the Lord said unto Moses, how long will this people provoke me?"

As the Spirit of God is often put for his spiritual essence, in itself considered, so it is often put for that essence considered in action as pervading the universe, and secretly working the will of the Deity. In this sense it is synonymous with the power of God. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath," literally, "Spirit of his mouth." By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens, his hand hath formed the crooked serpent." "Is the Spirit of the Lord straightened?" "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save." Then it is evident that the Spirit of God, the word of God, and the hand of God, mean all the same thing, that is, his power, his essence in action. If any proof were wanting of this, we have it in the next passage I shall quote. It is the angel's message to Mary. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee." This is evidently one of those passages, so frequent in the Scriptures, expressing the same thing in two different phrases, of similar signification.

"If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you." In another place, "If I, by the finger of God, cast out devils." So the finger of God and the Spirit of God, in the language of Jesus, signify the same thing, that is the power of God, or as it is afterward more fully explained by the apostle Peter, "Ye men of Israel hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you as ye yourselves also know."

Nothing can be plainer, or more explicit, or more decisive, than this speech of Peter, of this whole subject. God the Father was the only agent in all that was miraculous in Christ, and the Holy Spirit is his power.

In the next place, we say, that the Holy Spirit is not a person, because it is used in Scripture to signify gifts and endowments, miraculously bestowed by God, of superhuman power, knowledge, wisdom and understanding. "I have filled him," saith God, of the chief workman of the Tabernacle, "with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship." "And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy of the elders of Israel, and I will take of the Spirit which is upon thee and put it upon them. And the Lord came down in a cloud and spake unto him, and took of the Spirit which was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders. And it came to pass when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied."

Can this be a person, which God thus communicated to the elders of Israel? Is not the spirit of prophecy here communicated by God himself, instead of the Third Person in the Trinity? If there arise any doubt, let us hear what David says of himself in this very matter. "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me; he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." No intermediate agent certainly was here, in the mind of David. No personality of the Spirit is even hinted. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and the Spirit of

the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." These are certainly miraculous gifts and power, not a Person.

Thus we perceive that we can detect not a shadow of evidence in the Old Testament, of the personality of the Holy Spirit. We now come down to the New. Every thing in the Hebrew Scriptures is directly opposed to this supposition. It is not to be supposed that any change took place in the Divine Nature at that time, so we are to interpret the language of the New Testament on this subject in accordance with the doctrine of the Old. And we find that as far as our Saviour is concerned, there is an exact coincidence between the new and the old dispensations. Jesus represents the Father as the only agent in all that was miraculous in his ministry. Much more frequent mention, however, is made of the Holy Spirit toward the latter part of his ministry than in the former, and through the Acts and Epistles, than in any other part of the Bible. This arises from the different manner in which the Gospel was set up in the world from the law. The Mosaic dispensation came with outward demonstration. External miracles, but slightly connected with persons, accompanied the Israelites for forty years, and demonstrated to them the divine origin of their law.

The Gospel, on the other hand, came not with observation or outward show. It was borne witness to by God, by the miraculous powers conferred on individuals. In the words of the Evangelist, "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord work-

ing with them, and confirming the word with signs following."

The whole evidence, on which the establishment of Christianity depended, was miraculous powers conferred on individuals. They were so operated upon by divine power, that from timid, obscure, and uneducated men, they became bold, eloquent and unembarrassed; they had a collectedness and a wisdom on sudden emergencies, to which, in their former lives, they had been strangers. They possessed, likewise, miraculous knowledge and power, could speak languages with which they were before unacquainted. They possessed the power of communicating these divine gifts to their converts, by the imposition of their hands and prayer. The possession of these gifts not only demonstrated to the world the verity of their commission, but likewise was a source of the greatest comfort and encouragement to themselves, as it made them confident in their cause, and certain of the presence and favor of God. These powers continued with the apostles during their lives. From this circumstance it is, that the Holy Spirit is so frequently mentioned in the apostolic writings, in the Acts, and in the Epistles.

But our inquiry is, whether it is represented and considered by the apostles as a person of the Trinity equal to God the Father. It is a dogma of the Church of England, recited in their litany, that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. But even this dogma is expressly contradicted in Scripture. It does not appear that Christ, even in his glorified condition, after his resurrection from the dead, had the power to

send the Spirit ; for he promises that he “ will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter.” In conformity to this, hear what Peter says in his first speech after the ascension. “ This, Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost,” or the Holy Spirit, which he had promised, “ he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.” Hear him on another occasion. “ The God of our Fathers hath raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Ghost which” (not whom as our translators have with singular disingenuousness rendered it) “ God hath given to those who obey him.”

We deem these passages sufficient to show that the apostles considered God the Father to be the only agent in all their miraculous works, and if Christ is at any time represented as sending the Holy Spirit, it is to be understood, according to his own declaration, to be sent by God at his instance, or in confirmation of his mission, and the establishment of his Gospel. So are we to understand his promises of assistance that he would be with and assist them as long as they lived, or till Judaism was done away, and Christianity set up in its stead. God, by sending them a supernatural knowledge of their religion, and memory of what Christ had taught them, with the power of working miracles, supplied his

place, enabled them to carry on their work as if he were still with them.

And here comes in the great and sole argument on which the personality of the Holy Spirit is founded. Jesus personified it in his conversation with his disciples in his last interview with them, when he promised them divine aid. "I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter," or more literally, "teacher, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth." Here it is asked, if the Spirit were not a person, why should Christ in this place have personified it? We reply that this form of speech arose out of the circumstances of the case. He was comforting them in the prospect of leaving them. "You will not be forsaken, for my place as your teacher and comforter will be filled by ample communications of immediate inspiration. You shall not be without a teacher and comforter, for the divine communications of knowledge and power, which God shall give you, to enable you to carry on the work of preaching and establishing the Gospel, shall guide you into all the truth."

Now this conversation is the only unequivocal instance throughout the Bible of personification of the Holy Spirit. To my mind it is infinitely more probable to suppose that what is in reality a thing, and is so represented in a vast majority of cases, should be occasionally personified, than that a Person should be almost universally represented as a thing, and in a few cases only spoken of as it really is, as a Person. Exceptions prove a rule, not disprove it. If you consider this as proving the personality of the Spirit, then you make a



solitary exception the rule, and a vast majority of cases, more than fifty to one, the exceptions. On the same principle you might make the Grace of God a person. For Paul says that he has done certain things, "yet not I but the Grace of God which was in me." So has he personified Sin and Death. But it is answered that the general tenor of Scripture represents grace as the favor or assistance of God, and not a person. So we answer that the Scriptures generally represent the Holy Spirit as the essence, power, or influence of God, and not a person.

But it is always safe to interpret language by facts. What Christ promised really came to pass. After his ascension the Holy Spirit came, but how? In a personal form? Let us read the record. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were filled with the Holy Ghost." Does this seem like a person, or the miraculous power of God? Hear the interpretation which Peter, one of the persons on whom it fell, gives of this transaction. "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. And it shall come to pass in the last days (saith God) that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy." Can a person be poured out? "I will pour out *of* my Spirit." Can a part of a person be poured out, and a part retained? Can a person be

divided among several? "God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost," literally divisions or distributions of the Holy Ghost. "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us *of his Spirit.*" Now we ask, putting all these representations together, if it appears that the apostles, who received the Holy Spirit, understood it as a Person? Had they considered it as a Person of the Trinity equal to the Father, is it to be supposed that they would have failed to have made him an object of worship? But they did no such thing. While under the influence of this Spirit they join in an act of worship, in which they address themselves solely to the Father, and attribute to his agency these very miracles said to be wrought by the Holy Spirit. "Lord thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is. And now Lord behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word; by stretching forth thine hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done in the name of thy holy child Jesus."

Our argument is now closed. Let us sum it up, and consider it in the aggregate. We have said that the Holy Spirit is not a Person of the Trinity, or a person at all, because, in the first place, it is represented in Scripture as sustaining the same relation to God that the Spirit of man does to man. In the second place, I appealed to the personal experience and consciousness of all to say, if there were in their minds the same ground and material for the personality of the Holy

Spirit, which there is for that of the Father and of Christ? Thirdly, we inferred it was not a person, from its want of a proper name, the name by which it is designated being the name of a thing, not of a person, being in the neuter gender with neuter adjectives and pronouns to agree with it. Fourthly, it was never recognized nor worshipped by the Jews as a Person. The same general language respecting its office and operations is current and common in the Old Testament, and yet no one appears to have considered it a Person, or other than the power or energy of God. Fifthly, and what seemed to us demonstration, there is no instance in the Bible, from the beginning to the end, of an act of worship being paid to the Holy Ghost. In the sixth place, we adduced two passages in Scripture, which seemed to deny in so many words the existence of a third equal and infinite Being in the universe. In the seventh place, we brought forward many instances, in which Spirit of God is evidently used for his power or essence, considered in action, and in all cases spoken of as *his* Spirit, in such a manner as is totally inconsistent with all idea of independent existence or action. In the eighth place, we argued that the one conversation of Christ, in which alone he was personified, was an exception to the general tenor of the Scriptures, and therefore it would be irrational to make that the rule, and the other instances, in which it is spoken of as a power or influence, the exceptions. In the ninth place, we showed why Christ used this language, and compared it with the event, and the fact that the apostles never considered it a person.

If, when there is in the Scriptures such a mass of evidence against the personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit, any continue to regard it as a Person, and worship it as such, all we can say is, they do so not only without one example in Scripture, without any authority whatever, except tradition, but against a mass of evidence which, were it possible to abstract the subject from religious prejudices, would be absolutely irresistible.

But it may be asked here, if the Spirit of God mean nothing but God himself, why should it ever have been spoken of as in any measure distinct? The answer to this is found in the fact that all the language of the Bible is accommodated to human conceptions, is humanized, if I may so speak. As we have no idea of pure spirit, we resort of course to something known, to shadow forth that which is unknown. In speaking of the Deity, we resort to human similitudes. Thus, in the very commencement of the Bible, the Deity is represented as speaking when he created the world. Not that he really spoke, for this would involve the supposition of human organs and a material frame. But it is a way of representing the transaction in such a manner as to be level with our conceptions and capacities. Just so is it with all those passages which represent the Deity as possessing human organs, and human ways of receiving knowledge by means of the senses. Thus he is said to "measure the waters in the hollow of his hand." "The eyes of the Lord are in every place." By this language it would seem that the Deity received knowledge in a manner similar to ourselves, by organs of vision, and that he was in one place in order to be

a spectator to what was happening in another. But it produces no error, for we all interpret it as a figurative expression, meaning that the Deity, in some manner incomprehensible by us, knows everything that takes place throughout the boundless extent of the universe.

But men did not stop here in humanizing the Deity. They spoke not only of the hand, the arm, the eye of the Deity, but they spoke likewise of his Spirit or soul, as they spoke of the spirit or soul of man. But in this case, men have ultimately been misled by their own language, by being betrayed into a false analogy. Because man is made up of soul and body, the same idea is erroneously transferred to God, as if it were possible that he too consisted of two parts,—as if it were possible for the Spirit of God to be anything but God himself. It is not recollected that though a body may have a spirit, that a pure Spirit should have a spirit separate from itself, is a manifest contradiction.

Yes, Christians, God is a spirit, his essence alone pervades all space. He is infinitely present to every particle of matter, and every intellectual soul throughout the universe. Every particle, and every soul is upheld in being, and in the exercise of all its powers, by him alone. If any of these particles, or any of these souls have varied from their ordinary action into anything miraculous, it has been by the exertion of His power, His volition. In the language of the apostle, it is “God who worketh all in all.” Ye do greatly err then, not knowing the Scriptures, when ye set up any other Spirit or Person besides this one all perfect and all pervading Spirit as an object of worship.

Think then, I beseech you, think seriously whenever or wherever you hear or see such a form of devotional address as this, "O! God the Holy Ghost have mercy on me;" think if it be not utterly unscriptural, unjustified by any example or precept in God's word; think if it be not a presumptuous human invention, which well deserves the rebuke of God, "who hath required this at your hand?"

The doctrine of the Trinity I believe to be a serious obstacle to piety. It introduces, as we have seen, confusion into men's devotions, and imperfection into their ideas of God. Let us take for illustration, the Litany of the Episcopal church, to which we have just referred. Three Persons are introduced, and made three objects of worship, as if each and all were equally God. "O God, the Father of heaven, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners. O God, the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners. O God, the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners."

Now here are three objects of worship. But in order to make this worship signify anything, each of the three must sustain some practical relation to us, that is, the functions of Deity must be divided among them. Accordingly, to God the Father, is attributed the function of Creator; to God the Son, the function of redeeming the world; to God the Holy Ghost, the function of "proceeding from the Father and the Son," and of thus being the medium of communication between them and us.

If each of these functions be a function of Deity, then

each of these Persons must perform *all* the functions, or he is not a perfect Deity to us. If the peculiar function of the Father be that of Creator, then the Son is not our Creator, and to us he is not perfect Deity. If the redemption of the world be a divine function, and the Father be not our Redeemer, then to us he wants just so much of perfect Deity. If the redemption of the world be a delegated function, as most men in their hearts believe it is, then there is no propriety in worshipping the instrument, and exalting him to an equality with Him who uses him as an instrument. There is no propriety in worshipping the Holy Ghost as God, even supposing it to be a person, for assenting the ministerial function of "proceeding from the Father and the Son," and thus acting a part subordinate to both. Such a multiplication of objects of worship, and such a gradation among them, confuses and debases the idea of God, and impairs and enfeebles the spiritual power of devotion upon the mind and heart. That the multiplication and gradation of objects of worship, is exceedingly dangerous, will appear from what has taken place in the Episcopal church. By introducing into the Deity a Person, a part of whose nature is human, the human nature has become an object of adoration. God is worshipped for human incidents and sufferings. "By the mystery of thy holy incarnation, by thy holy nativity and circumcision, good Lord deliver us." God is worshipped for having been circumcised! "By thine agony and bloody sweat. By thy cross and passion, by thy precious death and burial." How can the living, eternal and unchangeable God, be worshipped

for his death and burial? Such are the consequences which flow from the violation of the fundamental principle of Judaism and Christianity, that God is one. The worshippers of one God in one Person may legitimately say to the worshippers of a Trinity of Persons, "Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship." We pray as Christ and his apostles did. We pray as all the inspired men of the Old Testament prayed. We worship but one Person, as they did. We cannot worship the Holy Ghost, because not one of them ever did so. "We cannot go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less or more." We are commanded to pray in the name of Christ. "In that day ye shall ask in my name." This we do. But we are forbidden to ask anything of him. "In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."

In the Episcopal service, of which we have spoken, there is a frequent repetition of the form, "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." This doxology is not found in the Bible; and the assertion with which it closes, is wholly untrue. There was no glory to the Son or to the Holy Ghost in all the Old Testament. So there are four thousand years taken from the beginning. In the Christian church the Holy Ghost was not worshipped, nor ever admitted into the Trinity even, till the council of Constantinople, in the year three hundred and eighty-one.



I have but one more thought to add. It is said in Scripture, "Know ye not that *ye* are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy."

## LECTURE IV.

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### THE ATONEMENT.

2 CORINTHIANS, V. 18, 19, 20.

“AND ALL THINGS ARE OF GOD, WHO HATH RECONCILED US TO HIMSELF BY JESUS CHRIST, AND HATH GIVEN TO US THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION; TO WIT, THAT GOD WAS IN CHRIST, RECONCILING THE WORLD UNTO HIMSELF, NOT IMPUTING THEIR TRESPASSES UNTO THEM; AND HATH COMMITTED UNTO US THE WORD OF RECONCILIATION. NOW THEN WE ARE AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST, AS THOUGH GOD DID BESEECH YOU BY US: WE PRAY YOU IN CHRIST'S STEAD, BE YE RECONCILED TO GOD.”

I AM not unaware that the denomination to which we belong have been accused of denying the atonement. I am persuaded that this charge is founded on a misapprehension of our sentiments. We believe in the atonement. We believe in it precisely in the sense in which it is stated in that passage of Scripture I have just read to you, and which passage I believe to be the fullest and most explicit statement of the doctrine to be found in the Scriptures. The word atonement, I scarcely need remind you, is found in the New Testament but once, and there is used for a word in the original, which is everywhere else translated reconciliation. Had it been translated reconciliation there, a

it ought to have been, much useless and unchristian controversy might have been saved. We believe that there was an intimate connection between the death of Christ and human salvation; we believe that he died for us, that he "gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." We believe, according to the text, that "God was in" or through "Christ reconciling the world to himself," and that when Christ left the world, he committed the ministry of reconciliation to the apostles, and they to their successors, and that all faithful ministers are Christ's ambassadors, by all the means of persuasion beseeching men to be reconciled to God. Men, when in a state of sin, are at variance with God. And the death of Christ has had, and still has a powerful influence in bringing about an at-one-ment, making them at one or reconciled together.

We are wronged then, when it is said of us that we deny the atonement. We believe that the death of Christ has a powerful influence in bringing about a reconciliation between God and man. So do those who censure us. The only difference between us is, as to the mode in which his death wrought this effect. Those who censure us say, that the death of Christ has an effect on God to reconcile him to us. We believe that the change must be wrought in us. We must repent, reform, and be conformed to his will, before we can be at one with him. We believe that the embassy of reconciliation came from God to man offering terms of reconciliation, and that Christ was the ambassador.

Conditions were offered through him to men, declaring what change must take place in their character and conduct, before God would be on terms of peace with them. The embassy was not sent by men to God to change him, and make him favorable and ready to show mercy. He is as merciful as he can be by nature. There is no change needed in him. The Scriptures inform us of no impediment or hindrance to his mercy, except the impenitence and obduracy of mankind. Creeds and catechisms declare that Christ died to reconcile God to man. The Scriptures seem to us to teach that he died to reconcile man to God. So we are accused of denying the atonement, not because we do in fact deny it, but because we will not adopt the explanation which others, not more infallible than we, choose to put upon it. As well might we in our turn, accuse them of denying the atonement, because they will not adopt our explanation of it.

What then is the commonly received doctrine of the Atonement? It is thus stated in the thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, "Christ, very God and very man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us." "The offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual." The Westminster Confession thus expresses it, "The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father hath given

him." Let us consider what is contained in these propositions.

In the first place, God was angry with men, and his anger was appeased by the sufferings and death of Christ. In the second place, that he suffered the full penalty for all the sins of all mankind; and thirdly, that he has purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for those whom God has given him. As a counterpart to this, his righteousness is imputed to us, as our guilt is to him; and his righteousness is the ground or reason of our acceptance with God, without respect to what we have done, either good or evil.

Now we say, that all these doctrines are essentially incredible, and we mean by incredible so entirely inconsistent with all we know of God, either from his works or his word, that we feel at once that such a system as this cannot make a part of his government. It does not agree with the facts of the case as stated in the Evangelical narrative. It does not agree with the general representations of the Scriptures.

In the first place, it does not agree with the facts of the case. Jesus came among the Jews in the character of their expected Messiah. He assumed the character of a divinely instructed teacher. He undertook to set up a new religion. His ministry is estimated to have continued about three years, most of which time he spent in instructing the multitudes which came to hear him. He chose twelve disciples, whom he more carefully taught the principles of his religion. He commanded men to repent and reform, and promised them

on condition they did so, that their sins should be blotted out and forgiven. He said not one word of any impediment on the part of God. He said nothing of any act of his own, making the Deity more propitious to men than he otherwise would have been. He added moreover, what contradicts one part of this hypothesis, "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." What is his whole sermon on the Mount, but one exhortation to practical righteousness? Now how utterly superfluous this was, if this righteousness was to be of no advantage to them, and the whole ground of their acceptance with God was to be his own righteousness imputed to them? And he concludes his first and most important discourse with these remarkable words, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock." And what is the rock which he builds upon? The imputed righteousness of Christ? That is passed over in silence the most profound. The fact, he says, that he has done these commandments of Christ is the rock which storms and floods cannot wash away.

But did his preaching produce general repentance and reformation? It did not. And what was the reason? Because they did not believe. Here then we see the necessity and agency of faith in procuring reconciliation or atonement. They did not repent, because they did not believe that he brought them a command from God to repent. They did not believe him to be the Messiah as he claimed to be. That is, they rejected the ambassador whom God had sent. God was endeavoring through Christ to reconcile the world

to himself, when by wicked works they were enemies to him. He offered them forgiveness simply on the terms of repentance and reformation. All that was wanting on their part was faith. The immediate disciples became convinced, with one exception, and were reconciled to God.

But the generality of the nation rejected him as their Messiah, and began to look upon him with hatred, and were determined to rid themselves of him and ruin his cause in the very inception. They therefore conspired together by false charges to take away his life. He was tried, condemned and crucified near the walls of Jerusalem. But for what was he condemned? For adhering to the declaration that he was the Messiah. He was called before the council of the nation and solemnly interrogated by the high priest. "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ? And Jesus said, I am." Had he shrunk from that question and its consequences, there would have been an end of his religion and his mission. He died then a martyr to that one declaration, "I am the Christ," or Messiah. He sealed his mission, his embassy of repentance and reconciliation, with his blood. We have this affecting transaction described to us by the Evangelists in the most vivid and moving colors. And as we see him led forth to execution, and suspended on the cross, is there anything in it which would lead us to imagine that he, who hangs upon that cross, from the sixth hour to the ninth, bore all the punishment which was due to all the sins of all the millions of the human race from the foundation of the world till its

close? Such is the graphic power of the Evangelists that you cannot but place yourself in that cloud of witnesses to the crucifixion, and would it ever enter your mind, that that barbarous and cruel murder could be considered in the light of an acceptable sacrifice to God? Could those wicked hands who crucified and slew the meek and sinless Jesus, be offering up an acceptable sacrifice to the Father of infinite compassion? Could the Deity be more pleased with the race of mankind, when a portion of them had cruelly and unjustly put to death the most spotless being who had ever appeared on earth? These are speculations about which the Apostles are profoundly silent, and are added to the scene by the imaginations of later ages. But while the Evangelical narrative is entirely silent as to these supposed effects of the death of Christ, it does state effects, which have been of unspeakable moment in the great office of the Redeemer, the reconciliation of the world to God. It drew upon him the intense and breathless gaze of that generation and all succeeding times. God did not need to be reconciled to man,—to be changed, appeased and satisfied. But there was need that sinful man should be changed, and brought into such a state as that the spontaneous mercy of God might be consistently extended to him. “And I,” said he, “if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” Myriads of hearts have been touched and melted to contrition, and thus reconciled to God by that affecting spectacle. These few hours of suffering then, though they produced no effect on the Deity to make him more ready to pardon mankind, for “God is



love," did produce on mankind an immense, inestimable effect. The death of Christ was the mightiest agency ever brought to bear upon the human mind. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life." Lifted up upon the summit of Calvary, amid the multitudes of the Jewish nation assembled to keep the Passover, "a spectacle to angels and to men," his dying and convulsed lips which had preached so much, and preached so much in vain, addressed the world in more moving language than they had ever uttered before, "Be ye reconciled to God." So the Jewish malice, instead of destroying him and crushing his cause, fixed upon him the sympathies and the confidence of millions of hearts. It put his character to the highest test, and by the manner in which he went through it, displayed him to the world in such a character of superhuman dignity, devotedness and benevolence, as to make an irresistible impression upon the human mind in that and every succeeding age. Who then does not perceive, that this tremendous exhibition was intended to produce an impression on men and not on God? There was no need of an impression upon God to make him more merciful, for the very mission of Christ originated in love. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Now this was the very effect which his crucifixion had, to draw to him the attention and fix on him the belief of mankind, to lead them to accept the terms of repentance and reformation, which

it had been the labor of his ministry to offer and urge upon them. Thus it was that the sufferings and death of Christ took away the sins of men, in the only way in which they can be removed, by producing faith, repentance and reformation. Thus Christ suffered and died on account of the sins of mankind, because men were sinners, and to take away their sins, but did not suffer their penalty. Had he suffered the full penalty of all the sins of all mankind, then they must in justice have been discharged, whether they repented or not, and all the sufferings inflicted on men in consequence of sin, is exacting the penalty twice, a proceeding which does not very well agree with those sentiments of justice which God has implanted within us.

Besides, the death of Christ operated in another way to produce faith, repentance, and remission of sin. The manner of his death was public, witnessed by multitudes. It was officially procured and officially ascertained. His body was placed under a guard of soldiers, and watched in a sepulchre hewn out of solid rock. What circumstances could have been devised by divine wisdom to render the miracle of his resurrection more striking and convincing to the world? Thus it was, that the malice of the Jews prepared the way, in the most effectual manner, for God to place the grand seal of his authority on the mission of Christ, by raising him from the dead, in spite of all the powers of earth could do; and thus he "brought life and immortality to light" from the tomb, which since the creation had been a land of shadows, doubts and darkness. When, therefore, the angel came to roll away the stone from the

the door of the sepulchre, and thus open to man, to all future ages, an undying hope out of the very caverns of the grave, he found the way prepared, by all the attending circumstances of his death and burial, to spread the tidings far and wide, and call the nations from the death of sin to a life of holiness. Thus the malicious murder of Christ by the wise arrangement of Divine Providence, was made the most direct and efficacious means of promoting his cause, of reconciling the world to himself through Jesus Christ. These events did produce a sensation in the world which never was experienced before nor since, and which manifests itself in every page of the Acts of the Apostles. The accession of the Holy Spirit, or those miraculous powers which were bestowed upon the apostles, completed the evidence, and then men began to believe in great numbers, repented, reformed, "that they might not perish but have everlasting life." Thus, according to our text, God was in or through Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their trespasses, and thus was committed to the apostles the ministry of reconciliation; and they went every where, beseeching men in Christ's stead "be ye reconciled to God." And what was in fact their preaching? Hear Peter in one of his first discourses after the ascension. "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. Unto you first God having raised up his son Jesus, sent him to bless you"—how—not by pacifying the wrath of God, or suffering the penalty of sin, but "by turning away every one from his iniquities." What is the only condition upon which their sins should be blotted out?

“Repent and be converted,” or turned from your sins.

Such appears to us to be the plain, historic statement of the ministry, the sufferings, the death and resurrection of Jesus. These seem to us to be the real effects, which his death and the circumstances attending it, actually had in the world and upon mankind. And we can have no doubt that these things were so arranged by infinite wisdom, in order to produce these effects. His death was a part of the great scheme of his mission to reconcile man to God. As it is simply and beautifully expressed by Paul. “Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. This agrees, as we conceive, with our views of the atonement; that it consists in reconciling man to God, and not in reconciling God to man; not in suffering the punishment due to men’s sins, but in turning them away from their sins, and making them proper subjects of the mercy of God; not in purchasing God’s mercy, for that was infinite, free, and boundless before, or removing any impediment in him to its exercise, but in removing the only impediment, the impenitence of man.

Now let us consider the opposite doctrine.—“Christ,” say the Articles of the Church of England, “very God and very man; who truly suffered, was crucified, dead and buried, to reconcile his Father to us. “The offering of Christ once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual.” The Westminster

Confession says, "The Lord Jesus Christ by his perfect obedience, and sacrifice of himself, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in heaven for all those whom the Father hath given him."

It is argued in support of this doctrine of atonement, that God is infinitely just, and his infinite justice requires a full penalty of every sin before it is forgiven. We answer then, if the debt is fully paid by another, it is not forgiven, so far as God is concerned. It is discharged. There is no forgiveness at all. If God has never forgiven a sin without exacting the full penalty, then he has never exercised an act of mercy in his administration of the universe. Can an usurer ever be said to forgive a debt, when he always compels either the debtor, or some one else to pay the whole sum?

We reply moreover, that we know God is merciful, for he has declared it in his holy word from the foundation of the world. Hear his declaration to Moses. "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin." Shall not we believe God's declaration concerning himself? Shall we believe that his mercy endureth forever, or shall we believe that this was uttered with some mental reservation, that he is merciful only when his mercy is purchased with a full equivalent of suffering? Mercy in its very nature is a relaxation of strict justice, is a remission of its exact awards. He who says God is just, in that sense of tenaciously exacting all, denies his mercy, a still more precious attribute

of the Divine perfections. Besides, he denies the Scriptures, for they uniformly assert that God is merciful. But it is no imputation on his justice to say that he is merciful. Injustice is punishing the innocent, or punishing the guilty more than they deserve, or withholding a proper or a promised reward from the righteous or the meritorious. It would be unjust to exact the full amount of the penalty from the surety, and then cast the debtor into prison till he should pay over the whole amount himself. It would be unjust to exact, according to the creed, "a full satisfaction for all the sins of all mankind" from Christ, and then exact it again from them, by all the pains inflicted on sin in this world, and the world to come.

In the next place, it is urged that an infinite sacrifice was necessary for the honor of God's law; that forgiveness without a substitute would weaken its authority. But men must be careful that in honoring God's law, they do not dishonor him. To make this supposition, is to suppose that man was made for the law, and not the law made for man. This would suppose that the Divine government was like weak human governments, established merely to keep people in order, and not to consult their everlasting happiness. The honor of such a government would be like the laws of Draco, written in blood, decreeing one and the same punishment, death, to the smallest and greatest offences. A government without mercy is what is called on earth, the government of a tyrant. Such an administration as that, while it honored the law would dishonor God. The government of God is strictly parental. Oh! how

different it is from that stern, fierce and inexorable one, which this supposition would make it! "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, for he knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust." Oh! how different would such a God be from that Heavenly Father we have shown us by Christ in the parable of the prodigal son! There our Heavenly Father, under the character of the parent of the returning profligate, sees the sinner, while he is yet a great way off, and he "had compassion," spontaneous, not purchased, "and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." This was intended by Christ to shadow forth the Divine conduct towards sinners. But according to the hypothesis we are opposing, it is not according to the truth. To have been true to the fact, he should have made the father, before he would pardon and receive his son, have insisted that the other brother should first undergo all the punishment which the prodigal had deserved. On the contrary, you perceive, that he asks nothing more than true penitence and sincere reformation.

In the next place, this dogma of an infinite satisfaction is supported by the following argument. Every sin is an infinite evil, because it is committed against an infinite Being. It therefore, requires an infinite satisfaction. Christ was the only Person, who could make this satisfaction, because he is God and man in one Person. But this argument is lame in two respects. In the first place, if every sin of a finite Being is infinite because committed *against* an infinite Being; on just as sound reason is the atonement infinite, because

it is made *to* an infinite Being. If the act derive an infinite nature from the Being to whom it is done, instead of a finite nature from the agent, then the satisfaction will be infinite from the nature of the Being to whom it is rendered, though the agent who renders it be finite.

The other point in which this argument fails, is this. Christ made an infinite satisfaction by his sufferings and death, because he was an infinite Being, both God and man. But if you ask the advocates of this dogma, if they believe the Second Person of the Trinity suffered and died, they answer, "No: it would be blasphemous to suppose so." Then it follows that nothing but the man suffered. What then becomes of the infinite satisfaction? It goes out in mere words. It is asserted in form, and denied in fact. The Divine Person must have been withdrawn all that time to the ruin of this argument, and the contradiction of creeds and articles of faith which assert that the two natures were joined in one Person never to be divided. Besides the Second Person, being equal in every respect in the Godhead with the first, the sins of mankind doubtless being committed against the whole Deity, were as much against him as the Father, and if the Father were angry and required satisfaction, the Second Person must be so too, and likewise require satisfaction. But he could not make satisfaction to himself, though he might to the Father and the Holy Ghost. It follows then irresistibly that the Second Person never has been, and never can be satisfied. Such amazing inconsistencies men are led into by falling into the fundamental error,



that the atonement is the reconciliation of God to man, instead of man to God.

But it is said, that the death of Christ was intended to make a display to the universe of the infinite evil of sin, and the wrath of God against it. It would have been making light of it, to have pardoned it on any other ground without making this exhibition. In answer to this I would say, that I can conceive of no possible way in which the evil of sin could be made to appear so light. The evil of sin is the happiness it prevents or destroys among mankind, the degradation and misery to which it subjects the sinner. These are its natural effects according to the laws of nature and God. Its appropriate punishment is remorse of conscience, and outward inconvenience and suffering. Its only cure, true penitence and thorough reformation. One of its evils and punishments is the slow, painful, and difficult process, the disagreeable and nauseous remedies to which we must submit, in order to be cured of this loathsome disease that we have brought upon ourselves. This, to my mind, displays the evil of sin more impressively than anything else could do. And I will add, I know of no way in which this wide-spreading evil of sin could be so diminished, I had almost said annihilated in my view as to suppose that all this mighty connection between cause and effect, of sin and suffering could be arrested and broken off, and all the merited sufferings of the myriads of the human race be concentrated and expiated by the sufferings of a few hours, by the agonies of one death. Sin is not so great an evil if all its ill consequences can be so easily got

rid of. I might have said, according to the theory we are opposing, the agonies and death of one human being, for it is not pretended, or rather it is strenuously denied, that the Divine Nature, the Second Person of the Trinity suffered. He must have been, if he were God equal to the Father, at that very moment filling all space in a state of infinite happiness and bliss. All connection of Jesus with him then, if there were any sympathy between them, must have mitigated the sufferings of Jesus, instead of making them infinite. Besides, there were some circumstances in the death of Christ, though an exceeding painful and excruciating one, of alleviation, of comfort and support. "It was for the joy set before him that he endured the cross, despising the shame." Was there no consolation in the anticipation of this joy? He was not descending to a dark, a doubtful, or a fearful tomb. He knew that in three days, he should rise in glory, and ascend to that eternal joy which was set before him. His sufferings were not infinite in duration, nor could they have been in degree, because there was much to console him under them. To suppose then that these sufferings were equivalent to, and sufficient to cancel and do away, all the black crimes of all mankind in all ages, is to my mind to make light of sin, rather than impress the universe with its infinite evil and ill-desert. How much more impressive to witness in its endless manifestations, the inexorable law by which suffering is chained to sin in the sinner's own person, not to be broken, but by true contrition and real reformation.

Moreover, this whole hypothesis of satisfaction and

substitution is founded on an entire misapprehension of the nature of sin and guilt, responsibility and punishment. It supposes things, which are impossible in their own nature. It supposes sin, guilt, punishment, innocence and righteousness to be transferable; that men's sins, guilt, and punishment were transferred to Christ, and his innocence and righteousness transferred to them. Sin is a personal act, and cannot be transferred, any more than personal identity can be transferred. It cannot by any possibility become the act of one, who never participated in it. Until one man can become another, he never can be guilty of his sins. That it cannot be transferred, is made certain by the very nature of conscience. That another suffers for my sin cannot relieve my conscience. It is rather aggravated than relieved by the fact. The only thing that can relieve me, is to suffer the penalty myself, or sincere repentance and reformation. Punishment is any kind of penalty, pain, or suffering inflicted on a transgressor. Punishment can take place only when there is a consciousness of guilt. If inflicted where there is no consciousness of guilt, it is not punishment. It is injury, or injustice. Vicarious punishment is a contradiction in terms. One man can suffer in consequence of another's sin. But this does not take it away; it rather aggravates it. One man may suffer for another that is a sinner, in order to reform and save him. One brother may undergo much for another brother in order to bring him to repentance, reformation, and reconciliation to their common father. But unless he brings him to repentance and reformation, it

is all in vain. He cannot suffer in his stead, nor do anything to expiate his guilt. Unless the guilty man repents and reforms, his conscience is not cleansed. He must suffer. He cannot enjoy peace or comfort.

Here then we come back to the ground from which we started. The sufferings and death of Christ are availing to take away the sins of men, only so far as they lead men to repentance and reformation. To this agrees this declaration of the apostle Peter: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." What can being redeemed by the blood of Christ from their vain conversation, mean but being brought to repentance and reformation? There is no other deliverance from sin but by repentance and reformation. And we go further, and say, that without repentance and reformation, forgiveness can do little or no good. And here again we affirm that the theory of the atonement being the reconciliation of God to man, instead of man to God, utterly mistakes the nature of things.

Suppose a good father has a profligate son. He becomes alienated from his father, and wanders from his house. Some kind friend brings him home and tries to make a reconciliation or atonement between them. The father, in his great tenderness, forgives all that the son has done amiss. But the son is not sorry for what he has done. He has not reformed, but is as bad as ever. He is the same miserable, degraded, dissolute

being as before. He is just as unhappy, and just as much the cause of unhappiness to his father. Of what use then is it to reconcile the father to him? Of no use whatever. The son must be reconciled to the father by repentance and reformation in order to have their reconciliation of any avail. The father was always ready to be reconciled whenever he saw a true and real amendment in the son. The mutual friend, in order to have his interposition of any avail, must persuade the son to reform; then he will be in deed and in truth the minister of reconciliation. Here then we see from the very nature of things, that Christ did not die to reconcile God to men, but to reconcile men to God, and his interposition is available only so far and to so many as he brings to repentance.

But it is said, God could not and would not pardon men, even when they had repented and reformed, without inflicting their proper penalty and punishment, on a substitute, or a third person. We answer, that this is a mere assertion without a shadow of proof. He who says that, might as well make any other assertion whatever. It is a libel on the character of God. What human parent was ever so inexorable and hardhearted as never to forgive one of his children when he asked his pardon with penitence and tears, until he had inflicted the full punishment on another of his children?

Besides, it is expressly contradicted by innumerable declarations of Scripture. "When he was a great way off, his Father saw him, and had compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." "And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both."

“If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you.” “If thy brother sin against thee, and turn again and say, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.” “How often,” asks one of his disciples, “until seven times?” He answers, “Until seventy times seven.” And shall God, who commands us to imitate him in his clemency and kindness, command us to forgive our brother until seventy times seven, on mere repentance and asking forgiveness, and shall he not forgive us once? “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God for he will abundantly pardon.” “Thou art a God,” said Nehemiah, “ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.” Are these the representations of a Being whose mercy must be purchased by the sufferings of an innocent person, or of one whose nature is all love and benevolence? And as to how far sacrifices propitiate his favor, hear the Psalmist. “For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart thou wilt not despise.” Do not say then, that the mercy of such a Being must be purchased by what my soul abhors to name, a human sacrifice.

But it may be urged, that Christ is said to have given himself a ransom for sinners. We believe it in the only sense which the assertion will bear. A literal ransom is given by one person to another for something received. In a literal ransom, things change owners. But here there is no such transaction, no such parties.

Christ was not given up to, and retained by any being or party in whose hands sinners were, and who then gave them up. It was not then a literal ransom. He was a ransom in the figurative sense of a deliverance, by laying down his life to redeem men from all iniquity. So God in Scripture is said to have ransomed the Israelites from Egypt, meaning not that he paid a price for them, but merely delivered them. So when he brought them back from the Babylonish captivity, Jeremiah declares, that "the Lord has redeemed Jacob and ransomed Israel."

The same observations are applicable to the phrase, "ye are bought with a price." There was no being whose property they were who could receive the price. The meaning is evidently the same as when it is elsewhere said that Christians "were redeemed from their vain conversation by the precious blood of Christ," that is, his death was a means of bringing them to repentance.

I have now finished the discussion, and I leave it with the candid judgments of all who hear me to say, which of these views of the atonement is most agreeable to the nature of things, the eternal laws of personal responsibility, and the representations of the Scriptures, that which makes it to consist in reconciling God to men, in purchasing his favor, or that which makes it to consist in reconciling man to God by bringing him to repentance and reformation, and thus making him a fit subject for the divine clemency. As to the doctrine of imputed righteousness, and the common form of praying to be accepted through the merits of Christ, I mere-

ly ask you to examine your Bibles, and see if there be such a prayer or such a sentiment in them. And when you are satisfied that it is a human invention, I would have you turn to what is there. "He that hath done good shall rise to the resurrection of life, and he that hath done evil, to the resurrection\* of condemnation."

I have merely to add, that the doctrine of atonement or reconciliation, is a practical doctrine, and one of immense importance to every one who hears me this night. It is not so much a matter of speculation as it is of feeling, of individual experience. You all know, every man may know, whether he is reconciled to God or not, whether he has sincerely repented and reformed, whether he has peace with God and a conscience cleansed by true contrition, whether he is living a life of obedience or of recklessness and sin. If he is living a penitent, obedient life, he is in a state of atonement, he is at one with God. But if not, be assured there is no speculation, there is no imputed righteousness that will save you or give you rest. We then, as the ambassadors for Christ, as though God did through us beseech you, we entreat you, be ye reconciled to God.



## LECTURE V.

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### ORIGINAL SIN.

EZEKIEL, XVIII. 20.

“THE SOUL THAT SINNETH, IT SHALL DIE. THE SON SHALL NOT BEAR THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHER, NEITHER SHALL THE FATHER BEAR THE INIQUITY OF THE SON: THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS SHALL BE UPON HIM, AND THE WICKEDNESS OF THE WICKED SHALL BE UPON HIM.

“ORIGINAL sin,” say the articles of the Church of England, “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, so that the flesh always lusted contrary to the spirit, and, therefore, in every person born into the world, it deserveth God’s wrath and damnation.”

It is expressed more strongly and broadly in the Westminster Catechism. “The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself but for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression. The sinfulness of that state, whereinto man fell, consists, in the guilt of Adam’s first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his

whole nature, which is commonly called original sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it. All mankind by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and the pains of hell forever."

It is not too much to say of this doctrine, that it shrouds the universe in gloom. It represents the myriads of the human race to be created at the very commencement of their existence, heirs of hell, and the torments of the damned. And as a full half of the human race die in infancy and childhood, this world is a mere nursery for the regions of woe, where the young plants of immortal existence spring up only to be removed to the dreary plains of endless sorrow; earth is only the vestibule, the entrance to the chambers of eternal death. The whole race of mankind are born under God's wrath and curse, grow worse and worse while they live, and finally sink down, with few exceptions, to inconceivable and eternal sufferings; and all this, not for what they have done, for any guilt or fault of their own, but in punishment of a sin, in which they did not participate, and of which they are entirely innocent, committed ages ago by a remote ancestor. He, who can look in the face of an infant in all its loveliness, and helplessness, and feel his heart yearn at the slightest accident which gives it pain, and believe this, must attribute to his Maker a character of infinite atrocity instead of mercy. Should you see a human parent torturing his children to death as soon as they were born, could you ever look on him with any other feeling than that of hor-

ror and detestation? So it seems to me, that any man who believes that God sends to eternal torments, myriads of the infants that are born into the world, can never worship him from any other motive than the most abject and degrading fear.

In the first place we remark, that the doctrine of original sin is incredible, because it involves the highest injustice on the part of God. If it be true, then there is an end of all religion. Religious affections towards God are founded on a belief of his moral perfection. The evidence of his moral perfection is found in what he does. And if he has done that which clearly contradicts all our ideas of justice, it is impossible for us to regard him as just, or to worship and love him as such.

That the condemnation of mankind to endless misery on account of Adam's sin, would be unjust, is a proposition so plain, that it only requires to be stated to strike the intuitive sense of justice, which God has implanted in every bosom. It is so plain that no reasoning can make it plainer. It only admits of illustration by parallel cases.

Suppose a law should be enacted, whereby it was decreed, that not only every thief should be imprisoned for life, but his children as soon as they were born, to the remotest generation, should be imprisoned likewise; would not such a law be considered unjust? But how infinitely less unjust than the condemnation of children for the sin of a remote ancestor, to interminable torments? Suppose it should be decreed that every murderer should not only be hung himself, but that all his descendants to the end of time should have their eyes

put out as soon as they were born? Could such a law as that be tolerated for a moment? Would not a legislature which could enact such a law be thought worthy of the eternal execration of mankind? And yet the injustice of such a law would be trifling, compared with that of dooming them to everlasting woe, instead of depriving them of one of their senses. It is to be borne in mind, likewise, that the effect of Adam's sin is two-fold. Its guilt is not only immediately imputed to his posterity, so that they are born under God's wrath and curse, but the same death in sin and corrupted nature is conveyed to his posterity, "whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil."

After this, when men are "*disabled*" to all good, and made incapable of doing anything good, then a law is proposed to them, not one article of which they can keep or perform, any more than the blind can see, or the lame can walk, and God punishes them for disobedience by all the pains that are consequent on sin in this world, and in the world to come. Such a complication of injustice as this far transcends all human conception; it exceeds all the injustice, which has been committed in all the tyrannies that have existed since the commencement of time. We say, therefore, that there must be some mistake here, some grand defect, either in the premises, or the reasonings by which such a doctrine is deduced from them.

I cannot doubt, that many pious and good men have thought themselves compelled by sufficient evidence to receive this doctrine as true, and doubtless, have con-

sidered it useful, to break down and subdue the stubborn heart of sinful man. But I say, at the same time, that I know no doctrine, which to me seems more calculated to vitiate and destroy all true piety to God and charity to man—to corrupt the moral sense and harden the heart.

I will only add to this part of the subject the candid confession of one of the most learned of Orthodox commentators on the New Testament who are now alive, Professor Stuart of Andover. "Those," says he, "who hold this theory usually maintain, that our depravity is not only connate, that is, born with us, but in us, innate, and that being such, it is also the punishment of Adam's sin which is imputed to us. There are some very formidable difficulties in the way of this. For the sin in this case of Adam's posterity, that is, their original sin, is by the very ground of the theory, merely imputed, not real and actual. But what is the punishment, actual to be sure, according to the statement of those, who advocate this theory, and actual indeed in a tremendous degree. The punishment begins with our being, it is born in us, and with us, and contains within itself not only the commencement of a misery, which is naturally without end, but is at the same time the root and ground of all other sins, which we commit, and which serve unspeakably to augment our condemnation and misery. Now can the human mind well conceive, that perfect justice would punish with actual and everlasting and inevitable corruption, and ruin, and misery, beings who are sinners only by imputation, i. e. by mere supposition, and not in fact? For myself," he contin-

ues, "I can only say that all the elements of my moral nature set themselves in array against such a representation as this. It is one of those cases which make it necessary for me to be made over again, and have new and different faculties, before I can admit its truth." To this we most heartily say, Amen. He goes on to add, "can it be brought in any tolerable measure to accord with the views which the Bible gives of divine justice? How can we make it to harmonize with the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel." "But this is not all. The supposition inverts the order of nature and providence. According to the tenor of it, punishment begins before the crime. It begins before distinct perception, and understanding, and reason, and moral sense are developed. It begins antecedent to all sense of duty, and antecedent to all moral rule. Such punishment, therefore, precedes the transgression, for where there is no law, there is no transgression, and surely there is no law where there is no moral sense or reason, nor understanding, nor perception. But how can justice make punishment precede transgression? 'The soul that sinneth shall die,' is the order in which Heaven has placed the matter. Sin comes first, punishment is the fruit or consequence. By the theory before us the reverse is the case." Such is the language which the elements of that nature which God has given us begin to extort from the sternest sect of the followers of Calvin in this country.

There seems to be something peculiarly hard in the arrangement that the imputation and consequences of Adam's sin should fall upon his posterity. If there

were any system of imputation which would stand the test of reason, it would be precisely the reverse of this. The sins of Adam's posterity might be visited on him with something like justice, since he, according to this system, was the real cause of them all. But we go on to say, that imputed guilt and substituted punishment, are in their own nature impossible, and a contradiction in terms. Punishment, in the proper sense of the term, can be inflicted only on the guilty. Inflicted on any one else, it is not punishment, but injustice, cruelty. What would be the feeling of the soul of an infant which had lived but a few days, when it should awake for the first time to a consciousness of being in the flames of hell, and it was told that it was the punishment of Adam's sin, which it was suffering; would conscience, would reason recognize the justice of such a doom, would not the sense of injustice and tyranny, unspeakable and inconceivable, predominate even over the sense of suffering and anguish forever and ever?

But it is said, that Adam was the federal head and representative of the human race, and therefore his fall necessarily involved all his offspring, and therefore it was just for God to bring the consequences of his fall upon all his offspring. We answer, that this does not relieve the difficulty in the least. It was no less injustice to suspend the eternal condition of millions on the choice of one man in one moment of his life. There must have been a peculiar relation between Adam and his posterity, which does not exist between men in after periods and their children. It is not pretended that children are at this period of the world accountable for

the acts of their parents. Why should the children of Adam have been? There was certainly no natural tendency in the nature of Adam's sin to produce any physical change for the worse. There is no reason to suppose that the eating of the forbidden fruit would deteriorate and pollute the physical constitution any more than any other kind of food. The injury, therefore, must have been mental entirely, and therefore it could not be transmitted. All souls come from God, and they have precisely that constitution which he is pleased to give them. It follows then that the sin of Adam entirely changed the Divine determination with regard to the moral nature with which he was to bring his posterity into existence. Had he not sinned, God would have brought them into being entirely pure, under his favour, instead of under his wrath. Adam did not create his own children, nor could he have the least agency in giving this or that moral constitution to their souls. Is it at all credible that God should have suspended his own action upon the choice of Adam?

A more awful consequence follows immediately after this. It follows that on this act of Adam depended the determination of God to make the immortal souls of the myriads of the human race in such a manner as to be the objects of his love and favour, or of his immediate hatred, wrath and damnation. So the Deity is represented as having settled the doom of mankind by an event, which, so far as they were concerned, was merely fortuitous, as if by the turn of a die. A proceeding more entirely arbitrary and cruel I confess myself unable to conceive.



We object to this theory, in the next place, that it makes the present condition of man, considered as a state of trial, a mere mockery. He has been entirely incapacitated for a state of trial by the fault of his first parents. If all man's moral constitution is so perverted as to be disabled from all good, and inclined to all evil, is there any fairness in his trial? Supposing a man's salvation were to be suspended on his abstinence from stimulating drinks, would it be just to create within him such a morbid thirst as is produced by long habits of intemperance, which at length gives a bias to the will so strong as almost to destroy all freedom and accountableness? That freedom, which accountableness acquires, demands that the scales should be hung equally balanced. A heavy weight thrown on one side entirely destroys all honesty and fairness in whatever is submitted to the trial.

If the doctrine of original sin be true, then is there no fairness in man's trial here below. All the commands of God's law are addressed to a being as incapable of performing them as a dead man to rise out of his grave. All the promises of God's word are insincere, that is, addressed to a being as incapable of performing the conditions, as he is of creating a world. And what is more practical injustice, we are punished just as much as if we had a fair trial. We are deprived of all that good, which we might have attained had our natures been created pure. Our consciences reproach us for all the ill we do, and make us just as miserable, as if we were not radically and constitutionally inclined to all evil, and disabled to any good. We are like a

diseased man in some awful dream. We see and feel the ruin that is coming upon us, and are filled with horror, but still we have no power to resist or avert it. Conscience bears a false testimony, and reproaches us for doing evil, when we had no power to do otherwise.

But there seems to be much more made of the fall than the Scriptures will bear out. Let us examine the record. "And the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Now is there one word of a covenant in all this? Is there any assent of Adam spoken of? There is a command on the part of God and also a threat, but no trace of a covenant of works, as has been deduced from it in later ages. Is there one word said of Adam's being the federal head of his posterity, or of their fate being involved in what he did? Is it not all personal to himself? So far from Adam's covenanting to act for his posterity, there is not one word said of it, nor is it even intimated that he was apprised of the fact. Indeed as to any posterity, it is difficult for us to conceive how such an idea could have entered into his mind; for it is not till the next verse that we read of the creation of woman.

Let us now consider what is meant by the threat "thou shalt surely die." Are we to interpret this literally? Is it probable that God would suspend his existence upon his obedience, and determine for this one

offence to destroy the work of his own hands, which he had so lately created? Is it not more probable that in relating this, Moses uses the language of his own period. And what is that language? Hear the language of this same Moses to the Israelites. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life that both thou and thy seed may live." Now is it not evident, that life and death here mean the same thing as blessing and cursing, that is prosperity and happiness, or adversity and suffering? So in the chapter we read this evening from Ezekiel, is it not evident that the threat of death means calamity, all the evils which are consequent upon sin, not the bare event of death itself. For that, in God's real providence, of which these promises and threatenings are the mere announcement, is only a remote, not an immediate consequence. God does not put every sinner immediately to death, for in so doing he would extinguish the race at once. It would give them no fair trial, to make their existence to depend on one act. God gives men, he gave these very Israelites, whom he threatened, the discipline of a whole life. Have we not then every reason to suppose that Moses uses language in the same sense in speaking of God's threatening to Adam; that it was a general and not a specific threat? We are compelled to adopt this meaning if we would not accuse the Deity of insincerity. For we find that he did not put an end to Adam's existence on the very day he sinned. If we would maintain the integrity of the character of God for consistency, sincerity, and veracity, we must consid-

er that the general threat of death, or whatever threat Moses intended to say God pronounced to Adam, meant just what evil God afterwards really inflicted upon him. And what was that evil? Expulsion from Paradise, where everything grew spontaneously, into the world which required cultivation.

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee, saying, then shalt thou not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground, for out of it wast thou taken, for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.” “Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception. In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children. And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall have rule over thee.” Here then are detailed and enumerated all the consequences and penalties of the first transgression. And what are they? “Cursed be” not thou, but “the ground, for thy sake.” Thou shalt labor for thy bread all thy life, (then he was to have had a life at any rate,) till thou return to the dust out of which thou wert taken.

Adam's mortality is usually ascribed to his sin. But even this dogma is not borne out by this enumeration of the penalties of the first transgression. The reason for it given here is, that man is made of dust. “*For* dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” He is

to die, not because he had sinned, but because he was made with a frail, perishable body. His sole penalty was to labor while he lived.

The woman was to be subjected to her husband, and to suffer the pains and cares of bearing children. Is there one penalty here, we would earnestly ask, of a moral nature? Is it not all purely physical? Is there any intimation of such an amazing change of their own moral constitution for the worse? Does God say one word of any great moral change in the natural character and constitution of their offspring in consequence of this one act of disobedience? Is there one word said of them and their offspring being indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is good, and wholly inclined to all evil? How do men dare to interpolate such a horrid doctrine into the word of God out of their own invention, without the support of one word or syllable in it? If this doctrine is true, God did not tell man the true penalty, neither the truth, nor the whole truth, nor a hundredth part of the truth. 'To have told the whole truth, according to this hypothesis, he should have said. "Because ye have done this, cursed be that moral nature which I have given you. Henceforth such is the change I make in your natures, that ye shall be, and your offspring, infinitely odious and hateful in my sight. The moment their souls shall go forth from my forming hand, so detestable will they be in my sight, that I will plunge them instantly into the eternal fires of hell, or if they are suffered to live, such shall be the diseased constitution of their moral natures, that they shall have no freedom to do one single good action, but

everything they do shall be sin, till death lands them with their infant brethren in the regions of woe, unless it may be a few, whom I will choose, and renovate and change their natures by my own almighty power." What an awful blot would such a curse and doom have been upon the first pages of the Bible! Such a blot do they put there, who have pretended to draw such a doctrine from the first chapters of Genesis. There is not the least hint in these chapters that Adam sustained a greater moral change by his first sin, than any other accountable being, or that the moral constitution of his offspring was any more affected by that sin than any subsequent one, or the offspring of any other man by any other sin. The trial was not a moral one, so far as the essential character of the act was concerned. I mean by this, the act was evil not from its own nature, but merely from being prohibited. It had no tendency to degrade and vitiate his character any further than as a simple act of disobedience. It was not like intemperance or passion, which, besides being prohibited, are evils in themselves, and debase and injure the moral nature. Its penalty was not moral, but physical, did not touch the soul but only man's outward condition.

And here we cannot but pause to ask, if there does not appear to have been a great deal of romancing upon the wonderfully advantageous condition in which Adam was created, when compared with any of his posterity? For my own part, I never could perceive that he had any other distinction besides that of being the first man and the first sinner. We are told indeed,

by Creeds and Catechisms, that he was created with "knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness." But these ideas are derived from any source rather than the sacred record. It seems more likely that his condition, so far as his intellectual and moral nature was concerned, was rather that of childhood. With the exception of ferocity and depravity, his condition is more likely to have resembled that of the naked savage, than any other of which we can conceive. Without experience, without traditional knowledge, without arts or science, what could his condition have been, but that of a mere animal, or rather, an infant with the powers of rationality only, but without the full development of reason. Knowledge comes by time, and the use of the senses, observation and reflection. Righteousness is right conduct, according to a rule. How can a man acquire righteousness before he has acted in correspondence to a rule? Holiness is freedom from sin, when the power of sinning is possessed. How then could he be superabundantly either righteous or holy, who sinned and fell the very first opportunity, in the first trial to which he was subjected?

But it is concluded that he was peculiarly formed in holiness and righteousness, because he is said to have been made in the image of God. It is said that this image was a moral likeness, and that sin destroyed this image. It is quite as likely that this image of God means the intellectual as the moral nature, that which gives him a dominion over the creatures. For in the first place, neither man nor any other being can be made with any positive moral qualities. He may have

capacities. But capacities are neither holy nor unholy, till they have been exercised rightly or wrongly. Holiness and righteousness, as well as sin, cannot, in the nature of things, précède moral action. In the second place, the image of God could not mean moral character, because, according to the theory we are opposing, that image must have been lost at the fall. And long after the fall, we find God forbidding murder on this ground, that man is made in the image of God. If innocence and righteousness constituted that image, then after the fall that reason ceased to exist. It was no worse to kill a man than a beast, so far as that reason was concerned, that he was made in the image of God.

Where then is the ground for supposing the great superiority of Adam to his posterity? Has not that very labor to which he was condemned, been the means of perfecting his nature, and cultivating all his virtues? Is not industry the frame-work of all there is great and good in man? Consider the state of those nations whose condition approaches nearest to that of Adam in ease and abundance, compared with those who are nearest to his state when driven from Paradise into a bleak and barren world. Who does not know, that the balance of intellectual and moral perfection, happiness and virtue, is altogether on the side of the laborious, the sufferers from this very curse of eating bread by the sweat of the face? Compare with theirs the condition of a pair at the present degenerate day commencing life together. Let them have been educated in all that the experience and ingenuity of man have accumulated, of wisdom, of moral and intellectual dis-



cipline. Let them have even a moderate share of the conveniences and comforts of life, let them have the endearments of society, the delights of literature, and the daily gratification of learning what is going on in this wide world. Would they consider it a great elevation, privilege, and exaltation to be transported to some solitary island, though filled with all that is represented to have blessed and adorned the garden of Eden? Just commensurate with that exaltation was the fall of Adam, according to the sacred record. When you come to strip this transaction of the coloring which imagination has thrown over it, there is nothing in the state of Adam in comparison with ours to envy, with the exception of his innocence, and that he lost quite as soon after his creation, as man ordinarily does in the state of infancy and childhood.

The very trial, to which he is represented as having been subjected, is one suited rather to a being in infantile weakness and imbecility, than a state of strength, of maturity, and enlarged intellectual action.

But it is urged, that the actual corruption of mankind proves their original corruption, the corruption of their nature. How happens it, that all sin as soon as they have an opportunity? There must have been an evil inclination, which preceded the first act. That evil inclination was original sin. If actual sin proves an evil inclination, and an evil inclination proves original sin, a constitutional, inherent defect, then Adam never fell at all, for he too, must have been created with original sin. If the first sin in every human being proves a corrupt nature, so the first sin in Adam proved a cor-

rupt nature in him. And if his first sin is consistent with original innocence, so is the first sin of every one of his descendants. If there is necessity to suppose original corruption in order to account for our first transgression, so there is just as much necessity to suppose original corruption in Adam. And if this original corruption and fault of nature deserves God's wrath and curse in us, before moral action, it must likewise have deserved it in him before his fall. Besides, those who hold this doctrine, likewise believe that there is a class of fallen angels, with Satan at their head, who were once innocent, but rebelled, and sinned against God. Now if sin proves original disposition, and corruption of nature, as is alleged in man, and if this disposition and corruption of nature before any actual sin deserves God's wrath and damnation, as is said in the case of man, then the angels who really fell, must have deserved damnation ages before they did anything amiss. If it is possible to account for the first sin of the fallen angels without original corruption, then it is just as easy to account for the first sin of every human being without original sin.

But it may be asked, is it not according to the analogy of God's actual dealings with men, that all mankind should be in worse outward condition, and have a more depraved disposition in consequence of Adam's sin? Do we not see the outward condition of children made worse by the vices of their parents? Do we not see them inherit bad dispositions and vicious propensities from their parents? Do not we see them sinners apparently because their parents were? Hear what

God says on this subject, in the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel. He denies that there is any effect of this kind, which affects moral agency. He says what must be true, that the vices of parents have the nature of warnings as well as evil examples. "Now lo, if he beget a son that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth and doeth not such like, he shall not die for the iniquity of his father." "Yet ye say, why, doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Here is an explicit denial, both of the doctrine of original sin, and of that close connection between the character of the father and the character of the son, which is asserted in the doctrine of original sin. We see it in the world. There is the utmost variety of character, even among members of the same family, the children of the same parents, and having the same example and education.

But do not children suffer from their connection with bad parents? We answer, yes. But this is not peculiar to the relation of parents and children. We are liable to suffer morally and physically from our connection with every one with whom we associate. We are liable to be corrupted, or robbed, or deceived, or murdered even, by a perfect stranger. The good or evil we receive from our parents is greater than any other,

because with them we have a closer, more important and lasting connection. As we are free beings, both parents and children, we could not receive the good without being exposed to the evil. On the whole, the good preponderates, both in that and in every other relation. That evil should be admitted into it, is no more strange than that it should have been admitted into the universe at all. And men, Christ has told us, are accountable, not for what they have not, but for what they have. God is not a hard master, reaping where he has not sown, requiring the full tale of brick, and withholding the straw. The circumstances of every human being are diverse from those of every other human being, the talents and opportunities different. One of these circumstances is the moral qualities of our parents, and those diversities of disposition and temperament, if any such there be, which we have inherited from them. And if the representations of the Scripture are true, they will all be taken into account by a righteous God, in the judgment of each.

And here we are led to remark, that the doctrine of original sin, while it reflects the highest dishonor on the character of God, and adds gloom to our conceptions of the miserable condition of man under such a government, and is apparently intended to humble mankind, in fact annihilates human guilt : together. The more depraved man's nature is by an agency not his own, the less to blame is he for doing wrong. A man who is famishing is less to blame for stealing than one whose appetite is fully supplied. So if God creates men devils, he cannot expect anything from them but the ac-

tions and characters of devils. He cannot create a bramble and then expect from it grapes or figs. He cannot create a tiger and then punish it because it does not behave with the gentleness of a lamb. He cannot create a fish with a nature to swim in the sea, and then punish it because it does not walk upon the shore. He cannot make an animal with a violent antipathy to water, "disabled, disinclined and made opposite" to it, and altogether inclined to live on land, and then punish it for not diving into the ocean. God expects all creatures to act according to their natures, or he would not have given them such natures. He would have given them natures best calculated for that action which best pleases him. The nature he gives them is the strongest possible indication of his design, and the purpose for which they are made. God creates us as really through our parents as he did Adam without parents. And we have just the constitution and nature which he designed, as much as he had. If sin be the only, the necessary, the natural action of our constitution, or of that combination of powers which God has given us, then sin is the natural use and exercise of all our faculties, and must be presumed to be the end for which they were made. Sin is then the natural use, not the perversion, of our powers. Sin then is no longer sin. Virtue would be a perversion, would be sin. The very essence of sin is, that it is a perversion of our nature and powers from the end and use for which they were designed, to something else. The end of a thing cannot possibly be other than the only end which it is made capable of attaining. Then if sin be the only thing which man by his natural

powers can do, sin is the end for which he is made. Virtue cannot be the end for which man is made, if he is made naturally utterly incapable of virtue. So this system, in its zeal to break man down and humble him under a sense of his sin, overshoots its mark, proves too much, defeats its own object, and makes man no sinner at all. For the power to do right is necessary to the guilt of doing wrong. The power to obey is indispensable to the moral turpitude of disobedience. All guilt supposes choice of evil when good was in our power. If good is not within our choice, then the very condition is taken away which constitutes any act sin. Accountability and power, according to the eternal laws of justice and the nature of things, must be always precisely commensurate with each other. To suppose that God made man for virtue, and gave him such a constitution that its natural spontaneous and necessary fruit and action is vice, is a contradiction in terms. Man's nature, the nature of every individual born into the world, is given him by God. The parents are merely the instruments in his hands. If he chooses to work with vitiated, imperfect instruments, so as to vitiate and ruin the nature and constitution of the being he creates, so that it naturally and necessarily goes wrong forever, then it is an act of his sovereign pleasure, perfectly arbitrary if the being be incapable of suffering from going wrong, and perfectly unjust, tyrannical and cruel, if he be capable of misery.

But it may here be asked, how happens it that man is a sinner? Why, if man be created innocent and pure, does it happen that every man violates the laws

of God? I can give no better answer to this, than the account which the Westminster divines have given of the causes of Adam's first sin. "Our First Parents," say they, with great simplicity, "being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the state wherein they were created, by sinning against God." So we say of all their offspring, being left to the freedom of their own will, they fall from the state wherein they were created by sinning against God. If then we have no need of going further back with the parents why is there with their offspring?

The capacity, the possibility of sin, and temptations to it, are involved as necessary to the very state of probation and trial. Without this possibility, capacity, temptation, there could be no virtue, no merit, no reward. There must, in order to a fair trial, be a balance in the mind between temptation, and reason and conscience, such as that the will may turn it either way. It is to be supposed, is it not, that man would sometimes do wrong as well as right? He has a constitution, all the parts of which minister to his happiness if rightly used. But everything is capable of abuse. Pleasure may be sought in violation of the moral sense. Of course sin and ultimate unhappiness is the result. But that very misery is calculated to cure the sin, and teach us to avoid it in future, so that even retributory suffering is not pure, unmingled evil. Though nauseous, it is medicinal, and tends to restore moral health.

It only remains to examine the few, very few, passages of Scripture, in which it is thought that this doctrine is taught. We have seen that original sin is not

taught either expressly or by implication in Genesis. Neither man's mortality, nor the sinfulness of his offspring is there made the penalty of his sin. We do not deny that the Jews, in after ages, invented these and many other fictions concerning the fall, as for instance the devil's animating and speaking through the serpent, and that these superstitions are alluded to by Christ and his apostles in the New Testament, in illustration of the Gospel. But we do say, that they were never expressly taught by them as a part of the Christian scheme. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, makes use of this superstition to illustrate his own argument, and reasons with them upon the supposition of its truth. But so did Christ speak of an unclean spirit, when it was cast out of a man, walking through dry places and finding no rest, all which is taken from the Rabbinical fables of that period. Paul uses the *argumentum ad hominem*, as it is called, uses an argument well calculated to strike the Jews, but which when reduced to the strict rules of logic, would not be conclusive to us: "As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." Now it is not pretended that Christ is the absolute author of immortality to man, but that he made it known and proved it by his resurrection. There is no more reason to suppose that the mortality of mankind is any more nearly connected with Adam, except the derivation of a mortal nature from him. It has been translated, with good reason, "As like Adam all die, so like Christ shall all be made alive." Doctrines may be referred to, nay, assumed as true for the sake of illustration, without affirming their truth. That strict argu-



ment is not intended, but illustration, we learn from the nature of the comparison. "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead." Now those who maintain original sin, do not believe that the resurrection of Christ produced the immortality of man, but only made it certain. He was the first who rose. The looseness of the argument does not require that Adam should have produced the death of his descendants, but only death came by him in such a sense that he was the first mortal, and his posterity inherit from him a nature subject to mortality.

"And were by nature children of wrath, even as others." Examine your Bibles and you will find that the apostle is not here speaking of the moral condition in which men are born in contrast with any possible state of innocence in which they might have been created, but is contrasting their present state of Christian purity with their former licentious practical conduct, in their heathen and unconverted state, surrounded as they were by bad example and manifold corruption. "And you hath he quickened who were dead"—not in original sin but "in trespasses and sins" of their own. "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience. Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were naturally," as it might be more accurately rendered, that is from the circumstances in which we were

placed, "were naturally children of wrath," that is exposed to sin, and the sufferings that flow from it.

A full explanation of this passage is immediately at hand. Paul uses the same word in the same connection in a case in which we know he means outward circumstances and not constitution. He uses it of those things in which a Jew differs from a Gentile, which cannot be by constitution. In his rebuke to Peter, he says, "If thou being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews, who are Jews *by nature* and not sinners of the Gentiles." A Jew by nature is a human being who has received a Jewish education, and a sinner by nature is one who has been educated by wicked people. Nature does not mean constitution in either case, but outward circumstances, and if so, this passage does not teach the doctrine of original sin at all.

To this passage we would oppose the unequivocal declarations of Christ concerning infants. "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." "Unless ye repent, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God." That is, that infants are in a state which fits them for the kingdom of heaven. But if this doctrine be true, then when men have come back to the condition of children, so far from being fit for heaven, they deserve God's wrath, curse, and damnation, for the very qualities which he hath given them.

We would oppose to this doctrine, what is said in the book of Jonah concerning the infants in the city of

Nineveh. "Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city," said God, "wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left?" If the doctrine of original sin be true, then these children could have been no obstacle, for if they deserved God's wrath and damnation, temporal destruction must have been but a light thing for them to endure.

We would oppose to this doctrine the declaration of Solomon, concerning the rectitude of man's moral constitution. "God hath made man upright," or rather right, "but they," not Adam, "have sought out many inventions." What does this assert, but that God has made human nature right and good, and that the natural action of all its parts is good, and that evil is an invention, a perversion of the action of that nature, and a constraint from that course which it is constituted to pursue. If the doctrine we are opposing be true, the very reverse of this is the fact, that God makes men wrong, and wrong is their natural and spontaneous action. The invention, the perversion would be to do right. But what is still more extravagant, of this invention they are made utterly incapable.

Such are the arguments on which the doctrine of original sin rests, and such are the reasons why we reject it. Let each one judge of them by the light of his own understanding.

## LECTURE VI.

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### TOTAL DEPRAVITY.

ACTS X. 34.

“THEN PETER OPENED HIS MOUTH AND SAID, 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.”

PETER, as you recollect, was led to make this remark, by the fact that Cornelius, a Gentile, had received a peculiar mark of God's favor and approbation. God had said to him in a vision, “Cornelius, thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.” This, to Peter, was utterly astonishing, bound up as he was in his narrow Jewish prejudices, and conceiving that no one but a Jew could be saved. “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.” This declaration of Peter seems to my mind to assert the general truth, that every human being in all nations and ages is in a state of moral probation, has some knowledge of God, or of some superhuman Power, and is capable of acting with reference to that power, of fearing God in the sense of

exercising towards him the sentiments of piety and reverence, has the capacity of distinguishing right from wrong, and of choosing right, and of doing all which is comprehended in working righteousness; and that on account of that righteousness he may be acceptable to God. I know of no words that Peter could have used which would have expressed these propositions more plainly and unequivocally.

But in opposition to this it is maintained in most of the Creeds and Catechisms of modern times, that man in the state in which God creates him, that is in his natural state, has no power to do anything of all this. It is said that he is totally depraved. It is said in the eighteenth Article of the Creed of the Church of England: "They are to be had accursed that presume to say that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law and the light of nature."

The tenth Article of that Creed is this: "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; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God without the grace of God, by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will." Article thirteenth, "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God; forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, yea rather, for that they are not done as God

hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."

The Westminster Confession, which is the Creed of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, thus states the doctrine: "Man in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well pleasing to God. Man by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation, so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself or prepare himself thereto."

It is thus expressed in the Creed which the Professors of one of our Theological Seminaries are obliged to subscribe every five years: "By nature every man is personally depraved, destitute of holiness, unlike and opposed to God, and previously to the renewing agency of the Divine Spirit, all his moral actions are adverse to the character and glory of God, being morally incapable of recovering the image of his Creator, which was lost in Adam, every man is justly exposed to damnation."

Edwards, one of the most received theological writers of this country, says on this subject: "So long as men are in their natural state, they not only have no good thing, but it is impossible that they should ever have or do any good thing." "Man's nature is wholly infected with this enmity against God. Every faculty and principle of action is wholly under the dominion of enmity against God. Every faculty is entirely and perfectly subdued under it, and enslaved by it. The un-

derstanding is under the reigning power of this enmity. The will is wholly under the reigning power of it. All the affections are governed by enmity against God; there is not one affection, nor one desire, that a natural man has, or that he is ever stirred up to act from, but what contains in it enmity against God. A natural man is all full of enmity against God, as any viper or venomous beast is full of poison." "Hanging by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing around, ready every moment to burn it asunder, you have nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you can do to induce God to spare you one moment."

I submit it to the judgments of all who hear me, if these statements do not bear the marks of the wildest extravagance and exaggeration? Are they not more like the raving and hyperbolic expressions of a man in a passion, or suffering some violent affection of the mind, than of a calm intellect expressing the result of a candid and impartial examination. To my mind this might seem a true picture of a devil, but not of those men and women we meet with in common life. And when we reflect that these assertions are made to conform to an arbitrary system of theology, a mere hypothesis concerning Adam's fall, it is almost impossible to restrain our indignation against the authors of such rash assertions, which reflect equal dishonor upon God and man.

The first remark we make upon this doctrine is, that if it be true, man is not, in his natural state, in a con-

dition of fair probation, nor indeed of probation at all. This appears on the very face of the doctrine itself. "Man in his state of innocency had power to will and to do that which is good and well pleasing to God. Man by his fall into a state of sin hath wholly lost all ability of will to any good accompanying salvation." Now to put a person in a condition of fair moral trial, according to those ideas of justice which God has made a part of our natures, he must have precisely what Adam is represented to have possessed in the state of innocence, power to will and to do that which is good and well pleasing to God. If in consequence of Adam's sin, God brings all his posterity into existence destitute of this power, then they are not in a state of moral probation. It being impossible for them to will or to do anything pleasing to God, they of course can do nothing acceptable to him. All the difference then that can be between one of their actions and another is, that it is more or less criminal. Until by miraculous agency this inability is removed, there is no power to will or do right, and where there is no power, there can be no fair trial, and no just responsibility.

Calvin, the great author and patron of this system in modern times, has the hardihood to deny this consequence. He says, "The necessity of sin does not render man the less accountable for it, nor make it the less proper that he should be charged with it; and on the other hand, its being voluntary is no proof that it could be avoided. Exhortations, admonitions, and exhortations are not administered to no purpose, though it be not in the power of man to obey. We



are not to infer from the commands of God, that man has any power of observing them. Conditional promises do not imply that man has the free power of doing that upon which the promise is suspended, and God is not chargeable with mocking our impotence, when he invites us to deserve his favor, though he knows our utter inability to do it."

All we have to say of such assertions as this is, that they do infinite and indelible dishonor both to the head and the heart of him who made them, and could only have originated in those dark, iron and ferocious ages when might was the only source of right, and all human government was a tissue of cruelty and oppression. We say, that were this doctrine true, it would uproot and destroy all the foundations of religion, and end in a cold and cheerless fatalism. All religious affections are founded on the supposition of God's moral perfections. They are founded upon the supposition that he is infinitely good and just. These qualities are essential to the very nature of God as an object of religious regard. Take them away, and we no longer have any God. We have a Being at the head of the universe, but a God no longer. Suppose him to require what men cannot perform, and then to punish them for not performing it, and we have the very essence of tyranny. All motive for moral action is taken away, and all ground for religious affection. We read of some savage nations who pay divine honors to the Spirit of Evil that he may not hurt them. And when you have clothed the Sovereign of the Universe with the attributes of the Spirit of Evil, there remains but one motive for

worshipping him, and that is the motive of abject fear.

But where did Calvin and the Westminster divines, and the framers of the articles of the Church of England, get the knowledge of this tremendous fact, that every action of every human being in the world is sin, and unpleasing and unacceptable to the Deity, with the exception of a few, whose natures he has changed? It is a hypothesis drawn from another hypothesis. It is founded upon the supposition that the children of Adam are brought into being with different moral faculties from those, which he had. Adam, they say, before his fall had power to will and to do that which is pleasant and acceptable to God. But his children are differently constituted. What proof have we of this, except the bare assertion of these men? It is not found in the original record, nor in any part of the Scriptures. The superstitious Jews went so far as to assert that man was mortal in consequence of Adam's sin, but they never said that all his actions were sin on that account. This is a pure invention of modern days.

It is attempted to be deduced from the account which is given of the flood. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way."

With regard to this representation, we remark, that it is made with respect to one period remarkable for its wickedness, so as to be miraculously punished. Is it fair to make this exception the general rule, and make

all mankind as wicked as those, whom God declared to be peculiarly wicked? Would it be just in a father to say of his son, that he was totally corrupt, because he had just done something amiss and been punished for it? But it is said, there is a term of positive universality used, "every imagination of his heart." But go on a little further, and you will learn how to interpret terms of apparent universality. "All flesh had corrupted his way." But Noah and his family had not. "All flesh" then is not strictly universal. Why then should "every imagination be?" If there were some, who had not corrupted themselves, then in spite of this universality there might have been some imaginations in men's hearts which were not evil. Besides, such unmixed wickedness as literal universality would here assert, is entirely inconsistent with the existence of society or of mankind at all. Sin is a disease of the body politic, which like natural diseases cannot go beyond a certain point without producing dissolution and death. And in society, this point is reached far short of total corruption, and I believe, even before the evil becomes more in amount than the good. A family can live together till they arrive at a certain pitch of depravity, and then they will either exterminate each other, or separate. There must be more truth than falsehood, or all intercourse must cease. There must be more industry than idleness, or men would starve. There must be more conjugal faithfulness than infidelity, or marriages would cease. There must be more parental love and care, than parental hatred and abandonment, or the race would become extinct. A community to-

tally and thoroughly depraved, could not exist a single year.

Besides, it is here said, that "all flesh had *corrupted* his way." Could that be said of beings totally depraved by nature from the very beginning of the race? Must there not have been something good to have corrupted? All then that we can infer from this passage is, that that generation of men were very wicked. It does not assert the doctrine of total depravity at all. And whatever inferences may be drawn from it are as much against this doctrine as for it.

The declaration that all men had corrupted their way, except one family which had remained pure, implies not total native depravity, but its opposite, that they all began existence innocent and pure, and might have continued so, as that one family did. Their corruption was not native, but induced by their own voluntary agency, was not a corruption of *nature*, but a corruption of *practice*.

Another proof text of this doctrine is taken from the confession of David, after those two horrid crimes, which cast such a dark shade over his, otherwise, so exalted character. "Behold," he says, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Does not every one discover in this exclamation, the poetic exaggeration of deep and passionate grief? Do we not perceive the same play of an excited imagination, which elsewhere declares, "Behold thou hast made my days as an handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee?" It is evidently not the purpose of David to palliate, but rather to exaggerate his crime. It is an

expression of his great guilt, wrung from him by his deep penitence. On the other supposition it would rather be offering an excuse, than which nothing could be further from his intention. The fact, that this passage has been drawn into the service, so entirely foreign to the subject, having so little relation to mankind at large, is sufficient evidence how few arguments can be brought from Scripture in favor of this hypothesis.

Other passages have been cited from the writings of Paul, such as this. "They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." But what is Paul attempting to prove? Not anything with regard to man's natural state, but as he says a few verses before: "We have proved both Jews and Gentiles to be under sin," that is, all stand in need of the Gospel, because all are sinful, not totally depraved. These passages are quoted by Paul from David, and by David they were used concerning his enemies and wicked men generally. You perceive then, that this awful and revolting doctrine of total depravity, and the inability of man to will or to do anything good and acceptable to God entirely fails of support, both from the Scriptural account of the fall of man, and from those separate passages, which have been alleged to prove it. It therefore falls to the ground. And for my own part, I can scarce conceive a better refutation of it than the fact that men have suffered themselves to be insulted with it so often and so long, that they have submitted to hear themselves abused and vilified by worms no better than themselves, so patiently and with so little resentment.

The doctrine of total depravity is a mere hypothesis, a mere assertion, which dishonors God, and destroys the foundations of religion. It degrades man and takes away all ground of just responsibility. We assert and believe, on the contrary, that every human being, who is complete, in all his natural faculties, is in a state of probation, that he has naturally, as the advocates of the other system describe Adam to have had, freedom to will and to do that which is well pleasing to God. That the only restraint which is ever put upon man's will to prevent him from doing the will of God, is that of evil habit, which he brings upon himself by his own abuse of his freedom. We believe that the infant comes from the hand of its Creator pure from moral stain. It is innocent, though without personal merit. There are none of its powers and faculties which are not necessary to its well being, or whose natural operation is evil. We believe that God has given to every son and daughter of Adam a law in the sense of right and wrong, which he has implanted within them; that they have the power, and moreover the consciousness of the power to choose between them; and on this sense of power is founded the jurisdiction, and the retribution of conscience. That every moral act of every human being has an effect on his whole future being, for better or worse. We believe that this internal law has more or less light from without, according to circumstances, and like the other powers of man it is capable of more or less improvement. In the darkness of barbarity and heathenism, it has the least opportunity of improvement, and in a community thoroughly imbued with the

light and practice of Christianity, the greatest. And we believe, that in a future world every one will be judged according to his character and actions, compared with his opportunities.

Now we ask, which of these methods of divine government seems most to bear the stamp of truth? There are four sources of evidence on this subject,—reason, conscience, observation, and the word of God. In the first place, which seems the most reasonable? Does it commend itself as probable that God would create this world as the first stage of man's existence, a scene of preparation for eternity, and withhold the very power, that of willing and doing good, which alone can render this stage of existence of any use to him? Is it not manifestly inconsistent to say that God has created this as a state of probation to man, and places him in it destitute of that very power which makes him capable of probation, that of willing and choosing right as well as wrong? According to this theory, the character which a state of probation is intended to give man the opportunity of forming by his own voluntary actions, is already formed and fixed by the agency of another. His trial is already over before it is begun. His character is already fixed before he has done a single intelligent, voluntary action. Shall God make man for virtue, and then withhold from him those very powers which render virtue and happiness possible and attainable? The tender care of God for man is manifested in ten thousand ways, in the bounties of nature, in the changes of the seasons, in the beauty and grandeur he has poured over all his works, in the relations of society and do-

mestic life, in the power of recovery from sickness and misfortune. But his happiness depends much more upon his power to do right. There is an order of nature, according to which if he regulate his conduct, a harmony arises which contributes infinitely more to his happiness, than all the richness and variety of nature. That course of conduct is what the understanding perceives as right. Can we ever believe that God has created in the moral nature of man such a repugnance to that right, such an opposition to it, that the soul never chooses it till its own nature is miraculously changed? Such a supposition, while it attributes to God the greatest care of man in little things, imputes to him an entire disregard to his higher interests. Is there any reasonableness in supposing that God would suspend the power of millions of the human race of choosing to do right, a circumstance infinitely more important to their well-being than any other, on a solitary act of a remote ancestor?

But it is said that God miraculously bestows it on some; or rather restores the power to choose that which is good and pleasing to him, to a few. We answer, this only increases the difficulty. The first supposition makes God infinitely unjust. This adds the most revolting partiality. It is utterly impossible from the very nature of the case, that one should merit his regard more than another, for it is impossible, previous to this miraculous change, for any one to will or to do anything pleasing to God. The selection then must be perfectly arbitrary. Would not that human parent be rendered infamous who should load a part of his chil-



dren with boundless favors, and condemn the rest to want, and vice, and misery, during their whole lives?

But it may be asked, is it not according to the analogy of the present life? We answer, no. Neither virtue nor happiness is the exclusive privilege of any outward condition. Besides, the inequalities of this state of trial may be made up in a state of retribution. Whereas, the distinction between having and not having the power of doing right and what is acceptable to God, is final and eternal. Its effects commence at once, and are in their own nature endless and hopeless. To deny the justice and impartiality of the Deity, is to deny his moral perfections. To deny his moral perfections, overthrows all religion, and rendering utterly uncertain the principles of the Divine Government, makes all attention to the subject a mere waste of time. We simply ask you, is the doctrine of total depravity reasonable?

Our next source of evidence is consciousness, the moral nature of man. This is a source of evidence of which every one can judge by examining his own mind and consulting his past experience. What is the moral nature of man? It is the faculty which the rational soul possesses, not possessed by the brutes, of perceiving right and wrong, good and evil, and the feeling, the consciousness of power to choose between them. On the conviction and consciousness of possessing these two powers of perceiving and choosing, is founded a third attribute, a sense of merit, worth and desert; or of guilt, blame and self-reproach. I appeal to all who hear me, to say if they do not recognize in themselves

all these powers and faculties, and an exercise of them such as I have described. I now ask if you ever felt such an impotence of will toward that which your understanding perceived to be right that it was impossible for you to choose it? If you had felt thus utterly disabled, as much so as a man in a palsy is to walk, would your conscience afterwards reproach you for not doing what at the time you felt it to be impossible for you to do? Are the agonies of remorse at all mitigated by any consciousness of inability to do what we knew was right? According to this system, the inability existed, nay, was absolutely invincible. Conscience then is a stupendous lie. Remorse is a wanton, unjust, unmerited cruelty. The whole moral nature of man is one vast system of barbarous deception. Man is made wretched by a feeling of liberty which he does not possess. He is just as miserable as if the cause of his wrong doing were in himself, whereas in fact it was in Adam thousands of years ago. But who is the author of this moral nature? God. By whose arrangement is it that we have this consciousness of power and feeling of remorse? God's. Then it follows that millions of the human race are undergoing the torments of remorse, for that for which they are not at all to blame, by the ordination of God. Does not every principle of reason and every sentiment of piety revolt from such a supposition?

Is it not evident then, that the moral nature of man is constructed upon the supposition that he is in that state by nature, in which the Westminster divines have described Adam as having been created, with freedom and power to will and to do that which is good, and

well pleasing to God? Which then shall we believe, our own moral nature, and God speaking through it, or shall we believe arbitrary systems of visionary men, founded on a few insulated and doubtful texts of Scripture?

The doctrine of total depravity, in the sense of inability to choose right in preference to wrong, is contradicted by consciousness, the highest source of evidence we possess. However often then it may be asserted, it is impossible that it should ever be understandingly believed.

The third source of evidence which I mentioned, is observation of the sentiments and conduct of mankind, and the course of Divine Providence. We now ask, if either of these give any countenance to the dogma, that man has not the power to will and to do any good?

We will first examine the sentiments of mankind with regard to each other. They are constantly passing judgment upon each other's characters and actions. They are continually praising one kind of actions, which they denominate good, and blaming another class of actions which they denominate bad. This is universal all over the world. It extends to every human being, and to every action, which has a moral character. How happens it that there are good actions and good men all over the world, if man is incapable of willing or doing anything that is good? How do men perform that which this theory supposes them incapable of performing? Men certainly are not apt to judge too charitably of each other; and according to this theory, being disabled from all good, and wholly inclined to all evil,

they must be disposed to harsh, unjust, and uncharitable judging, among other sins; how happens it, that men in judging of each other admit of good as well as bad actions, good as well as bad men? They not only judge so, but they reward, by all means in their power, those actions and characters, which they judge to be good? If this theory be true, then they labor under a total mistake. Everything is bad which is done by every human being, with the exception of a very few, and their good deeds are not their own, in any sense meriting a reward.

What is the supposition upon which all human laws are founded, and the rewards and punishments which are thereby dealt out to mankind? Upon no other certainly, than that men are free to choose good as well as evil. If men are incapable of doing good, and can do nothing but evil, then human laws are unjust, and founded on a false supposition. But are not human sentiments and feelings, human laws and institutions, the ordinances of God; and are not they the means he uses to exercise his moral government; are they not indeed a part of that government? Is it not exercised without regard to the giving or withholding any miraculous power, is it not exercised over man in his natural state? But this is all wrong and unjust, if man be not free to choose good as well as evil.

The languages of mankind are the best index both of their sentiments and of what really exists. Men always find words to express what they think, and feel, and discover. Men in all ages and nations have felt themselves to be free, therefore they have had words to

express that freedom. They have felt approbation and disapprobation, both for their own deeds and those of others. Some things they have called virtue, and other things they have called vice. If there were no such thing as virtue, where could such a word come from? But it is found in all languages. Is it not unaccountable that all nations should have made the same mistake, and invented a word for that which does not exist? The best ethical definition of virtue which has ever been given, was made by a heathen philosopher more than two thousand years ago. He said it was "the habit of that which is right." Now how could he define so accurately that, which not only he had never seen, but had never existed?

We have now finished this part of the discussion, with the exception of a few quibbles upon words, with which questions of this kind are always infested. It may be said, that what is called virtue among men is not good nor acceptable in the sight of God. If you please to limit and define that, which is good and acceptable to God, to be what is done by certain persons in certain circumstances, and having passed through certain undefinable supernatural changes, then every petty sect on earth, may limit what is pleasing to God to their own little circle. So might a literary sectarian and fanatic define intellect to be that mental power, which was possessed by the inhabitants of a certain street of a particular city, and say, that all the intellect of the rest of the world was only called intellect, but was not really such.

How then shall we know what is good and accepta-

ble to God? I will tell you in a few words. Not from the definitions of cold-blooded metaphysicians, who would cut the world up to make it correspond to the lines and angles of their own theories, and consign four-fifths of the human race to endless misery, merely to make out a favorite hypothesis. That is good and acceptable to God, which the understanding perceives to be right, which conscience approves, which the moral sentiments of mankind sanction, and which the providence of God rewards. That is good and acceptable to God, which any moral agent does in obedience to the highest law which God has given him, be that law that sense of right and wrong which God has given to all, or education, the moral sentiments of the community, or revelation.

Industry is good and acceptable to God. How do we know this? Because the understanding perceives it to be right, conscience approves it, the moral sentiments of mankind sanction it, and the providence of God rewards it. Truth is good and acceptable to God. How do we know this? Because the understanding perceives it to be right, the conscience approves it, the moral sentiments of mankind sanction it, and the providence of God rewards it. Repentance is good and acceptable to God. How do we know this? Because the understanding perceives it to be right, the conscience approves it, the moral sentiments of mankind sanction it, and the providence of God rewards it.

“But you are disparaging the gospel,” I hear one exclaim. “You are undervaluing the atonement, and the necessity of the imputed righteousness of Christ,”

cries another. "You are preaching mere morality, and making it possible that the heathen may be saved," says a third. I answer that I am vindicating the character of God from the most shocking imputations. I am vindicating him from the aspersion of being a Jewish, narrow, sectarian God, and making him, as he is, the God, and Father, and moral Governor of all mankind. I am making him just such a God as he is represented to be in our text. "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."

But it is said, you make men to get to heaven by their own merits. I answer, it is not true. It must be through the mercy of God, for all have sinned and come short. But I say likewise, what the Scriptures say, that every man shall be judged according to the deeds done in the body.

If it be meant that man in his natural state can do nothing good and acceptable to God in the sense of doing nothing perfectly and absolutely good, then I assent to it. But I say also, that this is equally true of the most perfect of the saints in light. There is some mixture of imperfection in the best deeds of the best. There is every variety of motive, and consequently of merit, in the virtuous acts of accountable beings, from the lowest, abject fear, to the most exalted, spontaneous preference for that which is good and delight in doing it.

The last appeal we shall make to observation is this, and it seems to be decisive of the whole question. Is

there in the mind of man a preference of wrong over right, of evil over good, when other things are all equal? I say nothing of the relative amount of good or bad actions in the world, I merely ask whether, when a man thinks he can attain the same amount of pleasure, or whatever else he seeks, by either a bad or a good action, he uniformly chooses the bad? If he chooses evil for its own sake, always and in all circumstances, then he is totally depraved. Is the prevailing character of the species pure malignity, then man is averse to all good, and only inclined to all evil. To me this seems a description of a devil and not of a man, even the worst. I do not think it is a pleasure to any man to do violence to his moral sense. I believe that men naturally love to see others do what is right and just, and take pleasure in doing it themselves. There is in man a natural love for what is just and right, which is gratified by doing right, precisely as any of the appetites or passions is gratified by enjoying its appropriate object. How then, it may be asked, does it happen that there is such a vast amount of sin in the world? How happens it that man sins at all? We answer, it is because the desires and passions are blind, have no discernment of morality or immorality in their objects. That which gives them pleasure seems to them good, without regard to its moral character. Sinful actions then are done, not because they are sin, but because they are pleasure—not from any love to sin as sin, nor from any desire to injure others, or to defy God, but from an eager though mistaken desire of happiness. Conscience, or the moral sense, that is, the perception



of right and the desire to do it, is given us to regulate the action of the desires and passions, to direct them to proper, and call them off from improper objects. And the trial of man is which he shall obey. Sometimes one gets the mastery and sometimes the other. This, if I mistake not, is the account which Paul gives of himself, even after his conversion. "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members."

We now come to the fourth and last source of evidence that man has power to do that which is good and acceptable to God, and that all men are in a state of moral probation,—the sacred Scriptures.

All the commands of God are so many evidences of man's power to will and to do what is pleasing to him. For if man have not this power, one of these consequences will follow, either that God commands what man has not the power to perform, which renders the command nugatory, vain, and a cruel mockery of man's imbecility, or that he commands that which, when performed, is not good and acceptable to him.

All the promises of God are evidences that man has the power to will and to do that which is good and acceptable to God. "The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him." But according to this theory man is incapable of having any righteousness, or doing anything that is right. Is it said that man's righteousness is so imperfect that it is no righteousness at all? Then it will follow that God has promised to accept that

which is unacceptable, and calls that righteousness which is not righteousness, a direct and plain contradiction in terms.

All the threatenings of God's word are so many evidences of man's power to will and to do that which is good and well pleasing to God. If all man's doings must of necessity be evil and sinful, from the very constitution which God has given him, can the Deity be represented in a more unworthy light, than as threatening man for doing that which he cannot avoid doing? Is it not adding insult to injury, first to bind man in adamant chains, and then threaten him with whips and scorpions, because he does not rise up and walk?

Besides, the Scriptures expressly inform us that, "Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord." He who had received and improved the two talents was welcomed, inasmuch as he had been faithful over a few things, into the joy of his Lord. "Know ye not, that to whom ye *yield* yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." "God who will render unto every man according to his deeds; to them, who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to the

Jew first, *and also to the Gentile.* For there is no respect of persons with God.”

“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 to themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts in the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.” “Many,” said our Saviour, seeing the faith of a heathen centurion, “shall come from the north, and from the south, and from the east, and from the west, and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.” “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.”

You perceive then upon what venerable heads the curse of the authors of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England must rest, even those of Christ and his apostles, for denying total depravity, and asserting that every man shall be judged according to that law which God has given him, and be saved, receive of God “eternal life” even though a “Gentile,” a heathen, if he have conformed his life to its requisitions, if he have, “by patient continuance in well doing, sought for glory, honor and immortality.”

You have now before you the evidence for and against the doctrine of Total Depravity. I leave it in your hands to judge, each one for himself, whether it be probable or improbable, true or false.

## LECTURE VII.

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### ELECTION AND REPROBATION.

ROMANS, VIII. 28, 29, 30.

“AND WE KNOW THAT ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD TO THEM THAT LOVE GOD, TO THEM WHO ARE THE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE. FOR WHOM HE DID FOREKNOW, HE ALSO DID PREDESTINATE TO BE CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON, THAT HE MIGHT BE THE FIRST BORN AMONG MANY BRETHREN. MORE-OVER, WHOM HE DID PREDESTINATE, THEM HE ALSO CALLED; AND WHOM HE CALLED, THEM HE ALSO JUSTIFIED; AND WHOM, HE JUSTIFIED, THEM HE ALSO GLORIFIED.”

THE doctrine of predestination, or election and reprobation is thus declared in the Seventeenth Article of the creed of the Church of England. “Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation, those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honor. Wherefore they, which he endued with so excellent a benefit of God, he called according to God’s purpose by his Spirit, working in due season; they through grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like

the image of his only begotten son Jesus Christ : they walk religiously in good works ; and at length by God's mercy they attain to everlasting felicity.

“As the godly consideration of predestination and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God ; so, for curious and carnal persons lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of most unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.”

The Westminster Confession is somewhat more bold and unscrupulous in its statement of the doctrine of election, and shrinks not likewise from its counterpart and consequence, the doctrine of reprobation. “By the decree of God for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated to everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death. These angels and men thus predestinated and fore-ordained are particularly and unchangeably designed ; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the

foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace. The rest of mankind, God was pleased according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.”

I presume to say, there is not one who has listened to this statement, every feeling of whose moral nature has not been shocked, and pained, and outraged by this most revolting doctrine. No words can describe the loathing I feel, for a dogma so slanderous to the moral character and government of God. The ancient doctrine of fate was mild and amiable when compared to it. And they, who endeavor to fasten it upon the Bible, are endeavoring to hang a mill-stone on the whole cause of religion.

What I wish you to notice at the very commencement of the discussion, is the wide difference there is between the apostle's doctrine of election, and that we have read from the creeds of men, you will observe, that the creeds put many things into it, which the apostle leaves out, and thus change the complexion of the whole doctrine. The creeds connect with it the dog-

ma of the fall of man, his being born under the wrath and curse of God, in the state of damnation by nature, entirely disabled from doing the will of God, and, without miraculous aid, inevitably doomed to eternal misery, being without freedom of the will to choose between good and evil; as having no power, no opportunity of salvation. Of all this, the apostle's doctrine of election is profoundly silent. Not a hint does he drop of man's being by nature in a state of inevitable damnation, or that he is not free to choose between good and evil. The creeds connect it with the dogma of miraculous, irresistible spiritual influences, whereby, not only power to choose good, not possessed before, is conferred, but the volition to choose good is absolutely produced; thereby making any reward or good consequences, which follow this miraculously produced volition and choice, as arbitrary and undeserved, as the privations and sufferings of the non-elect are unmerited. The apostle asserts no such thing. He says not one word of the conversion to Christianity of those whom he addresses as elected, by any supernatural influence bestowed on those individuals, and withheld from others who heard the Gospel at the same time.

Now to my mind, the creeds, by adding these other dogmas, man's inability, and his being necessarily and naturally in a state of damnation, and his being converted by irresistible power, have entirely changed the doctrine of election, as stated by Paul, and make it another and a new doctrine altogether. What then does Paul assert? What is he treating of in this chapter, and in this epistle? Certainly not of personal election. He

is speaking of the rejection of the Jews by God, and the adoption of Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, to be his chosen, that is, his elected people. He tells Christians that they are the chosen people of God, to whom he had sent the Gospel. This he considers to be a great privilege and blessing, as it was the design of God through the Gospel to make them holy and happy. "And," says he, "you ought to take comfort from these considerations even in your afflictions, and not sink under them, for to true Christians they are the means of promoting the very purpose for which they are called to be Christians. Holiness and sanctification are the ends aimed at both by giving you the Gospel, and sending you afflictions. It is no token of God's displeasure, nor ought it to discourage you. For why did God determine in his providence that you should have the Gospel preached to you?" That to "foreknow" means the determination of God that the Gospel shall be preached to a people, you may learn to demonstration in the beginning of the eleventh chapter of this Epistle. Speaking of the Jews, who were about to be rejected and destroyed, he says: "Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew," that is, the Christian community to whom through the Gospel he was to make himself known, and whom he thus should take into a peculiar relation to himself. As the rejection of the Jews was not personal, nor had immediate respect to their eternal condition, so neither had the reception of the Christians in their place respect immediately to their personal salvation.



As there might be some or many Jews after they were rejected as a nation, who might be saved personally, so there might be among those who were elected, that is the Christian community which he took in their stead, some, or many persons who might not be personally saved. God, you perceive, foreknew the Christians as a people, not as individuals, just as he rejected the Jews, not as individuals but as a nation. Taking this sense of "foreknow," which the apostle has given himself as the true sense, the meaning of the whole passage will be this. "Take courage under your sufferings, for they shall promote your spiritual good. They indeed coincide with the very purpose of the Gospel. For what was the design of God in determining to give you the Gospel? It was with the determination or the design that you should be conformed to the image of his Son, that is, that you should be holy and virtuous, if you improve your privileges. Whom he thus designed to be good and holy he called, that is, so ordered in his providence that the Gospel should be preached to them, and the overtures of the Gospel made to them. And those whom he called he justified, or more literally made righteous." And this clause, permit me to remark, opens the cause of all the difficulty that has ever been made from this passage. All the trouble and dispute to which this portion of Scripture has given rise, has sprung from straining to the letter of logical exactness, words which were written loosely and in popular language. "Those whom he called he justified or made righteous." Now this was literally not a fact. All were called, in a literal sense, to whom the Gospel was

preached. But were all who heard the Gospel justified and made righteous? By no means. Some rejected it, and received no benefit from it. It evidently means, some of them, or many of them, who were called were justified, that is, all who chose to obey. If all who were called were not justified, then it follows that all who were foreknown were not justified. Where then is personal election? For this is the very thing on which the whole question turns. If the identical persons are not meant in each step, if those who were justified did not embrace all who were called, then it will follow that the predetermination extended no further than calling. The number predestinated, does not correspond to the number actually justified or made holy. Then it follows that the justified, though they belong to the called, do not embrace them all. All the predestination there is then, goes no further than we before found it from other reasons, to the enjoyment of the spiritual privileges of the Gospel, the means of salvation which it affords. This inaccuracy of language, this speaking of all who were called as having obeyed, when in fact but a part did, this speaking, as if complying with the call were the necessary and invariable result of being called, shows us that the language is popular, and loose, and should put us on our guard against building important doctrines on it as if it were a cautious, logical and intended statement of a particular truth. The advocates therefore of the doctrine of unconditional election have attempted to cover up this weak part of the argument by making that definite and particular, which the apostle has left indefinite and general, and

have supplied a word here, which is not found nor intimated in the original text. They put in the word *effectual*, which alters the whole complexion of the passage. All are justified who are *effectually* called. Now what right have they to interpolate a word in this manner, and thus make the apostle assert a doctrine which his own words do not assert, and which probably never came into his mind? As it stands, without this word, *effectual*, it does not express the doctrine of personal election, because if we interpret language by facts, all were not justified who were called, that is to whom the Gospel was preached, it will follow that though all were called who were foreknown or predetermined to be, yet all were not justified who were called, and so fore-ordination in this sense will not embrace the same persons as justification, and therefore personal election falls to the ground. To remedy this, they put a restriction where the apostle has put none, and say that calling does not mean calling unless it be *effectual* calling. It is unaccountable to see what liberties men will take with the Scriptures in order to sustain a favorite hypothesis.

I now return to the apostle's argument. "Those whom he justified he glorified." Fear not, says he, in your troubles, they shall promote that very spiritual benefit which the dealings of God with you as Christians are intended to produce and secure. If God predetermined to send the Gospel to you, it was with the design that you should be conformed to the moral image of his son. In pursuance of this design he actually sent the Gospel to be preached among you. The effect of

that is, to make those who are called, that is of course as many as choose to accept, righteous, good, holy, and prepared for glory. It is not the purpose of the apostle to assert the doctrine of personal election. It is entirely foreign to the subject on which he is treating. His design is to show the subordination and subserviency of each step in God's dealings with them as Christians to the great end and result of holiness and glory. The certainty of any individual's attaining this result, is nowhere expressed or implied, for it is not even hinted at in the whole discourse. This would depend on each individual's own free and voluntary choice. It is not to declare that any particular individual would infallibly do this, but merely God made such arrangements in his providence that he might. It was his design in the Gospel dispensation that these successive processes should be gone through by those who enjoy it. For he adds immediately after, "He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, shall he not with him freely give us all things?" That is, shall he not make all things, that is all outward things, work together for our good, even our afflictions, since he has given his Son to suffer so much on our account? Nothing shall be wanting on his part, provided, as is always understood in Scripture, we are faithful to him and to ourselves.

To what then does Paul's doctrine of election amount? To this, that God predetermined to reject the Jews and to choose the Christians, that is, those who believed in Christ, for his people, who should enjoy the advantages of a revelation; that it was with a

design that those who enjoyed this revelation, should become assimilated in character to Christ. In pursuance of this plan the Gospel was preached, and men were invited, as it is elsewhere expressed, "into his kingdom and glory." Those who obeyed the call, were by the moral means of the Gospel, made holy, and accepted, and glorified by God. Is there anything here said of the natural and moral inability of man, and his being in a state, by nature, of inevitable damnation? Is there anything said of election causing any individual to embrace the Gospel, or does the election which Paul speaks of merely give him the opportunity? Is the reason why calling is effectual in some, ascribed to the immediate operation of God's irresistible power or Spirit on the mind of man, or is there not one word said about it, and we are left to conclude that it is the free will of man, as in other cases, which determines his choice? In short, is the predetermination of God represented as the cause why any one individual accepts the Gospel, or is God's reprobation represented as the cause, instead of the consequence, of any man's rejecting the Gospel?

These differences separate this doctrine of election as stated by Paul, and that which is fabricated in Creeds and Catechisms, as far as the east is from the west. One supposes man to be in a state of freedom. The other supposes him chained to the rock of destiny, and there tantalized and scourged with the utmost cruelty and barbarity. The one represents him as the subject of a just retribution. The other makes him to be rewarded without merit and punished without guilt. The one represents one man as raised by the inscrutable

providence of God above another in point of privileges, which he may improve or abuse, but for which he is strictly accountable. The other represents one man as raised from a state of perdition, in which he was involved by an agency not his own, by the arbitrary choice of God to a state of eternal happiness, and another, just as deserving, left to sink in eternal perdition, without ever having had the opportunity, by possessing freedom of the will, to do anything for his own deliverance. We reject then, with horror, the election of Creeds and Catechisms, and hold only to that of the apostles.

Now we ask, which of these doctrines of election is most analogous to the common providence of God? We see a system of election going on continually around us. We see men placed by what appears to us to be the arbitrary appointment or choice of God in every possible variety of condition. We see those conditions apparently exerting an influence upon their moral characters, so that as far as appears to us, a man's virtuous or vicious character is the natural result or effect of the circumstances in which he is placed, and yet we never say, that such a man is elected to be virtuous or vicious. And why do we not? In the first place, because it would be making impious imputations on God. And in the second place, because we do not apprehend sin in any situation to be strictly necessary and unavoidable. We do not feel nor believe that the will of man is merely mechanical, operated upon irresistibly by outward circumstances. We feel and believe that it has an independent action by which it may

resist outward influences. We see too, that character has not this invariable and mechanical correspondence with outward condition; that different individuals in precisely the same circumstances, as far as human penetration can perceive, act differently, form different characters, and that it is impossible to tell beforehand, what that character will be. One person is elected to have good and pious parents, another to derive his existence from the vicious and irreligious, and though it cannot be denied, that as far as we can see, the child of good and religious parents has a better opportunity than the child of the vicious and irreligious, still we recognize no necessary and inevitable connection between any outward circumstances and any character, either good or bad, because we do not see in fact any such necessary and inevitable connection. We see the children of good parents turn out badly, and the children of bad parents turn out well. We feel in ourselves, we perceive that the integrity of the moral government of God requires, that there should be a sense of right and wrong within us, and a power to act according to it, compared with which outward circumstances are but as the small dust of the balance. That God makes great disparity in men's outward condition, no one can deny, or wishes to deny. That he does this by arbitrary election is equally certain. To this kind of election, the terms of the Catechisms may be applied with certainty and perfect truth. God has chosen individuals to particular conditions, "without any regard or foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the

creature moving him thereto." This is perfectly consistent with his moral character. Nay, we believe, that it is in mercy that he appoints in a great measure, the outward condition of mankind. As it is necessary to the good of the whole, that different individuals should have different stations and capacities, so it is equally for their good that God should choose the individuals. Were it all left to man, this life would be a perpetual contest, strife and war for the highest stations, and the greatest endowments. That narrow space which God has now left open for men to rise or to fall in, creates no small degree of uneasiness and emulation. What would be the condition of mankind, were every thing left open in the same way? The appointment of man's condition, in a great measure, by God, has the same tranquillizing and satisfying effect that the distribution of desirable things by lot sometimes has, to which men are often forced to resort in their temporal affairs. And he who thus appoints the condition of every human being, is the rightful and infallible judge how far what is good or evil in their conduct is the result of circumstances, and how far of free moral action and spontaneous choice. The election then, which we maintain that the Scriptures teach, finds a close analogy in that election which we know God exercises in his common providence, that is, election to privileges and advantages. But the other doctrine of election to personal character, to moral action of one kind or other, finds no parallel, no analogy anywhere in the universe, of which we have any knowledge. The first is consistent likewise with God's moral attributes, for it is temporary



and remediable, the other is inconsistent with the moral perfections of God, because it is final and eternal. Which then is antecedently and intrinsically most probable?

We will now examine some of the examples of election mentioned in Scripture, and see to which of these theories of election they most accurately correspond. The whole nation of Israel are called God's elect. David says, "Thy servant is in the midst of thy people, whom thou hast chosen," or elected. "That I may see the good of thy chosen," or elect. "For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect." And in what sense were they God's elect? Not certainly in the sense of personal election to eternal salvation, for it does not appear that they were any better, taking into consideration their moral advantages, than any other nation. Another instance of election is that of Jacob and Esau. Jacob was chosen, to what? Not to salvation, but to have the birth-right, which was a mere civil, outward privilege, and he was therefore the father of the nation of Israel. They both acted in their private affairs, on their own personal responsibility, and we have no reason for believing from anything which the Scriptures say, that Jacob was a better man than Esau, or was any more likely to attain eternal life.

The disciples of Christ were elected, but not to personal character, or salvation, for one of them was lost. Paul was elected, not to be saved, but "to be a chosen vessel," as God said to Ananias, when he sent him to restore his sight, "to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." But did

this election secure his salvation? By no means. That depended on his own moral acts, his own conduct. For he himself says, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but I follow after that I may apprehend, that for which I am also apprehended of Christ. I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Is this the language of a man who feels himself to be personally elected to salvation? Certainly not. And if Paul was not, who ever was? To what was he elected? To preach the gospel, "for," says he, "necessity is laid on me, yea, wo is unto me if I preach not the gospel. For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will a dispensation," or stewardship, "of the gospel is committed to me;" and he could not refuse it. Is there anything like personal election in all this?

We have already stated the doctrine of reprobation. We will repeat it, in order to compare it with those passages of Scripture from which it is derived. "The rest of mankind God was pleased according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice." One of the principal proof texts of this horrible doctrine is this, from the ninth chapter of Romans. "What if God willing to show his wrath, and make his power known, endureth with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction." Whom do these vessels of wrath

mean? Do they mean, as this Catechism interprets, the rest of mankind, whom Adam ruined, and made incapable of doing anything good, and to whom God arbitrarily chose not to give that power? Let the connection show. "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he hath afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not only of the Jews, but of the Gentiles. As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people which were not my people." Then he is not speaking concerning mankind in general, he is not speaking of the fate of men in a future world at all. He is speaking of the Jews whom God had reprobated from being his people, and had chosen the Christians, both Jews and Gentiles in their stead. It is the Jews then, whom God had rejected and was about to destroy, that are called the vessels of wrath, with whom God had forborne with much long suffering, not wicked men generally. So this passage has nothing to do with personal election or reprobation in regard to salvation at all. That subject is not so much as touched upon in this whole epistle. The great burden which lay upon the apostle's mind, was the rejection and awful fate of the Jews, which was then impending, and in a few years after took place. He begins this very chapter, thus: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart, for I could wish myself accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites." This is continued to the end of the argumentative part of

the Epistle. Further on he says: "I speak to you, Gentiles." "If some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them." "Boast not against the branches," "because of unbelief were they broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded but fear, for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed that he also spare not thee." Is this the language which would be addressed by the apostle to men, who were personally and irrevocably elected to salvation, or to Gentiles or heathens, who had been brought into a peculiar relation to God by having the Gospel preached to them, and had become Christians, so far as believing on Christ and acknowledging his authority could make them so, but still were in danger of not attaining that whereunto they were called?

This view of the doctrine of election, which the apostle has himself given, must be kept in mind, and will serve as a key to interpret all other passages in which the doctrine is mentioned. Christians are addressed by the apostle as having been chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. But how are they chosen in or through Christ? They were, inasmuch as God before determined at the fulness of time to send Christ, and through him the Gospel to as many as heard the preaching of Christ and his apostles. All who believed were taken into an especial relation to God. They were chosen then to what? To be Christians; and if they were faithful, the Gospel would be the means of raising them to holiness and happiness. Peter expresses this whole matter with great plainness.

He says to the Christians, whom he was addressing, "But ye are a *chosen* generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Which in time past were not a people, but now are the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." But in addressing these same Christians, this elect, as he had called them, he exhorts them to give all diligence, to add unto faith virtue, to virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." How can this be? Can a personal election to eternal life, "without foresight of faith or good works," be made sure? Is it then uncertain? The election here spoken of cannot be personal, unconditional election. It must be calling and election to be Christians only, which is the very point we wished to prove. To have the calling and election made sure, must be effectual calling. But this effectual calling can happen only through the free co-operation of man. It is only by his giving all diligence to cultivate those virtues, which the apostle has enumerated, that his calling and election as a Christian can be made effectual to his personal salvation. Oh how different is this from the effectual calling of Creeds and Catechisms, which is carried on entirely arbitrarily, without the intervention of the human will rationally and spontaneously exercised! How much more rational, and consistent, and agreeable to the moral sense and experience of mankind!

I have searched the Scriptures with great care, and have been able to find in them no trace of that personal election and reprobation, which Catechisms and Creeds maintain. I find nothing of human inability, or irresistible divine influence. I do not find that the election, whatever it was, which is spoken of in the New Testament, extended to any except Christians, or those to whom the Gospel was preached. I do not find that it extended to those, who lived before the time of Christ, or to those, who then lived, or have since lived, who never heard of him or listened to the invitations of the Gospel. But this leaves the fate of ninety-nine hundredths of mankind, whose souls are just as dear to God as the hundredth part, to be determined, even if this doctrine be true in the sense maintained, without respect to this election. This circumstance is confirmation to show that system-makers have travelled without and beyond the record, when they have extended to all mankind, what was spoken merely and solely of Christians.

The only part of Scripture which seems to my mind to have any appearance of teaching predestination, or personal, arbitrary election, is the conversation of Christ with the Jews immediately after the miracle of the loaves and fishes, by which many worldly people were induced to follow him, not that they might be benefited by his doctrine, but that they might idly obtain a support. Whenever he attempted to say to them anything of a spiritual and elevated nature, they began to cavil, and perversely to take that literally which he meant in a figurative sense. When he spoke of his being the

bread that came down from heaven, meaning his doctrine, they disingenuously took him to mean his person. Just so with regard to his giving them his flesh. He soon grew weary of them, and told them, "No man can come to me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." And afterwards; "Therefore said I unto you, no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." These two sentences have at first sight the appearance of teaching that the power to become a true disciple of Christ was arbitrarily bestowed. But this appearance vanishes when we compare it with other parts of the same conversation, and consider the occasion and purpose for which it was spoken. Some had come to him with wrong motives and with evil dispositions. He tells them that this was not coming to him truly and acceptably. "It is written in the prophets," referring as was supposed to the times of the Messiah, "And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me." How then was it that it was given to men to come to Christ? This verse explains it to be by his having taught them. But in order that he should teach them they must learn. So he says, Whosoever hath heard and *learned* of the Father, cometh to me. Was not this hearing and learning a perfectly voluntary act? Then this giving to men to come to Christ was exercised by God not arbitrarily, or independently of their will and free agency, but through it. Those whom God had taught, but who had likewise been willing to learn, were they to whom God had given to come acceptably to Christ. Christ does not

mean to say that God arbitrarily gave the power to some and withheld it from others, of coming acceptably to him. He means to say that God hath given it to them who are willing to receive it, that is, who had received and obeyed and profited by the instructions which he had before given them. So these assertions of Christ do not declare the doctrine of arbitrary personal election, when taken in the connection in which they stand, and explained by the context, although to a superficial observer they may have that appearance.

We now finish our argument from Scripture with the conclusion that the doctrine of personal, unconditional election is not taught there. This is enough for those who take their religion from the Bible and from the Bible alone.

It now remains to discuss an argument for personal election drawn from a source merely and purely philosophical, the foreknowledge of God. Does not God foreknow every individual who will be saved? Is it not one of the Divine perfections to know, not only everything that has been, but everything that ever will be? Has not God foretold in the Scriptures the actions of men long before they happened? How could he do this, unless the future actions, and the future condition of every human being were known to him? How could this be, unless everything is unchangeably predetermined? Does it not therefore follow that all human actions, as well as human events, are arranged in a chain, or rather a web, no particle of which can ever be displaced?

We answer in the first place, that this subject is en-



tirely beyond our comprehension. We have no fixed data from which we can certainly decide one way or the other. For my own part, so little do we know of the abstract nature of the Deity, that I am not inclined to assert or deny anything very positively concerning the metaphysical perfections or attributes of the Divine Mind. There is much fallacy, I fear, in the language we use upon this subject. The word foreknowledge takes for granted the very point in question, that there is a kind of Fate above God himself, in which he reads what is to come. No future event can be foreknown, except by a Being who has the power, and has determined, to bring it to pass. His predetermination must be the foundation of his foreknowledge. That he has predetermined every act of his own to all eternity, so as no longer to be a free agent, is more than we can know, or have a right to assert. While this is the case, all positive assertions concerning God's foreknowledge must be rash, and all systems founded upon it can have no fixed or certain foundation.

Though I do not deny the universal foreknowledge of God, it is by no means clear to my mind, that in saying the Deity foresees and foreknows everything in the sense of having foreordained it, we do not take as much from his perfections in one particular as we add to them in another. That foreknowledge and foreordination of God, which fixes all future events, the actions of voluntary agents among the rest, fixes likewise the future actions of the Deity. It fixes a kind of fate, which, like that of the ancient heathens, binds God and man: Such a doctrine, therefore, as much as it adds

to God's omniscience, takes away from his omnipotence and freedom. It takes from his omnipotence in another way. It makes it impossible for him to create a contingency, or to create an agent positively free. It puts it out of his power to create a state of probation. It is no more honorable to the Deity, as far as I can conceive, to suppose him to govern the universe by a decree that he made from all eternity, than that he governs it by a present agency, which he orders every moment according to existing circumstances. The nature of a free volition of the human mind, according to those ideas of freedom, which we derive from consciousness and observation is, that it has no necessary and unavoidable connection with anything that went before, with any state of the mind, or of outward circumstances; otherwise it is mechanical, necessary, not free. It must be then absolutely uncertain how the mind will act. It is no impeachment of the Divine perfections to suppose that he does not foresee that as certain, which, for the sake of human liberty and trial, he has made uncertain. That he governs the material universe by certain, fixed, and invariable laws of succession, and likewise the general course of human events is probable and uncontradicted; but that there is left open a certain space for the free will of man to act, so far as is necessary to form and display character, is to my mind equally probable.

At any rate, God has made consciousness to be to us the highest and most undoubted source of evidence and belief. We are conscious that we are free, and it is a natural impossibility for us to believe anything else.

Whatever speculations we enter into, we shall always act upon this supposition. To us it is an ultimate, fundamental principle, not to be done away or modified by any other. The whole moral world is constructed upon the supposition that we are free. God treats us as if we were so.

Whether the foreknowledge of the Deity be consistent with our freedom, we do not know. One is a matter of remote, uncertain speculation, on a subject confessedly beyond our faculties. The other is a matter of intimate, continual, and certain consciousness. And if it be not true, all religious inquiries and speculations are equally vain and unprofitable.

## LECTURE VIII.

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### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH AND WORKS.

JAMES, II. 14—26.

“WHAT DOTHTH IT PROFIT, MY BRETHREN, THOUGH A MAN SAY HE HATH FAITH, AND HAVE NOT WORKS? CAN FAITH SAVE HIM? IF A BROTHER OR SISTER BE NAKED, AND DESTITUTE OF DAILY FOOD, AND ONE OF YOU SAY UNTO THEM, DEPART IN PEACE, BE YE WARMED AND FILLED; NOTWITHSTANDING YE GIVE THEM NOT THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE NEEDFUL TO THE BODY; WHAT DOTHTH IT PROFIT? EVEN SO FAITH, IF IT HAVE NOT WORKS, IS DEAD, BEING ALONE. YEA, A MAN MAY SAY, THOU HAST FAITH, AND I HAVE WORKS: SHOW ME THY FAITH WITHOUT THY WORKS, AND I WILL SHOW THEE MY FAITH BY MY WORKS. THOU BELIEVEST THAT THERE IS ONE GOD; THOU DOEST WELL: THE DEVILS ALSO BELIEVE, AND TREMBLE. BUT WILT THOU KNOW, O VAIN MAN, THAT FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD? WAS NOT ABRAHAM OUR FATHER JUSTIFIED BY WORKS, WHEN HE HAD OFFERED ISAAC HIS SON UPON THE ALTAR? SEEST THOU HOW FAITH WROUGHT WITH HIS WORKS, AND BY WORKS WAS FAITH MADE PERFECT? AND THE SCRIPTURE WAS FULFILLED WHICH SAITH, ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS IMPUTED UNTO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS: AND HE WAS CALLED THE FRIEND OF GOD. YE SEE THEN HOW THAT BY WORKS A MAN IS JUSTIFIED, AND NOT BY FAITH ONLY. LIKewise ALSO WAS NOT RAHAB THE HARLOT JUSTIFIED BY WORKS, WHEN SHE HAD RECEIVED THE MESSENGERS, AND HAD SENT THEM OUT ANOTHER WAY? FOR AS THE BODY WITHOUT THE SPIRIT IS DEAD, SO FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD ALSO.”

THE comparative agency of faith and works in the justification of man, is thus expressed in the eleventh

Article of the Creed of the Church of England. "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith; and not for our own deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the homily of justification."

The Westminster Confession and Catechisms are more elaborate in their enunciation of this doctrine. "Those," say they, "whom God effectually calleth, he freely justifieth, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous, not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone, not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith, which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God. Faith thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification. Faith justifies the sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other graces which do always accompany it, or of good works that are the fruits of it; nor as if the grace of faith, or any act thereof, were imputed to him for his justification, but only as it is an instrument by which he receiveth and applieth Christ and his righteousness."

You perceive at once, a wide discrepancy, if not a plain contradiction, between the doctrine of justification

as stated in the Creeds and Catechisms, and as stated by the apostle James. The Creeds say, that "men are justified by God not for anything wrought in them or done by them, nor any other act of evangelical obedience flowing from faith, nor yet by the merit of faith itself, but for Christ's sake alone." James declares on the other hand, that a man is justified both by faith and works. "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Now we ask, which is most entitled to credit, the apostle, or the Creeds and Catechisms? Both cannot be true. He who adheres to the Creeds must abandon the Bible.

Before, however, we compare the Creeds with the Scriptures, we shall examine their doctrine respecting the efficacy and office of faith, as to its intrinsic reasonableness, probability and consistency. We say in the first place, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, or the infinite preciousness of faith, and the worthlessness of works, is inconsistent with itself. It is admitted on all hands, that faith without works is dead, and standing alone is unprofitable. If it produce good works, then it is valuable. But if good works are of no value, how can faith be more valuable for producing that which is worthless? Is not action or inaction entirely indifferent, when that which action gains, is of no use after we have obtained it? Of what consequence is it whether a man be living or dead, if what he does while he lives be of no avail; if what it is possible for him to obtain, have no power to satisfy his hunger, or clothe his body, or shelter him from the storm? What

is a cause good for, if the effect it produces be of no value? What is the seed worth, if the fruit be worth nothing? Is there any difference in value between a tree which bears no fruit at all, and that which bears a fruit, which lies useless and untouched by man or beast?

It seems to my mind to be a great inconsistency, and to approach very near a contradiction, to say that faith without works is without value, and when good works accompany it, it is valuable, and still to affirm that those good works which give it all its value are worthless themselves. Certainly they are valuable for this very purpose of giving value to faith. Take away the works, and the faith will be without value. How can it be said then that works are not valuable? If faith be not acceptable without works, and is with them, then to a demonstration it is the works which render the faith acceptable. If a man cannot be accepted for faith without works, or, to use the technical language of theologians, his faith is not acceptable, saving faith, unless it be accompanied by works, and is accepted for faith with the addition of works, is it not plain that the works are in fact, however you may disguise the matter in words, the ground of his acceptance? With the works his faith is acceptable, without them it is not. It is all a mere quibble upon words to say that a man's faith is acceptable when his works are good, and still to deny that he is accepted on account of his good works. For according to this hypothesis it depends on the man's works at last, whether he is accepted or not. We say then that the theory which makes justification depend on faith alone, but at the same time maintains

that no faith will justify a man unaccompanied with good works, admits what it seems so strenuously to deny, that the ultimate ground of justification is good works.

Into just the same dilemma are they driven, who assert that man is justified by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him by faith. For there are different kinds of faith. There is a living and a dead faith. Which are entitled to this imputed righteousness, those who possess a living or dead faith? Those who possess a living faith. But what is a living faith? That, and that only which produces good works. Then he, and he alone, is entitled to the imputation of Christ's righteousness, who does good works. Good works then, on every hypothesis, are the ultimate and procuring cause of justification, even that which is by imputation. It makes no real difference whether a man's good works prove his faith to be good, and therefore make that acceptable and through that himself acceptable, or whether they are considered immediately and directly to make him acceptable himself. The difference is nothing more than that of a verbal and metaphysical subtilty.

In the next place, the doctrine of the justification of men by faith alone is an unreasonable doctrine. There is no reason in the nature of things why faith should stand so high and works so low in the estimation of God. Let us consider them in the light of practical utility. Neither of them can be of any immediate benefit to God. His happiness is entirely independent of anything his creatures either do or fail to do. Neither the righteousness nor the wickedness, the faith or the



unbelief, of myriads of beings can add to his happiness nor deprive him of it. For what says the Scripture? "Look unto the heavens and see; and behold the clouds, which are higher than thou. If thou be righteous, what givest thou him; or what receiveth he of thy hand? If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him, or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man." Here then is the standard by which the character and value of actions and properties of man are to be weighed, their effect upon human happiness and welfare.

Now we ask, what above all things else promotes human happiness and welfare? The answer is, good works. That is the very quality from which they derive their name. They are good because they produce good. What portion of real happiness does man enjoy that does not spring from good works? Why is the child happy? Because the parent takes care of it, and provides for its wants. What are these acts of the parent but good works? God commands them to be done, by the law of nature, of morality, and of revelation. Are they not then acceptable to God inasmuch as he loves and cares for little children; especially as he commands and requires them to be done, by the laws of nature, morality and revelation? Shall not the great Parent be pleased with every act of kindness done to the children whom he loves? Why is a parent happy? Because his child is affectionate, dutiful and obedient. These are good works because they produce good, they

increase the sum of human happiness. God delights in human happiness. Shall he not love and reward that which promotes what he delights in? What makes the dependent happy? Generosity, kindness, and charity in those from whom they must derive all they enjoy. And how many millions there are of such on the globe! God commands that generosity, kindness and charity to be exercised. And shall not that kindness, and charity, and generosity, be acceptable to him, when they are copies of his own glorious perfections, whereby he causes the sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sends rain upon the just and the unjust?

But you say, perhaps, that this is mere morality, and morality is nothing in the sight of God. It is religion alone that he regards. A heathen may have morality, and God cares nothing about the heathen, or about merely moral men, and will certainly doom them all to perdition at last. We answer, that these lines drawn between religion and morality, are drawn by man and not by God; and more frequently by cold-blooded bigotry and metaphysical divinity, than by charity or common sense. That is meritorious, that is religion, which a man does from a sense of duty, or in obedience to the moral laws of his nature, and a perception of right. That is acceptable in the sight of God, which it costs self-sacrifice, and personal privation and labor to perform, in obedience to the highest promptings of the mind, and which adds to the sum of human happiness. Call it religion, or call it morality, or call it what you please, you cannot persuade the plain, unsophisticated sense of mankind of anything else, than that everything

is acceptable to God, which his pure and impartial eye sees to be done by any human agent from a feeling of duty, from a perception of right, from generous emotion, from true and pure affection, from love to truth, and justice, and righteousness.

For what is a man made, except good works? Why has he understanding to perceive, and a will to determine, and hands and energies to execute, but that he may do something? And what shall he do? Not evil, certainly, but good.

And shall that good for which man is made, and for which God has prepared him in the very constitution of his nature, be nothing worth in the sight of God? Such a supposition is not reasonable. So far from good deeds having no merit, they are the only merit which man can have. It is the only ground of difference that we know between a bad man and a good man.

Now, we ask, what peculiar merit has faith, that it should be put so infinitely above works in estimating worthiness in the sight of God.

What is faith? Faith is the assent of the mind to truth, or it is trust in God. What are the moral qualities on which assent to truth depends? Candor and honesty. But they are moral qualities, but not faith. Faith then has no moral character of itself, but derives its moral character from candor and honesty. Works have a positive value of themselves. They produce happiness, and fulfil God's law. But were there nothing in the world but faith, there would be a complete stagnation. "The devils," the apostle says, "believe and tremble." There may be such overwhelming evi-

dence for truth as to make faith irresistible, and then belief has no longer any merit or moral character whatever. My faith can confer no happiness or good on others, though it may on myself. But my good works may confer great, lasting, eternal benefit on all around me. The term faith may be used in the sense of trust in God. Undoubtedly this is acceptable to him, for it does honor to his perfections. But it is so, only so long as I continue to do my duty, that is, while I do good works. The moment I cease to do good works, my trust in God becomes unacceptable and irrational. So that faith even in the sense of trust, without good works, is vain and unprofitable. Now we ask, if there be any reasonableness in placing faith so far above works as a ground of acceptance with God? Especially, we ask, if it be reasonable to affirm that faith is everything, and works are nothing?

In the next place, we say that the final acceptance of men on account of faith alone is improbable from all we know of the dealings of God with man in the present world. God has so made man that his good deeds are the cause of happiness to him in the present, and as far as we can see, in all future time. I know of no better, safer, or surer method of learning what is good and acceptable in the sight of God, than observing what he does. He certainly rewards good deeds, whether they are acceptable to him or not.

As soon as a man does anything good, God immediately begins to reward him. He makes others well disposed toward him and inclined to do him good offices. In the sense of their approbation and good offices he is

happy, is rewarded. And inasmuch as it is through the operation of that nature which God has made, God rewards him, as it were through mechanism. Not only so. He rewards him in another way, by the pleasurable reflections of his own conscience. These begin at once, and as far as we see, can never terminate. As often as they come up, they produce happiness, even at the remotest period. This is by the constitution which God has given the human mind, and is therefore indicative, if anything can be, of his disposition and will.

Now is it probable, we ask, that this order of things will cease, and another be introduced in another world; that God's disposition towards good works will change; that he will cease to approve and reward them, and introduce another scheme of retribution totally different, depending on faith alone? To me this supposition is entirely improbable. He must entirely change the whole constitution of every individual of the human race. He must make every human being forget every good deed he has ever done, or cease to look upon it with satisfaction. Now to my mind this would be so destroying personal identity, and changing the whole man, as to make us no longer the same persons; and of course the connection between this world and the next would be entirely destroyed. If men are to be raised to another life merely to be entirely changed, not to be judged according to their actions here, but to be treated according to the righteousness which is then bestowed upon them, on account of a quality in them not moral to any great extent, viz. more or less faith, and this not acquired but given, then future happiness be-

comes a thing entirely arbitrary. That this should be the case we think altogether improbable.

If it be meant, as it may possibly be in some cases, though most unhappily expressed, that no man can be justified by works in the sense of being perfectly innocent, fulfilling the whole law, that there must be mercy in our acceptance, we grant it. That our sins must be repented and forgiven, and our deficiencies pardoned, we do not deny. But that all the good there is in us is to be set aside, and something foreign introduced, that all that we are, have been, and have done, is to cease to affect our condition and happiness in future, is a doctrine to my mind utterly and totally improbable and incredible ; nothing in the whole compass of thought or conception could be more so.

There is a strange delusion in the world as to the nature of righteousness and goodness, as if it were a something distinct from the man who possesses it, and to be transferred like any other possession to another person. It is a quality or attribute of man which he can have only from having acted right in his own person. Goodness cannot be communicated. One man's being good never can make another man good, except through his own free agency. The righteousness or goodness of Christ was a quality of Christ personally. It cannot be transferred to another person any more than his consciousness or his personal identity can be transferred. Neither sin nor holiness are transferable any more than the qualities of gold can become the qualities of stone. God may pardon men and treat them as though they were righteous at the last day.

His benevolence might prompt him to do it. But even that would be of no avail. Righteousness cannot in the nature of things be communicated. Pardon would not make them happy. For be it ever remembered that no man, even if God treats him as if he were good, and spreads around him all the means of happiness, can be happy unless he is good. No man can be any happier than he has prepared himself to be. A bad man could not be happy, even in heaven. The righteousness then, which is by Christ, is that from the very nature of things which he induces men to perform. His office is then, as the Scripture represents, "to purify a people from all iniquity, and make them zealous of good works."

We now turn to the Scriptural argument. And we say, the doctrine of justification by faith alone is contradicted by the whole current of Scripture from beginning to end. If there be one doctrine in the Bible more prominent than the rest, it is the doctrine of rewards and punishments, that man is to be rewarded for his good works and punished for his sins. Upon this principle hung the whole Jewish economy, and God's dealings with his chosen people for many centuries. Hear the fundamental law which God lays down by Moses for his treatment of the nation of Israel. "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God shall set thee on high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto

the voice of the Lord thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field." "Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out." "Though a sinner," says Solomon, "do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him. But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God." It is written in Isaiah, "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him." "If a man," says Ezekiel, "be just, and do that which is lawful and right;" "hath walked in my statutes, and kept my judgments, to deal truly, he is just; he shall live, saith the Lord." "The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." Would it not appear by this, that works as well as faith are a ground of acceptance with God? Could there be a more explicit contradiction of the doctrine that man is justified by faith alone?

We now come to the New Testament. And there we find the first discourse of our Lord, in its whole drift, to run counter to it. It is often asserted that the law and the Gospel are essentially different in their fundamental principles. Nay, I have heard it explicitly stated that the language of the law is, "Do this and thou shalt live." But of the Gospel, "According to thy faith so



be it unto thee." Now, as it appears to me, nothing can be more contrary to fact. The Gospel proposes a law still more rigorous and exacting than the law itself, and insists on an obedience still more minute and universal. It insists not only on all the law demands, but much more. "Think not," said Christ, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." What then is not only a man's acceptance, but his eminence in the kingdom of heaven, here made to depend upon? On his doing and teaching these commandments. And what is doing the commandments but good works? A man's greatness in the kingdom is to depend precisely upon the number and amount of his good works. What then becomes of justification by faith alone?

Exactly agreeable to this is Christ's close of what may be considered, by way of eminence, the preceptive part of the Gospel. At the end of the sermon on the Mount, which is the summary of the Christian code of laws, a very directory of good works, he concludes with this declaration: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings

of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock : And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock."

What is the doctrine of the parable of the talents? "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy lord." Is this the doctrine of justification by faith alone, or by imputed, borrowed righteousness, or is it justification by works as well as faith?

We now come to the great test, Christ's solemn and scenic representation of judgment, that very transaction, where faith is represented to be so omnipotent and works so worthless.

Is there one word, in all that imposing and impressive scene, said concerning faith as the one grand, sole requisite?

Does that transaction look like the doctrine that the accepted are justified, "not on account of anything done by them, or any other evangelical obedience, but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ," according to the Creeds and Catechism? Let us read the record : "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : Naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me." "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these,

my brethren, ye have done it unto me." What then becomes of justification by faith alone? Is it not strange, is it not unaccountable, that it should have been passed over in most profound silence, in this very transaction where it is supposed by this theory to bear sway alone? Should not the Judge rather have said, "Inasmuch as ye have had faith, although I set aside and disregard as filthy rags, your own righteousness, your own good deeds, I impute to you the righteousness of another, and on that account bid you welcome to eternal joy?" Such should have been the language of this passage, had the doctrine of justification by faith alone been true. "They that have *done good*," says the Saviour, "shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation."

I need not repeat to you the proposition with which we commenced this division of discourse, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, is contradicted by the general current of Scripture, and explicitly in many of the most important passages.

Whence then came the doctrine of justification by faith alone? How could it have originated in the minds of men, and thence found its way into Creeds and Confessions in opposition to so much that is plain and unequivocal in the word of God? It claims to be founded on Scripture too. Many texts are quoted in support of it, among which are the following, from Paul's Epistle to the Romans: "Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." "Therefore we conclude that a man is justi-

fied by faith without the deeds of the law." Now one of these two things is certain, either that the Scriptures contradict themselves ; one part affirming what another denies ; or that one part or the other has been misunderstood, and thought to teach a doctrine which it does not teach. We cannot suppose that Scripture contradicts itself. There must be then some misapprehension. On which side is it most likely to be ? Which is most likely to be mistaken, the very few passages in which the doctrine of justification by faith alone is thought to be taught, or the whole compass and course of Scripture, in which judgment according to deeds is inculcated ?

Let us then examine these few passages in the writings of Paul, and see if they have not been misapprehended. James says in our text, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Paul says, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." It first occurs to remark, that the expressions are not identical, though similar. James asserts, that men are justified by works, that is, as the connection demonstrates, acts of moral goodness. Paul asserts that men are not justified—by what—not works simply, acts of moral goodness, for then there would have been a plain contradiction, but by the deeds of the law. Now acts of moral goodness, and deeds of the law may be very different things, and thus Paul may not deny what James and the rest of Scripture assert. James declares, that no man can be finally accepted by God, unless he be a good man. Paul may mean, and probably does mean, that a man

may be a good Christian, without conforming to the law of Moses. Paul in this Epistle to the Romans, and more especially in that to the Galatians is arguing against the Jews and Judaizing teachers, who taught, as we are informed in the Acts, that the converts from heathenism must be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved. Paul taught on the contrary, that it was only necessary to believe on Christ, repent, and live according to the Gospel. It is not his design to disparage works of moral goodness, for the last five chapters of this very Epistle are taken up in recommending and enjoining them on Christians, but to draw off the Jews from their bigoted attachment to the law of Moses. But why does Paul apparently speak so highly of faith, and so disparagingly of the law? Because he was defending the new religion against the old. The old, as the degenerate Jews then supposed, placed salvation in a minute and superstitious observance of the laws of Moses. The new, Paul declares, has another method of bringing men into a state of salvation, into a state of nearness to God and acceptance with him. He has set forth Christ to be a propitiatory, or mercy seat; in and through him he offers pardon, reconciliation and justification, or acquittal as the word means in this connection, to all mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, on condition of faith, repentance and obedience, without any regard whatever to the law of Moses. And this is what he means, when he speaks of being justified by faith in opposition to the deeds of the law. Faith then in this, and similar passages, does not mean bare belief alone, but the whole Christian religion, as distinguished from the law of Moses.

But in order to understand the writings of Paul, with regard to faith and the works of the law, we must take a brief view of the state of things at that time, and consider what was the great controversy of the age. When Paul wrote this Epistle, the Jewish temple was still standing at Jerusalem. The ritual of Moses was still maintained. The ceremonies and festivals, and all the national worship which had been established and recognized by God for ages was still kept up, and as flourishing as it ever had been, and no external indication had yet appeared that it was soon to decay. The Jewish nation was as yet apparently the chosen people of God. The first Christians were Jews, and at first preached only to Jews, and thought the Gospel was intended for them alone, although their Master had explicitly told them to go and teach all nations. The vision of Peter and the conversion of Cornelius, a Gentile, convinced them that they had not hitherto comprehended the extent of their commission. Before this, they themselves lived after the Jewish manner, abstaining from particular kinds of food, forbidden by the laws of Moses. Thus, instead of mingling with the Gentiles as they were designed to do, they shunned their society and kept themselves entirely distinct. There was danger then, if they went on in that way, that Christianity instead of becoming an universal religion, as it was intended to be, and spreading among the nations, the heathen would consider it as a petty Jewish sect, bound up in the same exclusive peculiarities, which had isolated them. The vision of Peter, and the conversion of Cornelius, opened their eyes, and showed them that

they must throw off all their Jewish peculiarities, and associate freely with the heathen, and preach to them the Gospel likewise, receiving them as Christians on the same terms as the Jews. This, however, did not satisfy their Jewish converts; they considered themselves still as Jews to be the favored people of God, and, inasmuch as their temple was standing, and its rites unabolished, their religion still to be sustained by God and to have the divine sanction. They insisted then that the heathen converts to the Gospel, must become Jews as well as Christians, be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, as well as the laws of Christ. Thus Christianity was in danger of perishing in its very inception by being identified with Judaism. This attempt of the Jewish converts to bring the Gentile Christians under the bondage of the Jewish law, seems to have emanated from Jerusalem. We read of it in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts. "And certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said, except ye be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." These emissaries went around wherever the apostles had established churches, endeavoring to propagate their doctrines. Paul, who was commissioned from the first as the especial apostle of the Gentiles, and as such felt himself bound to defend their rights and liberties, from the outset resisted this imposition. "When," we read, "Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them," they determined to send and consult the church at Jerusalem on this matter. The council held at Jerusalem, at which the apostle James presided, decided against these Judaizing teach-

ers, and determined to lay none of the burdens of the Jewish ritual upon them. Nothing daunted by this decision, these false teachers went on to disseminate their doctrines, and disturb the churches which Paul had planted. To counteract their influence and combat their doctrines was one of the prominent objects of Paul, in almost all his Epistles to these churches, which he wrote to them in his absence. Hence it is that we read so much in his writings concerning the law in contrast with the Gospel, so much apparently to the disparagement of the law and the commendation of the Gospel. Not that he undervalued the law in its place, but considered it inferior to the Gospel as a system, and was therefore, destined to give place to it.

But in proving and illustrating this great truth, in drawing this contrast between the law and the Gospel, to the advantage of the latter, he makes use of many arguments which are addressed only to Jews and which take them on their own principles, and though calculated to lead them into the truth, yet when considered as logical and philosophical reasoning, would not perhaps be considered as conclusive by any other than a Jewish mind.

“Let it not be counted strange by you Jews,” says the apostle in that paragraph, whence the chief arguments for justification by faith are taken, “let it not be considered strange that God should admit the heathen into a state of favor with him, such as you have hitherto supposed yourselves exclusively to possess, on condition of their believing in Christ, or their faith, without subjecting them to the laws of Moses. I can show you



from your own Scriptures, that faith has before been favorably regarded by God, in one not subjected to the law, or even to circumcision. You read in your own Scriptures, that "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness." And observe, (which is the chief point of the argument,) this was *before* he had received the rite of circumcision. And if Abraham obtained the favor of God before circumcision, why may not the Christian converts from heathenism without circumcision and the ceremonial law? Why then subject them to it at all?" Although the apostle says that "Abraham believed God and it was imputed unto him for righteousness," he does not say or intimate that this was the sole and whole ground of his justification or acceptance with God, but merely that it was an act acceptable to him. And even this contradicts the Creeds, for they say that faith itself is not imputed to the believer as righteousness. The Westminster Confession expressly declares, that men are justified not "for anything done by them, or wrought in them," not *by imputing faith itself the act of believing*, "but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ." "But," continues the apostle, "there is still according to your Scriptures, another ground of justification open to the Gentile Christians without conforming to the laws of Moses, or indeed without respect to works of any kind strictly speaking. For does not David say, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." But who is he? He who has sincerely repented. "Here then is another ground of

justification open to the Gentiles without subjecting them to the law. It is not necessary therefore to subject them to it. They may be justified even according to your Scriptures, without the deeds of the law.

It was by seizing on detached passages in arguments like these, and wresting them from their connection and the argument in which they are found, that the doctrine of justification by faith alone has been framed and supported, so contrary to the general sense of Scripture, to innumerable distinct passages, to reason, and common sense. What Paul really thought of the worth of mere faith may be learned from other parts of his writings, such as this: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And *though I have all faith*, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." This was the righteousness with which Paul desired to appear before the tribunal of God, when he says, "that I may be found not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," that is, Christian righteousness and not Jewish righteousness.

I might go on, did time permit, to show why it was that the Reformers, Calvin and his associates, who were the principal authors of our present Creeds, extracted this doctrine with such infinite labor from the Scriptures, and then maintained it so strenuously. I might show you, that it was to oppose what they thought the great error of the church of Rome, the doctrine of supererogation, or the accumulation of a fund of good works, if

we may so speak, in the Catholic church, by virtue of which they pardoned sins and sold indulgences. The reformers thought, if they could establish the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and of course the worthlessness of good works, their adversaries would be entirely prostrated and the abuse of indulgences would be cut up by the roots. But in opposing one error, we have seen, as it often happens, they fell into its opposite, and erred as much the other way. "Ye see then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

# LECTURE IX.

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## SALVATION.

1 TIMOTHY, I. 15.

“THIS IS A FAITHFUL SAYING, AND WORTHY OF ALL ACCEPTATION, THAT CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS.”

THE subject which is to occupy our attention this evening, is the most important which can engage the mind of man—salvation, deliverance from evil, and the attainment of everlasting happiness. This is a theme more interesting, if possible, than those we have hitherto discussed. The topics we have already considered have been connected with the highest and the deepest objects which can be explored by the human mind. We have contemplated the nature and attributes of the eternal One. We have traced him in his works, in his providence, in his revelation, in his purposes. We have looked into his dealings with the human race, in the state of nature, and under the discipline of a supernatural dispensation. We have attempted to investigate the moral nature and constitution of man, as to its endowments, its powers and capacities. We have contemplated the Mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus

Christ, in his nature and office, in the purpose and design of his mission.

We are now to consider the practical bearing of all these subjects upon us, our condition, our prospects, our happiness. In short, we are to consider of what benefit all these things can be to man. We are to consider the subject of salvation, deliverance from present and future evil, and the attainment of present and future happiness. This is a subject which must be deeply interesting to every one who hears me this night. In every bosom now before me there burns an unquenchable thirst for happiness, and an unconquerable aversion to suffering. There is too, in each one a strong desire and expectation of immortality. Existence then is to each of you an endless, an interminable prospect. Your only, your all-absorbing inquiry must be, how this interminable existence is to be passed; in a state of happiness or of suffering.

You have already had experience of both enjoyment and suffering. And the necessary result of that experience is, that you desire in future to escape as much suffering, and obtain as much happiness as you can. But the sufferings you have already endured, divide themselves into two kinds, those which were unavoidable, and those which might have been avoided; those which have arisen from natural causes, such as toil, care, bereavement, and those which have arisen from misconduct, feeling, speaking, and acting wrong, contrary to your own convictions of right. These two classes comprehend all the evils we have already felt, or ever can feel. They, of course, are the only ones

we can ever fear. These two classes of evils are still further distinguished by this circumstance, one of them necessarily injures the mind, the soul, the other does not. External and unavoidable evils, such as toil, care, pain, sickness, bereavement, do not injure the mind, they sometimes improve it. When they are over, the mind recovers from them, and is often the better and happier from having experienced them. The other species of evil wrong-doing, is pure, unmixed evil. It injures the mind. It not only destroys happiness, but it pollutes and degrades the soul. Its evil does not cease with the act, nor with its immediate outward effects. When these are over, its bad consequences still remain in the soul, a feeling of shame, degradation, self-reproach, and ill-desert, and a diminished capacity for happiness, from any source whatever. Among these bad consequences may be enumerated the greater liability to do wrong again, whenever temptation is presented, and thus to involve the soul still further in suffering and guilt. There is this further distinction between them, outward evils must perish with the body, and therefore cease at death; moral evil, wrong doing, produces its effects upon the soul itself, resides in the soul, and of course must go with it wherever it goes, and abide with it wherever it abides.

Again, a great amount of outward evil may be brought on, and actually is produced by wrong doing. Much of natural evil is produced by moral evil. It would be amazing to see, were the whole connection of causes and effects revealed to our view, what a vast proportion of the outward miseries of mankind are brought upon

themselves by their own and each other's misconduct. What a large amount of the poverty under which the multitude of mankind continually groan, is brought upon them by idleness, extravagance and vice, and then what an amount of vice this very poverty reproduces. How many of the diseases and pains of men are induced by intemperance and excess. How much of the social disquiet which afflicts and disturbs society, arises from bad and ill-governed passions, from wrong desires, pursuits, and principles. In short, SIN is the great, the radical, the all comprehending evil of this world. Deliver mankind from sin, from its commission and of course from its consequences, and what a glorious world we might have! The whole present condition and future prospects of man would be bright and cheering.

We said that the class of moral evils were avoidable. They are avoidable because they depend on the will, the voluntary conduct of men. This then is the only salvation of which man is capable, the *salvation from moral evil, from sin*. Of no other salvation is he capable, because all other evils depend not on his will, or on his conduct. They are for wise and benevolent purposes, the allotment of God. No innocence of life, no virtue of character can save a man from them. "The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly," "but in hope." Now, we ask, is not this deliverance of man from moral evil, from sin and its consequences, an achievement devoutly to be wished? What philanthropist, what benevolent heart, that earnestly desires the present and eternal happiness of his fellow beings, but must as ardently wish to see each individual

of the human race delivered from sin? I care not what his peculiar views, or creed, or principles, may be, he must wish to see sin the great scourge of humanity, destroyed. And so must every human being feel with regard to himself. No good comes on the whole, of doing wrong. That is our great trouble when reviewing the past, so we feel it to be our great danger in the future. The greatest blessing we can possibly experience is to be delivered from it, because it is the greatest bar to our happiness here and hereafter. This we believe to be the precise object of the mission of Christ, of all that he did and taught and suffered. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins."

But our desires do not stop here. We desire not only deliverance from sin, but positive enjoyment. While we expect immortality we wish to possess happiness. This again is of two kinds, that which flows from outward causes, such as are under the immediate superintendence of Providence, and that which springs from doing and thinking and feeling right. For those sources of happiness which are outward, we are dependent immediately on God, and must be so forever. But he has hitherto not been wanting to us, and therefore if we are faithful to him and to ourselves, we have no reason to suppose that he ever will be. What a world he has given us for our abode! How richly is it stored with everything that can minister to our wants! In the progressive stages of our lives, what provision for our improvement and our enjoyment! In the relations of society, what scope for the expansion and gratifica-



tion of the affections! He who has already done so much, can in future do anything for us our happiness may require. He who has thus prepared this magnificent world for our abode, may, when we have passed through its probation, provide an abode still more rich and resplendent, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the imagination of man conceived.

There is as we before said, another fountain of happiness in ourselves, doing right. This depends upon our own choice. And it is equally rich in happiness with the outward world. You have all tasted it. You have felt the blessedness of doing your duty. You have felt the satisfaction of doing what is just, in opposition to what would promote your own selfish interests. You have felt the holy calm and peace of a conscience clear and at rest. You have felt the glow of pleasure with which every act of kindness and charity and generosity is forever after remembered. You have felt the delight of sympathy with all that is good and pure throughout the universe. In short, in your better hours you have felt a sympathy with the holy benevolence of the blessed Jesus, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, and went about doing good. It is the design of his mission, of all that he did and all that he taught, to confer on you this happiness, all that satisfaction which springs from doing right, all that felicity which he enjoyed on earth and now enjoys in heaven, where he is reaping that reward which was set before him. He would accomplish this by making you like himself, by rendering you good and holy.

Now we ask if there be not something rational and

intelligible in this view of salvation? Does it not enlist your best sympathies and feelings? Does it not seem an object worthy of the labors and sufferings of the great Messiah? Is it not freed from the common mystifications in which this plain and simple subject is involved by the technical phrases of metaphysical and theological language?

There is I know another view of salvation and the agency of Christ in bringing it about. We are aware that there are other views which make salvation an outward, coarse, material affair. Salvation by Christ, according to the Creeds and systems of divinity we have been examining, consists not in the moral and persuasive power he exercises over the mind, to reform, purify and strengthen it, to make it forever to enjoy the pleasure and happiness of righteousness, but to procure the pardon of sin for a certain number. In the language of the Westminster Confession, "Christ, by his obedience and death, did fully discharge the debt of all those that are thus justified, and did make a proper, real and full satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf." God justifies men, says this Confession, "not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and" "accepting their persons as righteous; not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing or any other evangelical obedience to them as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves; it is

the gift of God." Does not such a system of salvation as this, outrage and disgust every reasonable principle of the human mind? Is it not the preaching of such doctrines as this, which has driven hosts of the very best minds, and I fear I may add hearts too, into the ranks of infidelity, or made them listen coldly or superciliously to the Gospel as a tissue of paradoxes, riddles and contradictions, fit only to amuse and beguile the weakest understandings, but entirely removed alike from the regions of common life and of common sense?

Such a doctrine of salvation as this, we do not hesitate to aver, to be utterly inconsistent with the laws of mind, with the attributes of God, and the nature of man.

In the first place, it is said that Christ saves men by discharging their debt. Let us examine this matter a little, and see if it be possible in the nature of things. What analogy is there between sin and a debt? A debt is a sum of money, which another may pay and discharge. But is sin such a thing as to be separable from the sinner, and thus be transferable, and be discharged by another? It is a transaction between God and the soul of man, in which no third person can intermeddle. It is written not only in the book of God's retribution, but it is written in the soul of the sinner, and nothing but the tears of true penitence can wash it out, and when the conscience is cleansed, just so soon does God blot it out of the book of his remembrance, for so it is written, not once or twice, but many times in the Bible. He that "confesseth and forsaketh" his sins shall find mercy. "If we confess our

sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The idea of our sins being discharged then like a debt by another, without our repentance, is an impossibility in the nature of things, and if we do repent they are instantly forgiven by God without the intervention of a third person. That third person therefore, in order to bring about the forgiveness of our sins, must bring us to repentance. And this is the very thing by which we maintain that Christ is the Saviour of men, so far as he brings them to repentance for what they have already done amiss, and saves them from committing sin in future by forming them to virtue and holiness.

In the second place, the system of salvation by imputed righteousness, or the vicarious discharge of the sins of a part of mankind, makes it a thing entirely arbitrary. If it is "not for anything wrought in them, or done by them," that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to them, then there will be at the day of judgment, no ground of preference of one over another. The whole human race will stand on the same ground. The selection of some for happiness, and others for misery will be perfectly arbitrary. There will be no reason why some are received into enjoyment, and others sent away into suffering, except the arbitrary will of the judge. And can any one believe that he will proceed thus arbitrarily? No one surely, who has a single idea of God that is honorable to his character. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

In the third place, according to this principle the discipline of this world as a state of probation is entirely

lost and thrown away. The pains and pleasures of this life, operating upon our moral nature, free to choose as guided by the understanding, are plainly a discipline to us, to wean us from sin and attach us to virtue. Character, according to our ideas formed from experience, is a thing of slow growth. It is formed by a long succession of actions. It cannot from the very nature of things be communicated to a man. Actions cannot be communicated, and they are what constitute character. Almighty power cannot communicate actions to a man which he never did. The discipline of this life as far as we see, is intended to make man do certain actions and refrain from others. By doing one class of actions and avoiding another, he attains happiness and escapes misery,—and what is this but salvation? This world seems to be intended as a preparation for another by the formation of a character. But what is the use of this character and this preparation, if it is to be set aside at last, and men are to be judged by a character communicated, instead of the one which has been formed? This system of salvation by imputed righteousness contradicts every phenomenon in the moral world. It is inconsistent with the nature of things. It supposes what is not true, that sin is of the nature of a debt, something foreign and separable from the soul of the sinner which may therefore be paid, expiated or discharged by another. A better analogy would have been, that it is a poison taken into the system, which so far as it exists, must continually operate to destroy happiness and produce misery. It can be expelled only by repentance and reformation, and by

the laws of our nature the effects will remain even after the poison is expelled just in proportion to its amount, and the time it had been injuring the system.

This system, we have moreover seen, makes salvation arbitrary, partial and unjust, and therefore, entirely unworthy of a just and holy God. Besides, it overthrows a fundamental principle in our nature and condition, proclaimed by a thousand according voices within and around us, that we are in a state of probation, preparing by what we do, forming a character, for our whole future existence. This theory entirely destroys all connection between this life and another.

This leads us to speak of another view of salvation by Christ, which seems to us to be equally erroneous. It is said that salvation by Christ consists in restoring the ruin by the fall. A parallel is drawn, based on a few passages of Scripture, between what Adam did against us, and what Christ did for us. And what was the injury which Adam inflicted on his posterity according to this system? He ruined their nature, so vitiated their moral constitution, that they are incapable of willing or doing anything good and acceptable to God. Now we ask, how could what Christ did and suffered and taught, restore the natures of men who lived and died ages before he was born? To have done away and counteracted the effects of the sin of Adam, it should have restored the nature of the posterity of Adam before they began to act, and have given them the power of acting right, of which according to this system they were brought into the world destitute. The work of Christ did not counteract the effects of

the fall of Adam, assuming for argument sake that the fall of Adam did affect the nature of his posterity as is asserted, for they came into the world and acted and formed characters under this moral inability to do good and right. The work of Christ did not interpose so far as to give them a fair moral probation, for they could do nothing but evil. They were under the necessity from the first of sinning and suffering its punishment, laying up wrath against the day of wrath. They were deprived, according to this hypothesis, of the power of doing anything that is good, and of course of enjoying the happiness and the good consequences of it. We ask again, what effect could that which Christ did and suffered have had to change and restore the natures of men who lived and died ages before he was born?

But it may be said, that the sufferings and obedience of Christ were intended to have an effect on God, to induce him to remedy the effects of the fall. We answer in the first place, that it is an imputation on the character of God, to suppose that he needed to be moved by any other being to do what was right and expedient in itself. This is representing some other being as more wise and more benevolent than God, which to my mind seems little short of impiety. In the second place we say, the remedy was not applied in the right place. To have made the work of Christ commensurate with the injury of Adam, we ought at our birth or creation to have been restored exactly to that condition which we should have occupied had Adam never sinned, to the condition of power to do good as well as evil. But according to this system, man has

no such power, every act in his natural state is wrong and deserving God's damnation. This supposed work of Christ in inducing God to change men's natures, is not commensurate with the supposed work of Adam in ruining them. One is as hypothetical and imaginary as the other. But it may be rejoined, though God may not be induced by what Christ has done to restore the ruin of the fall in this world, he may on the confines of another, and by a transfer, an imputation of Christ's righteousness, may restore man to what he would have been had Adam never sinned. We can only answer, that if he extends it to one he must on the same principle extend it to all, and all be made happy alike. But this, all who maintain this system most strenuously deny; it is moreover, utterly improbable from all we know of God, or see of his character and providence. All experience and all revelation assure us, that all men are in a state of probation and are to be judged according to the deeds done in the body.

One more specimen of what we regard as erroneous views of salvation, and we shall have finished this part of the subject. It is often said, with great flippancy and great apparent smartness, "Your salvation will never do for me. I cannot trust myself in the hands of your Saviour. I must have an Almighty Saviour." We answer that this remark is more flippant and smart, than sensible or conclusive. We ask in return, for what purpose do you require an Almighty Saviour? To rescue you from the hands of God? You are in his hands, and must forever be. No one can deliver you from him. Hear what the Saviour, Christ, says: "My Father is



greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands." This remark instead of invalidating our views, merely shows the misapprehension of those who make it of what Christian salvation is, and how it is effected. That remark goes upon the supposition, that Christ saves men just as some giant would rescue a man from the hands of robbers, or snatch him from a dwelling in flames, from a wreck on the seas, or from the walls of a dungeon. They seem to suppose that Christ saves men by drawing them out of the fires of a local, material hell, where they have been cast by an angry and incensed God. In these gross, material conceptions of salvation, they entirely forget that salvation is a *state* of the mind, not the place in which the mind is. The hinderance of happiness is in the mind, not out of it. It is the criminal when suffering deep in his soul the horrors of remorse and so absorbed in his crime that he can think of nothing else, any more happy when under the broad and beautiful heaven, surrounded by the luxuriance of this magnificent earth, than when in the silent recesses of his dungeon?

Besides, this coarse, material conception of salvation supposes two things that are false: one, that any other being can be more powerful than God Almighty; and another, that we are, or can be safer or happier in any other hands than in those of our heavenly Father, whose very nature is love, and who pitieth us as a father pitieth his children. No! The difficulty is in our own souls. It is there that we must be saved by being delivered from the power of in-dwelling sin. There is no want of readiness on the part of God to bestow happi

ness on men, as far as they deserve it, or as far as they have prepared themselves to receive it. He cannot make a bad man happy, either according to the laws of his moral government, or according to the nature of the mind. The vicious, degraded mind, retaining its identity, is incapable of receiving happiness, as much as a diseased man is incapable of receiving ease and comfort. Milton, the poet of religion and of human nature, has in the character of Satan set this subject in its true light. The apostate exclaims: —

“ Me miserable! which way shall I fly  
 Infinite wrath and infinite despair?  
 Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;  
 And, in the lowest deep, a lower deep  
 Still threatening to devour me opens wide,  
 To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heaven.”

That state of the mind has been brought on by voluntary action, by abuse of the free will. It can be removed only by a change of that action. It can be only by repentance, reformation, and obedience. Man must be saved from sin by voluntarily changing the action of his mind. You perceive then, that almightiness is not the quality in the Saviour demanded, is not the indispensable requisite in salvation from sin. Were that the fact, is there not omnipotence enough in God to effect it? Certainly, all must confess that there is. But this is not the appropriate agency, or God our heavenly Father would choose to exercise it. Almighty and irresistible power, exercised upon man's mind, would destroy his free agency. And God chooses to save men through their free agency, not against it. Almighty and

irresistible power exerted on man's will, destroys the morality of his actions, makes them neither good nor bad, deserving neither praise nor blame, reward nor punishment. They are mechanical. He is a mere machine. His actions are no longer his own, but those of the Being of whom he is the passive instrument.

What you compel a man to do by irresistible power, makes him neither better nor worse. He can become worse only by exercising his own choice, so he can recover and become better only by exercising the same choice. Choosing bad actions is perdition, choosing good actions is salvation. It is plainly not the purpose of God to save men against their will, but through their will. All the salvation then, of which men are capable from the very nature of things, in a moral point of view, is by persuasion, instruction, motive, inducement, offered to the understanding, and through the understanding to the will. This principle may be illustrated in a thousand ways. Suppose a man is intemperate. How can he be saved and made a better man? Suppose God, by an act of his almighty power, destroys his capacity of excess, or annihilates all desire of stimulating drinks. The man is saved from intemperance. But how is he saved? By ceasing to be a moral agent in this particular. He is no better than he was before. To be saved in a moral and Christian sense of the term, he must change his course of conduct, still possessing the same powers. But how must he change? It must not be by a foreign, irresistible force, as we have seen, for that would destroy the moral character of his actions. He must be saved, if saved at all, by motives, persua-

sion, knowledge, inducement, operating through the understanding upon the will. He who should thus persuade him, would be his saviour, in the only sense in which he is capable of moral salvation.

What is true of this particular case is true of all moral salvation. It can take place only through the understanding and the will, by persuasion, instruction, motive, inducement. Almighty power, irresistible force, is not the requisite to these. Nay, it is inconsistent with them. The exercise of it would destroy them all. Force and persuasion are contradictory to each other. Where force begins, there persuasion ends, and free agency, and moral accountability, good or ill desert, end with it.

You perceive then, that the flippant remark which many of you have often heard, has more of smartness in it than point, and shows more ignorance than good sense. We have seen that almighty power, resistless force, so far from being necessary, are positively excluded, from the very nature of the work to be performed. Persuasion, instruction, motive, inducement, being the only means of salvation which the nature of the case and of man admits; he who can exercise these in the most perfect manner, has all the powers and attributes which the nature of the case requires or admits. Such powers and attributes had Jesus Christ, by the gift and endowment of God.

God surely is almighty enough to save all mankind, if mere power were all that were requisite. He might save all mankind from sin by his resistless power. But it would not be such a kind of salvation as the case of man

requires. It would not be a moral salvation. It would be a mechanical salvation. It would reduce men to mere machines, destroy the moral character of their actions, and in saving men from sin, make virtue, which consists in the free choice of good when evil was equally in the power of choice, impossible.

A part of salvation consists in inducing men to choose and perform good actions, so as to form a good and holy character. Mere force, destroying the freedom of the will, would defeat then, instead of promoting salvation. We see therefore why God permits that which is otherwise so inexplicable, so much moral evil in the world. He will not break in upon man's free agency. It is necessary to the very existence of all the goodness there is in being. He therefore bears with the evil for the sake of the good.

You perceive then the utter futility of that common reasoning that you hear, which argues because Jesus Christ is the Saviour of men he must therefore be an almighty being and one of the Persons of the Trinity. We have seen by an examination of the nature of things, that the exercise of almighty power is excluded by the very nature of the work he has to do. Persuasion, instruction, motive, inducement, it does not require almighty power or infinite attributes of any kind to impart, and the very constitution of man's moral nature forbids the use of any other. It is sufficient then that the Saviour of men should be endowed and furnished by God with all the powers and means to instruct, persuade, move, and induce. We believe and think that the uniform representations of the Scriptures asser, that

these were the very powers and means which God bestowed on Christ. We believe that God conferred on Christ those powers and means which were exactly commensurate with the work he was to perform, that of saving men from their sins. We see no evidence in Scripture that he possessed these powers and means inherently. We see, on the other hand, abundant evidence and assertion that they were all derived and communicated. "All things," says he, "are delivered unto me of my Father." "I can of mine own self do nothing." "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself." "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."

From the considerations we have now gone through, we are able I hope to understand more clearly the nature of Christian salvation, or of salvation by Christ. And we are now prepared, I trust, to answer the following important questions: What is it to be saved? From what are men saved? Who is the Saviour of men? How does Christ effect men's salvation?

First, what is it to be saved? If our investigations into the nature of man have resulted in the discovery of truth, it is to be induced to forsake sin, and practise goodness, to leave off doing wrong actions and to do right actions in future, to repent of what we have done amiss, and in time to come to avoid those evil actions we have before done, and those which we have never done, but which we are in danger of doing. This is to be in a state of safety, in a state of salvation. This is

largely described in the Scriptures. Isaiah displays it in his exhortations. "Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" that is, who avoid sin, and practise goodness. According to this idea, true Christians are said to be already saved. "According to his mercy he *saved* us." True Christians were in a state of salvation. Salvation is then a state of freedom from the guilt of sin and the habit of sin, and is the practice of goodness, begun here and perfected in heaven. It is eternal, final salvation; for moral evil is the only evil, which can accompany or follow us into another world. All other evils and sources of unhappiness must cease, and be destroyed at death.

Second, from what are we saved? We are saved from sin; not merely from punishment, but from sinful habit, from a state of moral degradation and debasement. The evil of sin is not so much that it is written in God's book of account against us, as that it is written in our own souls, enters into and as it were pollutes our spiritual nature, like poison or a disease. While it is in us, and so far as it is in us, we are in perdition, we are in hell, or hell is in us. That Saviour, who should interpose to expiate our sins, as it is called, and should procure them to be expunged from the records of hea-

ven, would still do us no good, for they would still be in us, and as far as they existed, would destroy or prevent our happiness. He must bring us to repentance and amendment, and then we shall begin to recover from our disease, and again enjoy health and happiness. And as fast as we rid ourselves of them, so fast they disappear and vanish from the book of God. For what says the Scripture? "But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions, that he hath committed, *they shall not be mentioned unto him*; in his righteousness that he hath done, he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live?" He that "confesseth and forsaketh" his sins shall find mercy. "Her sins," said Christ of the weeping penitent, "which are many, are forgiven." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

We are able to answer the third question: Who is the Saviour of men? We can answer it in the very words of Scripture, the words of the apostle Peter. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree, him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins." But is he the original cause, the first Mover of our salvation? By no means. He was raised up by God, and exalted to be a Prince



and a Saviour. He then is the instrumental cause of our salvation, and God is the original cause. God is our Saviour in the primary and Christ in a secondary sense.

All the powers by which Christ saves men, were communicated to him by God, they were not original and inherent. He was by the right hand of God exalted to be a Saviour, that is, received from God the qualifications and means to achieve man's salvation, to give men repentance and forgiveness of sins, to produce in them penitence and holiness.

This brings us to the fourth question we proposed to answer: What are those powers and means which God conferred on Christ, and in virtue of which "he is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him;" how does Christ save men, or how does God save men, through Christ?

Let the apostle Peter answer this question: "God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." It is a moral salvation then which he is to effect. It is a change in human conduct, from doing wrong to doing right. And does not this exactly correspond to the result of our investigation into the nature of man, and the kind of salvation he was capable of receiving? How does he bring about this change in their conduct? By the exertion of resistless power? That would be inconsistent with their free agency and the moral character of their actions. The only means, which their moral constitution will admit, are persuasion, instruction, motive, inducement, offered to the understanding of men,

and through their understanding to their will. Nothing is good or evil in man, or of good or ill desert, which does not pass through the understanding, is perceived by it to be good or evil, and is embraced or rejected as such by the will. The idea of making men good by irresistible power, almighty influence of any kind, is impossible. It destroys the very nature of goodness, which is, that it must be the free choice of right.

Christ must save us then, if he save us at all, according to the laws of our own nature, by persuasion, instruction, motive, inducement. And is not this the very nature of his Gospel? Is it not all persuasion, instruction, motive, inducement? Christ saves us then by his Gospel. Its wisdom is superhuman, and carries with it intuitive conviction to the mind of man. And God gave the Gospel to Christ. "I have given unto them," says he, in his prayer, "the words which thou gavest me." "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."

Christ saves men by his perfect character, for it instructs and persuades by the most powerful of all means, example. It likewise confirms the Gospel, and gives it power over the minds and hearts of men. It leaves us

an example that this should follow his steps, and then to us there is no condemnation.

He saves us by his crucifixion and his resurrection, for by devoting himself to death, to sustain the declaration "I am the Christ," he sealed the truth of his Gospel with his blood. By his resurrection he made immortality sure, and brought the whole weight of eternal consequences to bear upon the alternatives, the promises and the threatenings, which his Gospel presents, holding out to those who by a patient continuance in the ways of well doing, seek for glory, honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those that are contentious and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.

We have now reached the great object and end of our inquiry, and conclude that Christ saves men, not by expiating their sins, but by saving them from their sins, not by miraculously changing their natures, but by changing their moral action through instruction, persuasion, motive, inducement; not by overpowering the will, but by exciting it to right exercise. Does not salvation by Christ then appear to be a very simple, intelligible matter, after all the mystery that has been poured over it? Does it not appear in admirable consistency with all the laws of the human mind? Does it not enable you to settle a question of infinite moment to each one of you, viz. whether you are saved or not; whether you are in a state of salvation or perdition? Have you been persuaded, moved, induced by the Gospel to forsake sin, and practise goodness, or to avoid that sin you were

in danger of committing; then you have experienced, and are experiencing Christian salvation. If not, no matter what you believe, or whether you believe nothing, you are in a state of perdition. For the sinner must suffer as long as he continues to sin. "Christ," in the words of the apostle, "became the author of eternal salvation to them," and them only, "that obey him."

# LECTURE X.

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## REGENERATION.

1 PETER, I. 23—25.

“BEING BORN AGAIN, NOT OF CORRUPTIBLE SEED, BUT OF INCORRUPTIBLE, BY THE WORD OF GOD, WHICH LIVETH AND ABIDETH FOREVER. FOR ALL FLESH IS AS GRASS, AND ALL THE GLORY OF MAN AS THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERETH, AND THE FLOWER THEREOF FALLETH AWAY: BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURETH FOREVER. AND THIS IS THE WORD, WHICH BY THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED UNTO YOU.”

IT will be the object of this discourse to examine and explain the doctrine of regeneration, as it stands in the Scriptures, in the Creeds and systems of men, and as displayed in the phenomena of Christian experience. The main point to be kept in view throughout the whole, and which it is our chief purpose to settle is, whether in this process the mind of man is active or passive, whether it be effected by a power without or beyond the mind in which the mind is acted upon; or whether it be an achievement, in which the mind is active, uses its own powers and that assistance which God grants to all our actions, in the use of the means which he has appointed. We wish to know if the reason why one is regenerated and another is not, be a neglect on

his part to exercise a power which he possessed but failed to use, or the neglect or failure on the part of God to communicate to him those special influences of his Spirit or power, which are necessary to control the will and change the character.

It follows as a necessary part of that system of Divinity which we have been so long examining, and which contains the doctrine of the fall of man, the entire corruption of his nature, the consequent sinfulness of every act, and his entire inability to will or to do anything good and acceptable to God, that the mind with its ordinary powers and assistance, cannot originate any act or train of action, which is either good in itself, or leads to any good. It follows then as a necessary consequence, that as in punishment of the sin of Adam, God made the natures of his posterity in such a way that they can do nothing good, so nothing but an act of the same Almighty power can change that nature so as to give it even the capacity to do anything good and acceptable to God.

The state of man by nature is thus expressed in the tenth of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. "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: wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will."

In the Westminster Confession it is said, "All those

whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his Almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man; who is altogether passive therein, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it. Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when and where and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word; others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved; much less, can men not professing the Christian religion be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested."

Lest it should be said that we are combatting the dog-

mas of a by-gone age, I would remind you that the doctrines we have stated, are found in the Public Standards of the Presbyterian Church of the United States, and the Articles of the Episcopal Church of this country. I will likewise subjoin some of the statements of the ablest defenders of this system at different periods. President Edwards of Princeton, has the following expression in his works. "So long as men are in their natural state, they not only have no good thing, but it is impossible they should have or do any good thing." Man is "not susceptible of the things of the Spirit of God, because they are not discerned by means of any principle in nature, but altogether by a principle that is divine, something introduced by the grace of God's Holy Spirit, which is above all that is natural." "The power of the enmity of natural man against God is so great that it is insuperable by any finite power." "Natural men cannot overcome their own enmity, let them strive never so much with their own hearts." Thomas Scott, whose commentary on the Bible has been circulated so industriously and so widely in this country and in England, has in one of his notes the following passages: "Man by nature is unholy, and cannot relish or even discern the excellency of true religion." "He can neither repent, submit, believe, love nor obey; but must remain a rebel, an enemy." "He must be inwardly and effectually changed, before he can understand the nature and glory of the Gospel." "The new birth must precede all the actions of the spiritual life; till that has taken place, the man can neither see, hear, speak, walk, nor work in a spiritual manner." In this



new birth "a real creation is effected by his [God's] omnipotence. The regenerated sinner has the substance of all holy dispositions communicated to his soul." In the sermons of Henry Martyn, late missionary to the East, a widely received writer, is found the following passage : "There is in the dead body no power to return to life ; neither is there in the soul any ability to attain a spiritual life, or the exercise of holy affection toward God." "There is in the dead body no spark of life, that time or care may fan into a flame ; it will remain a corpse ; nothing but the power of God can raise it from the dead. In like manner there is in the natural man no latent principle of spiritual life ;" "a change" must be "wrought in him by an eternal agent, life put into him by the Spirit of God."

It is useless any further to multiply quotations. The import of what we have already given is too plain to be mistaken. The Westminster Confession asserts in so many words that the soul of man "is *altogether passive in regeneration*, that man cannot by anything he can do even 'prepare himself thereunto," that is, do anything that will make it more proper for God to regenerate him than any other person who has done nothing at all. Some of the private authorities we cited carry this doctrine out to a still greater fulness of statement. Edwards says, that there must be "a principle that is divine, something introduced by the grace of God's Holy Spirit, which is above all that is natural." Scott says, in this new birth "a real creation is effected by his [God's] omnipotence." "The new birth must precede all the actions of the spiritual life." Henry Mar-

tyn says, "In the natural man there is no latent principle of spiritual life, except there be a superadded principle from above, any more than there is life in a dead body; for either to return to life, requires an effort of the same almighty power."

Is it any wonder that the Bible is thrown away with contempt, notwithstanding all that is touching, and heavenly, and true in its pages, when its cause is identified with doctrines so paradoxical and revolting, I was going to say inconsistent with each other, but I should say consistent, horribly consistent with each other! It is a part of one consistent system, which, stripping God of mercy and man of freedom, reduces the whole universe to a dreary despotism, and subjects both God and man to a relentless and inexorable fate, which sweeps on, with stern and irresistible sway, over all beings and all events, through the ceaseless ages of duration.

We object to this doctrine of the mind being passive in regeneration, that it is an atrocious libel on the moral character of God, and if true, destroys his attributes of justice and goodness, makes it impossible for us to love or adore him, and absolves us from all allegiance to his throne, except that of mere power and compulsion. It represents him as requiring from men, what he does not give them power to perform, and then punishing them with the utmost severity because they do not comply. It is representing him as punishing mankind because he did not change their natures. Those who are passed by and left to perish in their sins, suffer forever in consequence, not of their own neglect to do anything which they might have done, but in con-

sequence of the neglect of God to do what he alone could do ; for this doctrine asserts that before regeneration every act is sinful, and it is impossible that it should be otherwise, and therefore there is nothing, which a man can do, which will have the least effect in inducing God to change his nature. Now this is the very essence of a tyranny, and whoever proves that to be the character of the God of the Scriptures, proves it to be a virtue instead of a crime to reject them as a standard of morality and religion ; makes it a virtue to turn to that Deity, which the mind forms to itself, out of the elements of truth and beauty and goodness, which it finds in its own nature, and scattered throughout the universe.

We object, in the second place, to this system of passive regeneration that it is inconsistent with, and destroys the moral nature of man. It makes man in the state of nature, to be not in a state of probation. He has no choice between good and evil. He cannot, from the very constitution of his nature, choose good. He can, and must, only choose evil. And therefore, although he may do that which is followed with evil consequences, it cannot be charged as sin or guilt upon the agent, because sin is a conscious, voluntary choice of evil, when good was equally in our power. It would be precisely as unjust in God to call such an one to account, and punish him for his evil actions, as to punish the beasts of prey for the exhibition of that very ferocity which he himself has made a part of their natures.

So, on the other hand, such a change in man's nature as to destroy all evil propensities, to annihilate all

the passions and appetites, and to give an entire predominance of the moral and intellectual over the animal, would equally destroy the probation of man. Such a change in man would be appropriate to a state of reward, but not of probation. If God so changes the nature of any human being, that any act is necessarily holy, then, although the act may be followed by good consequences and in itself be right, still the agent has no merit, is no better or more worthy of reward and of happiness for having done it.

Such a regeneration as this change of nature would be, instead of promoting by discipline a meritorious character, would put an instantaneous stop to all moral improvement, and render it impossible. All desert, all merit, all blame, all character, as instantly ceases when a man becomes incapable of doing evil, as when he becomes, or is incapable of doing good. And so, according to this theory, the regenerate are placed as far from the line of moral agency on one side, as the unregenerate are on the other. Suppose, when an agent, whom we think free, is deliberating on two courses of action, one of which he perceives to be good, and the other wicked, while he is holding the thing in suspense, and balanced, as we may say, a foreign agent having access to his mind, and sufficient power, gives supernatural strength to the good motive and turns the scale; though the action might be good, and benefit the man, would not the merit of it be entirely destroyed? Though we might call the man fortunate, could we call him worthy, or meritorious on that account? Supposing an evil spirit, on the other hand, should interpose and super-

naturally turn the scale in favor of the wicked action ; though the action might be evil, and attended with evil consequences, should we not consider the agent unfortunate rather than criminal ? Just so with a regenerated and an unregenerated man, according to the system we are considering. One is constrained to do evil by an agency without and beyond his control, his own nature made incapable of doing anything that is good ; and the other equally constrained by an agency without and beyond his control, to do good, by his own nature, changed, by an immediate act of God, from a prompter to all evil, to a prompter to all good.

It may be objected to this, that according to my own showing, the principles laid down would destroy the moral desert of very good men in their actions, and the moral turpitude of very bad men in theirs. For it is confessed on all hands that long habits of sin do at length in a manner enslave the will, till at last it becomes next to impossible for a wicked man to choose right, and habit or his own nature depraved by bad usage, comes in like an evil, supernatural power, to turn the scale and determine the mind to evil. According to my system, it may be objected, he is not to blame. So on the other hand, by long habits of virtue the choice of good becomes spontaneous and almost infallible. It may be said, that I would make the suggestions of habit destroy all merit, and a man become incapable of virtue, just in proportion to his approach to perfection.

I answer, that the slavery of the will, the incapacity to do good, has been brought on by the man himself.

It is one of the natural consequences and punishments of sin. So has the readiness of the choice of good been produced in the good man by his own free agency by forming the habit of choosing right, and he is justly entitled to all its benefits, as the other as justly suffers the merited effects of indulgence in what he knew to be wrong. And this opens to us the atrocity of that injustice which this system charges upon God. It makes him inflict this impotence of the will, this incapacity to all that is good, on an innocent being, on every child that comes into the world, previous to all moral action, all character and desert, which could be the just punishment only of a long course of wilful sin. On the other hand, he bestows this spontaneous choice of good, which we have seen is the necessary consequence and the proper reward of a long course of well-doing, arbitrarily on some, who have done nothing, and according to this system could do nothing, to merit this unspeakable and immeasurable distinction.

These considerations moreover throw great light on the doctrine of spiritual influences in general. They show us what immediate action of God upon the mind is consistent with moral agency and what is not. We see there can be no action immediately upon the will. God, it is true, may by his access to the mind, and the power he has over it, influence a man to do this or that, or to go to this place or that, and this action or motion may save the man's life, or procure him some other good. But so far as his will was acted upon by God, he is neither better nor worse, his moral probation or progress is neither hindered nor helped by it. In order

that an action may have a moral character, and make a man better or worse, it must originate in the determination of the will itself, and not in something else, or in some other will. Whatever influence God exercises upon man as a moral agent, to make him better or worse, must not touch the will, but leave it free. Any attempt to make man good by operating immediately on the will, even by almighty power, must defeat itself and destroy that very freedom on which all good or ill desert depends. Nothing in man, we have already observed, is of a moral nature, either of good or ill desert, which does not pass through the understanding, is not perceived by that to be either good or evil, and is not embraced by the will as good or evil. The only way then in which God himself can act upon the mind of man, by which he can be made morally better, is by presenting ideas to his understanding. Why not produce feelings and dispositions and actions? We answer, that feelings produced in any other way than through the understanding which approves or disapproves, have no moral character, and though they may promote present enjoyment or produce suffering, do not merit either praise or blame, do not make a man either better or worse. And dispositions not the result of choice and cultivation, but arbitrarily bestowed, are equally destitute of all worth or ill desert. Were goodness the production of the immediate action of God upon the will, the feelings and dispositions, all external means and institutions of religion and morality would have been superfluous. No revelation would ever have been given, for the inward man was just as accessible

to God without as with a revelation. All we can say is, that this immediate influence is not the way in which he has chosen to call forth goodness in man. It is by addressing him from without through the senses, by nature, by Providence, by experience, by the example of others, by the accumulated wisdom of ages, by revelation, by prayer, by the other institutions of religion. With these he has connected the growth of holiness in the soul of man, just as he has connected the sowing of the seed and the labors of cultivation with producing a harvest, instead of calling it into being by an immediate act of creative power.

We object, in the third place, that the doctrine of passive regeneration connected with human inability, makes the preaching of the Gospel a solemn mockery. It makes the preacher contradict himself at every breath. He stands professedly to call sinners to repentance, and he must, if he be faithful, say to men, in the name, and as the ambassador of Christ, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But if he tell them the whole truth, as he is bound to do, he must likewise tell them, that it does not depend upon their will, that they cannot make one effectual motion towards it, till God works upon their hearts, and there is nothing that they can do which will prepare themselves for it, or induce God to do it. If this be not a solemn mockery, and a cruel one, I know not what is. That it does not bring all such religious instruction into entire discredit, is because the grossness of the contradiction is kept out of sight, by general, mystical, and indefinite language.



We object to the doctrine of passive regeneration, and in short the doctrine as it is taught in the Creeds and preached at the present day, that it is founded on a perversion of the figurative language of Scripture. So indeed have been most of the extravagances which have disfigured the Christian church. It was thus that the doctrine of transubstantiation was drawn from the phrase, "this is my body," and of vicarious sacrifice from Christ's redeeming us with his blood. Figurative language is the comparison of one thing with another for the sake of illustration, from some point of resemblance. But instead of stopping at those points in which there is a real resemblance, enthusiastic minds run on to find or make a resemblance where there is none. This is sometimes harmless. But it does not stop here. Some minds pass from enthusiasm to fanaticism, and insist in transferring to the thing compared, all the qualities and circumstances of the thing to which it is compared.

Thus, because Christ called the process by which a man became a true Christian in his day, being "born again," not from any resemblance between the two things, but from an accidental cause, as I shall hereafter show, the expression has been caught up and made to contain the very essence of the Gospel. Happening to fall in, as it did, with the theory of man's entire corruption and inability, which has prevailed since the days of Calvin, though occurring but a few times, it has been more used perhaps in Protestant churches, to express that spiritual renovation which is the legitimate effect of the Gospel, than all the many terms which

signify the same thing in the whole New Testament. The nature of spiritual renovation has been imagined and described to be, not what it is, but what natural birth is. Instead of investigating spiritual renovation in its own laws and nature, they go for them to natural birth, and insist, because of the comparison, that one is precisely like the other in every respect. Men are not born according to their own wills, or volitions, so it follows logically and philosophically, that we are passive in regeneration. One takes place in a very short space of time, so the other must without question likewise be instantaneous. And as a person once born cannot relapse into a state of being unborn, so it is demonstrably proved that a good man can never become a bad man. Thus it is that the literal parts of Scripture are sacrificed, and made to bend to the figurative, and even contrary figures are overlooked and forgotten. It is forgotten that Christ and his apostles always addressed men as free, "Whosoever *will*, let him take the water of life freely." It is forgotten that the kingdom of heaven is compared to leaven, to the gradual growth of corn, and a grain of mustard seed. It is forgotten that all Christians were warned against relapse, and Paul himself felt the possibility of becoming a castaway.

What do men mean by thus treating the doctrine of revelation? Do they wish to mystify instead of explaining the Bible? Do they wish to make it a riddle instead of a plain book? Do they wish to make the people entirely dependent on the Priesthood, or would they so enlighten them that they may find the way to heaven themselves? Would they make the Gospel

glad tidings, or the means of filling men's minds with confusion, alarm and distress ?

This brings me to the second principal division of discourse, the examination of that part of Scripture, on which this phraseology is founded. It is taken, as you know, from the third chapter of John, from Christ's conversation with Nicodemus. That conversation I shall now attempt to explain.

And we first observe that the artificial division of the Bible into chapters and verses, as often in other cases, so peculiarly in this, has contributed to obscure the meaning, by destroying the connection on which the whole point and bearing of the conversation depend. The last three verses of the preceding chapter ought to have belonged to this, as they are immediately introductory, and state a general truth of which the conversation with Nicodemus is a particular proof, example, illustration. "Now when Jesus was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man." As an example of this he goes on to say, "There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles which thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." What an-

swer was this to the address of Nicodemus? None at all, surely. But it was something more. It was an answer to what was in him, to his thoughts, and purposes, and his whole character. Being "born again," was a phrase very well understood by Nicodemus, because it was a phrase in common use among the Jews, and applied to the act of becoming a proselyte to Judaism from idolatry. The convert was washed or baptized, received a new name, renounced his natural kindred, and by a kind of legal fiction, became a child of Abraham, and commencing a new life, was very naturally said to be born again. Such, said Christ to Nicodemus, must be the change, which must take place in every one, even a Jew, who is received into the kingdom of heaven, and becomes a true Christian. Nicodemus undoubtedly understanding him in that sense, inquires, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Can we Jews, who have grown old in our religion, renounce it for a new one? Are we not now the people of God? "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born," of water and spirit, not "of water and of the Spirit" as our version has mistranslated it, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." You come to me in secret, and profess your convictions of my prophetic character. Go, and be baptized, and openly profess your faith. You come relying on your birth as a Jew to entitle you to the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, I solemnly assure you, that no natural lineage gives you any such privilege. Birth into my kingdom must be spiritual,

not of the flesh. He who becomes a follower of mine, by imbibing the spirit of Christianity, is the true son of Abraham, and child of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the spirit is spirit." He who is a child of Abraham according to the flesh, is merely a man. He has no moral or spiritual character on that account. But he who by my doctrine becomes in his soul like Abraham, he becomes a true member of the new church, the kingdom of heaven, and a spiritual child of Abraham. The whole error in this doctrine of passive regeneration, so far as it is founded on this passage has arisen from considering "spirit" in this case to mean the Holy Spirit. The contrast is not between flesh and the Holy Spirit, but between the corporeal and the spiritual part of man; those who derived their birth from Jewish parents, and those who became true Christians in their souls. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit." Be not astonished that I say to you Jews, ye must be born again, must outwardly profess, and inwardly, spiritually adopt and practise my religion; for although you may trace human descent and parentage, and ascertain by something outward, who are or who are not Jews by birth, the children of Abraham, and as you conceive, the children of God, spiritual birth the true children of Abraham, cannot be discovered by anything of the kind. Virtue and holiness, acknowledge no such descent. They are equally within the attain-

ment of every soul. You cannot trace them to any earthly origin or lineage, any more than you can find the place where the wind that blows begins, or where it ends.

To what then does this amount? Simply to this. The Evangelist John relates of Jesus, as an evidence of his Messiahship, what the Jews expected of their Messiah, that he should have power to discern the thoughts and characters of men; that on his first visit to Jerusalem after his baptism, Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews came to him by night, for fear of committing himself by such a visit by day, with a design no doubt, to do what in modern homely phrase would be called to sound him, to lead him into conversation, to find out more of him, his mission and designs, in order to become his follower or not, as his prudence or interest might ultimately dictate. Jesus at once discovering the character and mental condition of the man, instead of replying directly to his address, which was merely a respectful profession of belief in his prophetic character, answers, to his thoughts, opinions and purposes, and tells him that baptism, outward profession, and spiritual renovation, were the only initiation into his kingdom. It was the renovation of the soul which was the requisite, not the birth of the body of Jewish lineage. That is, a man, to enjoy the blessedness of the Messiah's kingdom, must become a Christian, both by profession and practice, both outwardly and inwardly.

Is there one word said here of the fall of man, of original sin and entire inability in man to will or to do any good? Is there anything intimated of the necessity

of his nature being changed by an Almighty fiat, before he is capable of moral agency? Is there any indication that the souls of men were merely passive in their translation into the kingdom of God? It does not appear that Jesus was speaking on that subject. There is no mention of the agent in regeneration at all. He neither asserts nor denies that the soul is regenerated by the irresistible influences of the Holy Spirit. He merely declares that the qualifications for admission into the kingdom of heaven are spiritual, of the mind, and not of the flesh or body, by birth or descent. By what means those qualities are produced or acquired, he does not assert. It would have been entirely foreign to his purpose and to the subject, to have said anything about it. But there are circumstances in the case, which show that he did not suppose that spiritual regeneration was produced by any foreign, irresistible agency. For it is coupled in the same category, and made a part of the same condition, with being born of water. That was certainly voluntary, and brought about by free, voluntary agency, and we have a right to suppose spiritual birth or the moral preparation, to be voluntary likewise. To suppose otherwise, would be to suppose that Christ gave as a condition of entering his kingdom, one thing which men could comply with, and another which they could not; which would make the condition, as offered to free, intelligent, and responsible agents, exceedingly trifling and inconsequent. So you perceive that the doctrine of passive regeneration finds no support in that very passage of Scripture from which it is derived. It is as inconsistent with Scripture, as it is

with common sense and the nature of things. Both Scripture and reason unitedly testify, that a man's actions to have any moral character, to make him better or worse, must originate in himself. There is no such thing as passive, mechanical virtue and holiness.

If we would learn what other agent there is besides man's will in regeneration, we must go to our text. "Born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." The word of God, then, this is the great spiritual power which, in conjunction with the will, works a spiritual renovation in a man. Now we have come to something rational and intelligible. The word of God addresses itself to the understanding, the rational faculties of man, and through them to the will, and therefore the actions it induces men to do may have a moral character, be worthy of praise or blame. We can readily see how a man may become spiritually renovated, or spiritually born into the kingdom of God by the word of God, for it operates by persuasion, instruction, motive, inducement. It may work a thorough change in him without violating his free agency, but through his free agency. But the other interpretation, being born of the Holy Spirit, in the sense of a miraculous change of nature by irresistible power, has no moral character at all, neither makes a man better nor worse. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." He had just before been speaking of his being the bread of life, and giving his flesh and blood to be the life of the world. Some of them took offence at it; he explains himself: It is my doctrine I mean. "It is the spirit



that quickeneth ; the flesh profiteth nothing : the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life ;” and as spirit, have power to quicken and communicate spiritual life. “ Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy word is truth.” The word, then, has power to quicken and sanctify. And what is this but spiritual renovation, regeneration, birth of the soul into the kingdom of God ? When, says the apostle, “ the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” By preaching what ? The word, surely. But was not the power of God required to connect the word, the cause, with the effect, the spiritual renovation of the hearer ? Certainly. So is his power requisite to connect any other cause with its effect, the sowing of the seed with the springing of the plant. And the accompanying agency of God is as sure in the one case as in the other. But there is another agency to come in on both occasions, that of man. He must receive the word into a good and honest heart. The Gospel did not save men against their will. It only gave them the opportunity to be saved. And the reason why one was spiritually renovated, reformed, saved, and another failed to be, was not because he withheld that efficiency from his word in one case which he gave it in another, but because one man chose to obey and the other to resist it.

“ For every one that asketh receiveth.” Why ? Because he asks. But this theory makes it necessary for him to receive the very thing he asks before he asks, otherwise he cannot ask acceptably. The very thing which he wishes to have done for him must have been

done before, or it is useless for him to pray, and if it has been done, it is manifestly useless. "The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word and it becometh unfruitful." "What, choke the word, if it be irresistible! Can omnipotence be defeated? If man be altogether passive in regeneration, can anything in him, either the cares of this world or anything else, afford any effectual resistance?"

The doctrine of passive regeneration by irresistible power must be given up as inconsistent with the laws of the mind, the moral constitution of our nature, and unsupported, nay, contradicted by the sacred Scriptures.

It may now occur to ask, what then is regeneration by the word of God, or the Gospel, as applied to us? We will attempt to explain it. The only way, we before demonstrated, in which a man can be morally changed, and made a better man, is through his understanding and will, by instruction, persuasion, motive, inducement.

The Gospel is a system of doctrines, a collection of facts, a body of motives, precepts, and predictions, which are addressed to the understanding, the conscience, the feelings, the sympathies, the whole moral nature of man, and through all these to the will, to produce right action. Its effect, of course, is to form a good character when there is none, and reform it when it is bad. The spiritual birth spoken of by Christ, does not define the condition before it took place to be either sinful or innocent. He merely insists that to be a Christian, a man must possess a Christian character.

The Gospel enlightens the understanding, teaches it concerning God, the fountain and foundation of all religion, and makes him the all-commanding motive, the central, all-pervading force in spiritual things. It teaches more of man and duty, and the reasons of it; and thus informs, awakens, and quickens the moral sense. It sets before us Jesus Christ with his all perfect character, to be an object of our sympathies and affections, and thus enlists our feelings on the side of goodness. Through his resurrection, it opens to us the spiritual world with its tremendous and eternal retributions. It gives us access with greater confidence to the Father of mercies in our devotions. When therefore, one who has been instructed by the Gospel is placed in a situation where a moral choice is to be made, there is a greater probability that he will choose right, for he sees more clearly the reasons for it, and his whole nature is enlisted on the side of right. By the repetition of such actions the character is formed, the soul is born into the kingdom of heaven.

But the Gospel has power to change as well as form the character. A man grows up decidedly bad. In order to enter into the kingdom of God he must become a good man. This takes place under the influences of the religion of Jesus,—sometimes suddenly, but oftener by slow advances. When it is done, how has it been accomplished? The theory we have been examining makes it to have been accomplished by almighty, irresistible power, changing his nature, or forcing his will. Such a change, we have already demonstrated, would destroy all moral agency and accountability. How then

does it happen? Not by a change of moral nature but by a change of moral action. One is within the power of man's free will, and the other is not.

In the first place, there is a change in the objects of his attention. We all know we have the power of turning our minds, our thoughts, to whatever we please. Before, the man of whom we speak, paid no attention to religion or religious subjects. He was entirely absorbed in worldly or vicious pursuits. Something called his attention forcibly to religion. Some exhibition of Gospel truth perhaps impressed him, or some event of providence; or he spontaneously directed his mind that way, as men may direct their minds to any subject or any pursuit. Instead of thinking of his business, and his worldly affairs, when he is in the house of God, he enters into the devotions, he attends to the Scriptures, and listens with desire of personal improvement to the preaching. Instead of reading secular books exclusively, when he has any time to devote to reading, he turns his attention often to the Bible. By thus directing his mind to the religion of the New Testament, its nature is not changed. It is the same mind in all its faculties and endowments that it was before. The objects only, to which its exercises are directed, are changed. His understanding is enlightened, and his knowledge enlarged. He becomes acquainted with his duty and the reasons of it. He learns more of God, of himself, and of the consequences of his conduct. By this direction of his attention to the teaching of Jesus, his moral sense, his conscience is awakened, made more active and discriminating. His motives for obeying its dictates are more

fully displayed and comprehended. And when he again comes to act, those considerations which were before overlooked present themselves, and he will no longer act as he did before he attended to them. His choice is different, his conduct and consequently his character changed.

In the second place, the objects of his pursuit are changed. The powers by which he pursues them are unaltered, but the objects to which they are directed are changed. Before, all his actions and energies were directed to the acquisition of worldly advantages. By the Gospel he is taught that these are not the only good; that the calm satisfactions of an approving conscience, the sense of the approbation of God, the sentiment of duty, the exercise of the benevolent and religious affections, are as rich and valuable sources of happiness as those which he has exclusively cultivated. He directs his efforts to gain these good things. When called upon to act, he chooses with reference to these, he chooses to secure the approbation of his conscience by obeying its dictates, to secure the favour of God by doing his will. He seeks the pleasures of benevolence by exercising it on all proper occasions. He seeks the pleasures of devotion by maintaining communion with God.

In the third place, the objects of his affections are changed. The faculty by which he loves, undergoes no alteration. It has now new objects. Before, he was conversant only with the things of the world, with the pleasures of the senses, and the unlawful gratification of the passions. These are attended with a degree of pleasure, though of a low and unsatisfactory kind, and

besides, wound the conscience and injure the mind. However, being the only objects with which his mind is conversant, habit and a slight degree of gratification make him attached to them. But on directing his attention to religion and becoming acquainted with a new class of objects, such as conscience, virtue, piety, God, and spiritual things, he finds that these too have their pleasures; he becomes attached to them, and they destroy his relish for the other class of objects and wear him from them.

Thus it is that the man's habits of action become entirely changed, his feelings and affections. His character is changed, and he is born into the kingdom of God. But there is no change of nature, no irresistible action of God upon his soul. It is the result of his own free agency. But it may be asked, do you exclude divine influence? We answer, no. But "the Spirit helpeth our infirmities," does not originate or perform our actions. God gives "the Holy Spirit to them that ask him," but not in order to cause them to ask him.

Here then is the distinction the neglect of which has been the source of so much mistake. Regeneration is a voluntary change of moral action, not a change of nature. That theory which would make it a change of nature, would make man not a free agent either before or after regeneration. Before, he has not the power to do good, and afterwards, as this doctrine is always connected with that of the saints' perseverance, he "is kept by the power of God unto salvation." Now he can be literally so kept only by destroying his free agency. So, before regeneration, he is prevented by

God, through his own nature, from doing good ; and after regeneration, he is prevented from doing evil by the same power, by a change of his nature, or an interference with his will. He is therefore not a free agent in either case.

But the theory of regeneration consisting in an instantaneous and entire change of nature seems in sad contradiction to facts. How happens it that the regenerated sin at all ? If before regeneration every act was sinful because it proceeded from a sinful nature, so after regeneration, by which the nature is made holy, every act ought to be holy, according to the nature from which it proceeds. But this is not the case. Those who are thought regenerate, still continue to sin. The capacity to sin is not taken away, nor the inclination. To what, then, does that holiness of nature amount, which still leaves the capacity and the inclination to sin and occasional indulgence ? What more can the unregenerate man have, than the capacity and the inclination to sin, and occasional indulgence ? There is no difference of nature between them. The only possible difference is, that one yields to temptation more frequently than the other. And to what does this amount ? To different habits of moral action. The only difference between them is different degrees of virtue and vice, of holiness and sin. But, it is said, up to the point of regeneration the unregenerate can do nothing good, are incapable of virtue. I answer, that this bears the same marks of extravagance with the assertion that the regenerate man cannot sin. And as one is not true, the other, being based on the same hypothesis, is just as likely to be

false. This point is imaginary. There is every gradation of character, from the highest to the lowest. There is no such great chasm at any particular line. All the regeneration which facts and the experience of life exhibit to us, is that of more good actions and less sins than before, and that is a change of moral action, not of moral nature.

But, it may be said, a man must be something or nothing, regenerate or unregenerate, a saint or a sinner, in a state of perdition or salvation. I answer, that this representation arises from gross ideas and false conceptions and analogies. It arises from urging the figure of birth in a point where it was not intended to apply, and from supposing future happiness or misery is to arise from place, not moral condition. Let us bring these conceptions to the test of the word of God. He that "is born of God sinneth not." That is true to the letter. But who arrives at such a degree of perfection as this in the present world? Then no one is fully born in a spiritual sense till he arrives at the perfection of heaven. Regeneration, then, instead of being momentary, embraces the whole Christian course from the beginning to the end.

But what change in the moral nature of man keeps him from sinning, according to this system, after regeneration? It must be a change of some or all the powers concerned in moral action. These are the understanding and moral sense, the passions and appetites, and the will. We have already demonstrated that the will cannot be immediately touched without destroying moral action. The appetites and passions cannot, without de-



stroying temptation, and of course moral probation. There remain, then, only the understanding and the moral sense. And these are the very powers which need not miraculous interference. They are the very powers which man can cultivate and strengthen, to any extent, by his own moral actions ; and for the cultivation and improvement of which there are provided means as boundless as the universe, and as rich as the unsearchable and inexhaustible stores of divine revelation, and accessible as the everlasting fountain of devotion springing up perpetually in the soul.

We conclude, therefore, that the soul is active, not passive, in the process of spiritual renovation, in being born into the kingdom of heaven.

## LECTURE XI.

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### WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY.

ROMANS, 1. 16.

“FOR I AM NOT ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST; FOR IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION TO EVERY ONE THAT BELIEVETH.”

WHAT is Christianity? This is the question which I propose this evening to discuss. I am not unaware of the difficulty of defining so wide and general a subject, or compressing that definition into a single discourse. I am not unaware, likewise, of the great variety of answers which might be given to this question, all equally true according to the view taken of it, and the purpose for which it is considered. The answer we shall attempt to give it, will be with reference to this point,—its power over the minds, hearts, and lives of men. What in it are the sources of its moral and spiritual power? Its effect upon mankind was at once great and signal. It immediately formed a community of a character more pure and exalted than the world had ever known. And from that day to this, those who have enjoyed its influence have been distinguished from the rest of the world by a marked superiority of moral, social, and intellectual condition. An effect has been produced. That effect

must have had an adequate cause. That cause is contained in the narrow compass of the New Testament. It is not pretended that there is anything traditionary in our religion. It is all written down in the memoirs of the evangelists and apostles. Does it exceed the powers of the human mind to trace these effects to their causes? In doing this we shall discover what is essential to Christianity, and what is not, a point than which nothing can be more important to settle with certainty and conviction.

It may have seemed, and doubtless has seemed to many honest minds, that in discarding the doctrines we have been discussing, such as the Trinity, original sin, moral inability, vicarious punishment, passive and irresistible regeneration, and their associated doctrines, that we had stripped Christianity of all its peculiar and most precious elements, and made it another Gospel. This impression may be very honest and sincere, and at the same time very erroneous. It may be that their impressions as to what Christianity is, may have arisen more from habit than examination. They have perhaps been accustomed to hear these doctrines preached as the sum and substance of the Gospel, and have associated with them their religious ideas and feelings. It may be, then, that their belief in these opinions and dogmas, is rather traditionary than derived from the Bible. When they miss their old theological terms and doctrines, when they hear the Gospel stripped of these peculiarities, it may seem another Gospel, not because it is different from the Gospel of the New Testament, but because it is different from the creeds, systems, and inventions of men.

The only way to determine which is the true Gospel, is to compare them both with the preaching of the apostles. We have in the Acts, records of their preaching for thirty years. We have sketches of their sermons on many important occasions, before large bodies of men, both Jews and heathens. We have sermons which were followed by the most signal effects, the conversion of thousands to Christianity, such effects as demonstrated the doctrines taught, whatever they were, to be the true Gospel, which is well characterized in our text as "the power of God unto salvation."

We have every reason to believe that what they taught was the true Gospel, and all that was essential to it, because in the first place they were under the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, and in the second place, because it produced the effect, which the Gospel was intended to produce, the moral and spiritual renovation of the hearers, repentance, reformation and obedience. I beseech you, therefore, to follow me with an impartial mind while I examine the preaching of the apostles as recorded in the Acts. And I entreat you, one and all, not only to listen to these lectures with candor, but to imitate the conduct of the noble Bereans, so highly commended by Paul, to search the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so. Neither receive nor reject the doctrines you hear in this place, on human authority, but go to the Bible, and comparing one part with another, endeavor to make a consistent whole.

We shall first examine the first Christian sermon that was ever delivered, and one which was followed by the

conversion of a greater number than any other sermon ever preached, the conversion of three thousand souls. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up." "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Such then is the substance, and such were the effects of the first Christian discourse. We now proceed to analyze its doctrines. Does it contain the doctrine of the Trinity? Not the least hint or glimpse of it from beginning to end. God is

spoken of as one individual Being, altogether distinct from Christ and superior to him; as having wrought his miracles, when he was on earth, "miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him;" as having raised him from the dead, exalted him by his right hand, and granted those miraculous powers now possessed by the apostles, and made him both Lord and Christ, "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Is there any hint of the Supreme Deity of Jesus Christ, any intimation that he had two natures, one of which was the Second Person of the Trinity, equal to the Father, any glance even at his omnipotence and independence? Let the words of the apostle decide. "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God," or more literally, proved to be a man from God "among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him." "Him ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, whom God hath raised up." Deity certainly, can be hardly predicated of such a being. He was not even Lord and Christ, by his own original right or nature, for "God hath *made* that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." The Holy Ghost is likewise mentioned in this discourse, but how, as God, as a Person of the Trinity, as a person at all? "Having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost," or to translate the Hebrew idiom, "the promised Holy Ghost," or the Holy Ghost which was promised, "he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Can the third Person of the Trinity be re-

ceived from the First, by the Second, and shed forth on the apostles? Miraculous powers might be, but all this ill agrees with the attributes of a person. The Trinity, then, so far from being found in this first Christian discourse, is not only left out, but contradicted.

Is there anything said in this discourse of the fall of man, original sin, total depravity, and entire inability? Not one word. These doctrines are passed over in the most profound silence. Other doctrines too are mentioned, which are inconsistent with them. "Save yourselves," says he; but how could this be, if the soul be entirely passive in salvation, if we are delivered by a foreign power? He teaches then, that men must save themselves in the use of their own natural powers, and the extraordinary means which were then afforded them. But what were they to do in order to be saved? "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." That is, become Christians inwardly and outwardly, by profession and practice, and your sins shall be blotted out, you shall be accepted by God. Is the doctrine of conversion by the irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit taught here? Mark well. "Repent, and be baptized," and your sins shall be forgiven, and then, and not till then, "ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Spiritual influences, all the spiritual influences here alluded to, are the consequence of repentance and conversion, not the causes of it. From what are they to save themselves? From the corruption of their nature, inherent in them, in consequence of which they are

unable to will, or to do, anything good and acceptable to God? No! "Save yourselves from this untoward generation," the wickedness and depravity, for which that generation were distinguished. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." Now here is an instance of three thousand souls in the Christian church, converted and become Christians indeed, without knowing one word of the doctrine of the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the Deity and personality of the Holy Spirit, vicarious punishment, original sin, entire inability, passive regeneration, in short, the least intimation of any of those doctrines which in modern times are upheld to be the very essence and potency of the Gospel. These doctrines not being found in the preaching of the apostles, of course could have had no agency in their conversion, in their moral renovation and their becoming true Christians. This discourse then, must contain the efficient doctrines of Christianity, must contain that which gives it its power over the minds and hearts of men. It must contain all of the Gospel, which makes it the instrument in the hands of God for the salvation of men. What then are the doctrines it contains? In the first place, the unity, the perfections and agency of God are taken for granted, are assumed; for the apostle was addressing the Jews, to whom the existence and attributes of God had long been known. Second, the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, "God hath made that



same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." Thirdly, his resurrection from the dead, by which every other doctrine is confirmed, all that he had taught and promised and threatened them, was demonstrated to be true. And the inference, drawn from this by the apostle was, that they must repent and become true Christians by profession and practice.

Now we ask, is it not singular, is it not astonishing, is it not unaccountable, that effects so truly evangelical as the conversion of three thousand souls should have been produced by a sermon, in which there is not one single evangelical doctrine of modern times? And is it not still more astonishing, that three thousand souls should have been readily received into the Christian church by the inspired apostles, in consequence of their assent to the above simple doctrines, and the very name and privileges of Christians be refused by uninspired men to multitudes in our days, who believe, and profess to believe, the same with these primitive disciples?

The next discourse of the apostles to which I shall direct your attention is that of Peter to Cornelius and his friends at Cesarea. I select this because it was an address to heathens, as the other was an address to Jews. We wish to see what doctrines he would teach pagans in addition to those he had announced as the Gospel to Jews. "Then Peter opened his mouth and said, 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. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (he is Lord of all); That word,

I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Now, we ask, what new or additional doctrine we have here, not stated in the former discourse? Addressing Gentiles, he says that God is no respecter of persons, not the God of the Jews only, but of all nations and all men. All are in his sight in a state of trial and probation, according to the light they have, and if faithful in the use of that light, have it equally in their power to become acceptable to God. Is this consistent or is it not, with the doctrine of election and reprobation, of the natural inability of man to will or do anything good, the necessity of an irresistible and supernatural change?

He then goes on to mention the mission, miracles, ministry, and death of Jesus of Nazareth. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and

with power." Here are what are called the three Persons of the Trinity, placed in such a light as entirely to refute the doctrine. According to that theory, it would be asserted, that the First Person of the Trinity anointed the Second Person with the Third. Beside the solecism of such language as this, it involves suppositions utterly subversive of the Trinitarian hypothesis. It supposes the power of Jesus Christ, without any reservation or limitation of persons or natures, to have been derived, communicated to him by the First Person through the instrumentality of the Third. Where is then his original and underived omnipotence? And as to the personality of the Holy Ghost, I have only to ask you if that agrees with anointing, if one person can with any appearance of congruity be said to be anointed with another? He glances likewise at the reconciliation and amalgamation of Jews and Gentiles in the new religion; "preaching peace by Jesus Christ; (he is Lord of all);" that is both of Jews and Gentiles. As Paul afterwards more fully expresses it in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh"—"But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."

The next important point which the apostle mentions is the resurrection. That he dwells on with more distinctness than in his sermon to the Jews. "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before

of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead." This is the great fact of which they were the witnesses and upon which they always insist in all their preaching. "And he commanded us to preach unto the people and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." In what sense Christ is here said to be the judge of quick and dead, it is foreign to our present purpose to inquire. It is sufficient to prevent all misconceptions of his nature and character, that he is said to be ordained of God to this office. The fact is the main point, the all-important disclosure, that there is to be a judgment as well as a resurrection. He closes, as he did before, with the doctrine of the remission of sins. What then is the summary of the Gospel which Peter preached to Cornelius? The impartiality of God, the salvability of the heathen, the mission, miracles, death and resurrection of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins and a future judgment. This was followed by the conversion of Cornelius and his company. And do you find in it any trace of those peculiar doctrines which are now so often declared to be the essence of Christianity?

We now pass to the preaching of Paul, first to Jews and afterwards to Pagans. When Paul was in Antioch in Asia Minor he thus addressed a synagogue of Jews. "Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience." "Of this man's seed" (David's) "hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus." "Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the

word of this salvation sent. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him, and though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain. And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a sepulchre. But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings," or the Gospel, the joyful news, "how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again,"—"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Do you not perceive in this discourse the same simplicity, the same identical doctrines, which were stated by Peter,—the facts of the Gospel history, the mission, ministry, death and resurrection of Christ? This last, the resurrection of Christ, he makes to be the very Gospel itself, the very glad tidings he had to announce. The same prominence he gives this fact in one of his Epistles to the Corinthians. "Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached

unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures; and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve, after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.” —“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” Here then is the main fact, the resurrection of Jesus. Christianity depends upon it. This is the pivot, the fundamental proposition, on which the whole system rests. Deny this, and you deny everything. Admit this, and you are a Christian, so far as faith is concerned. It contains the germ of Christianity, and when expanded into all its consequences, it becomes the whole system of the Gospel. And what does it prove? Does it prove the Trinity, vicarious punishment, human inability, election and reprobation, passive regeneration, imputed righteousness, and their kindred doctrines? By no means, it does not touch them. What then does it prove? It establishes beyond cavil the doctrine of immortality, the certainty of which is the great sanction of religion of any kind, the key-stone of the edifice of faith, which completes and sustains the whole fabric. It sets the seal of God’s assurance upon his mission and authority, his doctrines and his promises, declares him to be what he claimed to be, the Messiah, as is well expressed by Paul in the commencement of his Epistle to the Romans, “declared to be the Son of God,” that is, the Messiah “with power, by the resurrection from the dead.”

That the resurrection of Christ, and of the dead, was the great burden of Paul's preaching, appears from many detached passages in the Acts. Before the Jewish council, he pleads: "of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." Before Agrippa he pleads: "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise, our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" That there were other doctrines mingled with these, respecting the conduct of life, we have no reason to doubt. For in his defence before Felix, he connects with this doctrine of the resurrection a moral conduct strictly conformed to the dictates of conscience. "And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man." Afterwards it is said, "And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled."

The last apostolic discourse which we shall notice, is the famous and remarkable speech of Paul before the Athenians on Mars' Hill. Here he addressed an audience which were ignorant not only of the Gospel but of Judaism. Here then it was to be expected that Paul would preach the whole Gospel, not only that which the Gospel added to Judaism, but that which it contained in common with it. We should expect him to begin as he

does, at the foundation, the Being, Attributes, and Providence of the one God. As before, in their addresses to the Jews, the apostles went immediately to the mission and history of Christ, so in this, an address to Gentiles, the one God is the topic principally enlarged upon. “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, *TO THE UNKNOWN GOD*. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God, that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life and breath and all things: and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one of us; for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he 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.”



Now we ask, what are the doctrines contained in this discourse, which Paul announced to the Athenians as a summary of the Gospel? They are the unity, perfections, providence, and paternal character of God, the divine mission and authority of Jesus Christ, demonstrated by his resurrection, and repentance in anticipation of a future righteous judgment. Where then are the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, as they are called? Passed over in the most profound silence.

We have now gone over the principal discourses of the apostles in the first thirty years of their ministry, as recorded in the Acts, and what do they teach? The Trinity? Not one word of it that we can find. The Unity? Yes. It is taught in every discourse. The Deity of Christ? Nowhere. What then? His divine mission and authority. "God anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power," and raised him from the dead. The Deity and personality of the Holy Spirit? That is denied, inasmuch as it is something given, communicated, poured out. Remission of sins on account of Christ's sufferings? By no means. "*Repent*, that your sins may be blotted out." Total inability, election and reprobation? Not at all. "Now commandeth *all* men everywhere to repent." Salvation by foreign, irresistible power? Nothing like it. "Save *yourselves* from this untoward generation."

What then is the grand conclusion to which we are brought by this examination of the preaching of the apostles? The irresistible conclusion is, that these peculiar doctrines we have been so long examining, are not found there.

If they are not found in the preaching of the apostles, then they make no part of the Gospel, are merely human inventions which have been added to the Gospel by the fancy and imagination of man. They are the hay and stubble which have been added to the silver and gold of the true foundation by man's device. And since the doctrines they did preach had the power to reform and renovate men, and make them true Christians, we infer without danger of a mistake, that the whole moral and spiritual power of the Gospel is contained in those doctrines. And, of course, whatever other doctrines have since been added to these, and preached in conjunction with them, the effect has been produced by the few and simple elements taught by the apostles, and not by the superadded doctrines of men. And as the Gospel continues forever the same, these are the doctrines which now produce all that moral and spiritual effect, which the Gospel is at this day producing in the world.

These are, as we have seen, the existence, perfections, providence, and paternal character of God, the mission, miracles, teaching, death and resurrection of Christ, the remission of sins upon repentance, the resurrection of the dead and a just judgment, and retribution in a future world. These must contain all the elements of moral power in the Gospel, for they are the whole of it, according to the apostles. A striking evidence that this was the substance of what was thought necessary for a Christian to believe in the first ages, is to be found in its coincidence with the most ancient standard of faith we have, which has come down under the name of the

Apostles' Creed. "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day he rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." There is almost as little mention of the peculiar doctrines we have been controverting, in this early Creed, as there is in the preaching of the apostles; and had this Creed never been lengthened in after times, there would have been but little controversy in the Christian Church.

Let us now consider the moral efficiency of these doctrines. The very essence of all religion is summed up in its first article, the existence, perfections, providence, and paternal character of God. He is the eternal centre and fountain of religion. He is the prime moving and all pervading power. Without him the universe is a blank; and without him religion could no more exist than vegetation without the sun. "This," said our Saviour, "is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Did not Christ understand the nature of his own religion, the true sources of its moral power? Accordingly, he came to show us the Father. Give me the knowledge of a perfect God, such as Jesus has described our

heavenly Father to be, and you have established in my mind the mightiest moral agency which can operate upon me. His goodness calls forth my gratitude and love; his purity and holiness arouse in my mind a strong aspiration to be like him; his all pervading presence and agency awaken in me a salutary fear of offending him. An object is thus given my devotions, which will make them a fountain of spiritual influences springing up into everlasting life. I must then act with reference to him. I feel that "it is God that worketh in me both to will and to do of his good pleasure." This then is the leading source of moral and spiritual power in the Gospel, and it is independent of these peculiar doctrines we have been discussing. We are unable to conceive how any moral power is gained by dividing this one God into three distinctions or persons. One All-perfect and Infinite Being is certainly adequate to all the purposes that three are. I can see confusion and weakened influence in the idea of three Persons in God, but no advantage whatever.

The next source of moral power is the character of Jesus Christ. Paul at Athens, you recollect, preached in addition to the one God, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being," "Jesus and the resurrection." "This is life eternal," or the source or cause of life eternal, "that they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." He who knows Jesus Christ as he is, has operating within him a spiritual power of another kind, but scarcely less potent than that of God himself. For in him is exhibited human perfection. As God supplies the all powerful motive

to action, so Jesus furnishes the rule and guide. There is not a difficulty in human life, there is not a situation so abject and perplexing, that is not solved and made easy by one glance at Christ, one clear conception of the spirit that was in him. The conviction is overwhelming, that the reason why any are weary and heavy laden with the burdens of this world is, that they have not learned of him who was "meek and lowly in heart." Christ laboring and suffering in the cause of man, in obscurity, poverty, persecution, supported only by a pure heart, and a reliance on God, closing his life in agony under the triumph of malice, and then ascending to glory, is the most omnipotent Gospel which was ever preached to man. Its echoes sounded forth from the hills of Judea, and still are ringing round the world. They touch a chord in the human heart of sympathy, and consolation, which wakens all of virtuous energy there is in the soul. The life of Christ is a solution of the high and otherwise inexplicable mysteries of this dark and uncertain world. When exhibited to mankind as he went about doing good, or hanging upon the cross, he becomes a source of moral and spiritual power to the Gospel, which no mind can estimate, and no tongue can tell. He "draws all men unto him" by the cords of love.

The third source of moral and spiritual power in the Gospel, is the teaching of Jesus. I mean, its superhuman wisdom, its intuitive certainty and truth, by which it carries irresistible conviction to the human mind and heart. The Gospel in this sense is the wisdom of God, and therefore, the power of God. This is the great and universal evidence by which it is ever accompanied. It

carries conviction, because it finds a witness in the inner man of its eternal truth. It was this coincidence, which, when Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come, made Felix tremble, the judge clothed in purple before the prisoner in chains. He found the Gospel was in him before, and the reasoning of Paul revived the crushed authority of his own conscience. The Gospel without, responded to by conscience within, was too much for the hardened Roman, and he trembled and was overcome with fear. So is it ever. The moral evidence of the Gospel strikes many hearts, even of those whose understandings its outward testimony fails to convince, and who never submit their lives to its power. And thousands of the human race, like the rude officers of the Sanhedrim, quail before the humble Nazarene, and confess that "never man spake like this man."

The third doctrine to which the Gospel owes its moral and spiritual power, is the offer of mercy from God, of the pardon and remission of sin, expressly and explicitly made to mankind through Jesus Christ, on condition of true repentance and reformation. This was, it is true, to a certain extent, the doctrine of Judaism and of natural religion. Yet through them it does not come with that directness and power with which it comes by an express ambassador and mediator from heaven, proclaiming "Repent, that your sins may be blotted out." This makes certain the great motive for the exercise of repentance, the certainty of its efficacy and its acceptableness with God. All men feel that they need this pardon, for all men feel that they have sinned and come

short. The overtures of mercy made under such affecting circumstances as the suffering life, and bloody, painful death of Christ, are calculated to make a powerful impression upon the world. This is what gives power to the ministers of reconciliation, when they stand up and proclaim, that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" and when they "as ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech" men through them, they "pray men, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God."

But the grand doctrine of Christianity, both for power and importance, is the resurrection of the dead. As it is the corner stone on which the entire system rests, so it is the animating principle which breathes a living energy into the whole, and fixes it in the soul of man as its great and commanding motive. Deny this or omit it, and Unity or Trinity, purchased or free forgiveness, predestination or self-determined choice, or any other doctrine, or negation of doctrine, becomes matter of entire indifference. This life is an enigma utterly beyond the powers of man to explain. Human wisdom, in this case, concentrates itself into this brutish proposition: "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

Establish this doctrine and the brute disappears, and the angel rises in its place. Man, from a mere animal, becomes a spiritual being. No longer absorbed in the frivolities about him, he listens to the distant roar of the ocean of eternity, and he is still. He becomes a thoughtful, intellectual, conscientious being; he awakes from the lethargy, the moral death of vicious indulgence, to a life of righteousness, and peace, and joy.

For, in the fifth and last place, the resurrection makes sure the most powerful doctrine which can operate on the will of man, the judgment to come. That judgment then becomes certain, because our own consciences have condemned us already. The judgment of conscience we cannot reverse, nor change, nor resist. What appears to us now, in our character and conduct, unworthy and wicked, will appear so then, and with ten-fold clearness in the light of eternity. Sin, doing wrong, becomes a word of more portentous meaning than when pent up in the narrow confines of this world. Eternity, with all its retributions, is brought to bear on the present life. And where is the wretch so degraded, whose base schemes are not sometimes arrested, whose outstretched hand does not sometimes pause from its purpose, at the thought of that judgment, which Christ has pictured among the floating images of a coming eternity?

These are the doctrines, the simple but sublime doctrines of the apostles, and not the petty dogmas of contending sects, which are Christianity, and which constitute the moral and spiritual power of the Gospel. Then, as now, they were the efficient means of the sanctification and salvation of man, and the moral regeneration of the world. "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."



## LECTURE XII.

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### WHAT IS IT TO BE A CHRISTIAN.

ACTS, XI. 26.

“AND THE DISCIPLES WERE CALLED CHRISTIANS FIRST IN ANTIOCH.”

WHAT is it to be a Christian? What is it necessary for a man to believe, and what is it necessary for him to practise in order to be a Christian, and as such entitled to the name, privileges, and hopes of a Christian? It is my design in this discourse to promote the cause of piety and charity. Of piety, by leading each one to self-examination and earnest self-improvement, and of charity, by giving you the scriptural and reasonable standard for judging of the Christian character and rights of others. I address those, who have a sincere desire to know the truth, and to embrace it, who wish to understand their own rights, and while they maintain them are equally willing to learn and respect the rights of others. I do not address that class of persons, who would give or withhold the Christian name, just as they thought it expedient, in order to produce popular effect, to raise up one sect and pull down another, to deter the multitude from fair and impartial examination, by hard names

and odious imputations. Such men I do not address, for light, conviction, is what they do not want. They already know better than they do. I address those who are earnest inquirers after truth and holiness, those who wish to unite, not scatter the flock of Christ; those who wish to find in the Creeds of different sects points of resemblance instead of points of difference.

It has been common, we know, for every sect into which the church has been divided, to insist on their own peculiarities as the essentials of Christianity. But if this be allowed, what follows? It follows that every other sect, all other sects, who do not hold to the same are not Christians. It unchurches and excommunicates all the rest of Christendom. If the Catholic insists that every article of his Creed is essential to Christianity and indispensable to salvation, then it will follow that all Protestants are not Christians. They may be very moral, devout, conscientious men, and may stand well on the ground of mere natural religion, but in Christianity they have no part nor lot. They are neither entitled to the name nor privileges of Christians. They have departed from the great body of the church, as it was handed down from the apostles, they reject its authority, they deny transubstantiation, they refuse to submit to the enactments and Creeds of councils, they set at nought all the essential doctrines of the religion of Christ, and of course are not Christians. Their priesthood are destitute of all spiritual power and authority, their ministrations of the word and ordinances are null and void, and they themselves are rebels against the authority of Christ in the person of his vicar the bishop of Rome.

The Protestant appeals from this decision. He denies the right of the church of Rome, or of any other church to legislate for his conscience. He asserts "*the sufficiency of the Scriptures and the right of private judgment.*" He appeals to the Scriptures, and denies that the peculiar doctrines of the Roman Catholic church are found in the Bible, and calls them human inventions. He appeals to the Gospel method of judging of true discipleship, "by their fruits ye shall know them." The true faith is tested by its power to purify the heart, and overcome the world. The lives and characters of Protestants have exhibited such fruits. Their holy lives, passed in all godliness and honesty, have demonstrated the sufficiency of their faith for the only purpose for which faith is valuable, to prepare the soul for heaven. But the Catholic rejoins, there is not an article of our Creed, which is not drawn immediately from Scripture and may be supported from it. And one doctrine to which you object, and which you deny, is asserted in so many words, "this is my body." Now if you deny this, you contradict Christ, and deny the Bible; and if you deny the Bible, you are no Christian, whatever you may pretend. And as to your holiness and good works, they may appear to men very fair and specious, you may exhibit a great deal of zeal and fervency and outward morality, but if your faith is wrong, your actions cannot be right. They do not proceed from the right motive. Your faith is not right, and previous to your conversion to the right faith your best actions are only splendid sins.

The Protestant replies, It is not reasonable to sup-

pose that Christ's words are to be taken literally when he says, "this is my body," and as to our characters, you cannot judge men's hearts; God only can do that. As man cannot go deeper than the outward actions, so he exceeds his powers and presumptuously arrogates the prerogative of God if he judges the heart bad on account of opinions, when the life is good.

The Catholic answers with surprise and scorn. Unreasonable! So you pretend to set up your carnal reason in opposition to Scripture! You reject a doctrine plainly stated in so many words in Scripture, merely because it contradicts your fallible reason! If such be the principles on which you proceed, there is an end to the authority of revelation. We may as well have no Scriptures, as to interpret them, not according to their literal import, but according to our reason. To dissent from the great body of the Church, and from the doctrine and authority handed down in direct and unbroken succession from the apostles, is heresy, and heretics are not Christians, are not entitled to the Christian name and privileges. So far from being acknowledged as Christians they are to be excommunicated and cast off. For this we have the express warrant of Scripture. "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such, is subverted and sinneth." The conscientious Catholic from principle, the partisan Catholic from policy, in all those places where the Protestant heresy was rife and likely to spread, would warn all good Catholics against the new doctrine as a soul destroying error. They would denounce its teachers as bad and dangerous men,

they would forbid their people to listen to their teaching, and do all in their power to throw discredit on their cause.

The Protestant would complain of this, as an invasion of his Christian liberty. But if he belonged to any sect of Protestants who sustain a Creed, he would complain to his own condemnation. Suppose him to belong to the English Episcopal Church. He protests against the Church of Rome's legislating for his conscience, on the ground of the sufficiency of the Scriptures and the right of private judgment. But then he turns round and legislates for the consciences of others. He frames Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, and declares that the sum of Christianity is contained in them. And although he does not say that all who do not assent to these Articles are not Christians, yet he does what is infinitely worse, he treats them as if they were not Christians. He deprives them of the rights and privileges of Christians. He repels them from Christian ordinances, he shuts them out of the ministry of the Church, as much as if they were heathens or Mahometans. He goes further, and shuts out the Dissenter, not only from his rights as a Christian, but from his rights as a citizen. He cuts him off from all share in the patrimony of the Church, which was given by the pious of past ages to the whole body of believers. He excludes him from all civil offices of honor, trust, and emolument. The bare denial of the Christian name is a mere trifle compared to all this. The Churchman either believes the Dissenter a Christian, or he does not. If he does, he is bound to extend to him the equal rights

of a Christian. If he does not, then he must confess himself just as bigoted towards the Dissenter as the Catholic is towards him.

The Dissenter complains of this in his turn and thinks himself hardly and unjustly treated. All of the name combine together and overthrow the Established Church. But have their former oppressions and sufferings taught them forbearance and respect for the rights of conscience and of private judgment? Not all all. The first thing they do, on coming into power, is to legislate for the consciences of others, and frame the Westminster Confession, a burden still more heavy than had ever been imposed upon the rational soul of man. As little mercy was shown to the Dissenters from that, as there had been to them when they were Dissenters. That Creed was transplanted to this country, and on our American soil, human blood has flowed at the whipping post,\* the lives of men have been sacrificed on the gallows for dissenting from a Protestant faith which set up for the motto of its banner when it separated from the Church of Rome, **THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES AND THE RIGHT OF PRIVATE JUDGMENT.**

Soon these Dissenters began to dissent from each other. There sprung up the sect of the Baptists, and claimed to be the only true church in existence. They (I mean the Particular Baptists) unchurched, and of course denied the Christian name to all Christendom

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\* In 1650, a man of the name of Holmes, received thirty lashes at the whipping post in Boston, for professing and teaching the doctrines of the Baptists. On the 27th of October, 1659, three persons suffered death by the common hangman in the same place from the Puritans of New England, for their adherence to the sect of the Quakers.

but themselves. None could be Christians except those who have been baptized by immersion. None others had the promise of salvation. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." But he that is not immersed is not baptized. He is not a Christian and must be repelled from the Christian ordinances; he has no promise, no reasonable hope of salvation. Having broken one commandment he is "guilty of all." He is without the pale of God's covenanted mercy, and consequently exposed to damnation.

Thus you perceive how easy it is for any sect, great or small, to erect its own peculiar dogmas into the standard and criterion of Christian faith, and deny the Christian name, and rights and ordinances to all those who will not receive their creed; and moreover to support this usurpation from the Scriptures by specious and plausible arguments. We have seen too, that all have been disposed to exercise this usurpation when they have had the power. You perceive then that it is unsafe to adopt the peculiarities of any sect as indispensable to constitute a Christian. It must be something common to them all, or all are not Christians. And if all are not Christians, who is to decide who are and who are not? Every sect of course will maintain that they are the true Church, and if they insist that all their peculiarities are essential, then all who do not assent to them are not Christians. But if we examine this matter a little closer we find that these sects, minute as they are, are divided among themselves, and each party are more tenacious of the differences between themselves than they are of those points in which they differ from other

sects, and oppose and persecute each other with more rancour than they do any one else. Are sectarians then to be trusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven? By no means. There is no reason why these subdivisions may not again subdivide, and so go on till each individual shall have a church of his own of which he is the only true and accepted member.

But at length a sect arises determined to carry out the principles of the Reformation not only in name but in fact. They abjure all creeds and take the Bible as their only standard of faith. They study it by the best lights which they can command, and they find that many doctrines contained in the creeds are not found in the Bible, such as the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, the Personality and Deity of the Spirit, original sin, vicarious punishment, irresistible conversion, and their kindred doctrines. They proclaim this to the world as the result of impartial, conscientious examination; and straight the old cry of heresy and unbelief is raised against them. On the first opening of this church, a learned Professor\* addressed the inhabitants of this community in such language as this, "He who does not receive the doctrine of man's guilt and depravity by nature, and the doctrine of the divinity and atonement of the Son of God, and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, does not receive the Gospel and is consequently no Christian. It follows with irresistible conviction to my mind that he who rejects these fundamental truths, however respectable, virtuous, and apparently devout he may be, rejects Christianity as really,

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\* Samuel Miller, D. D. of Princeton.



though not under precisely the same circumstances, yet as really as any Deist ever did. And that he cannot with propriety be called a Christian in any sense." "Their preaching is to be avoided as blasphemy, their publications are to be abhorred as pestiferous, their ordinances are to be held unworthy of regard as Christian institutions; and these things being so, you ought to regard a proposition to go and hear them preach or to read their publications, as you would a proposition to hear a preacher of open infidelity, or to read an artful publication of a follower of Herbert or Hume."

Such is the language, which a Protestant Divine, of the nineteenth century takes upon himself to use concerning persons who meet together to worship God in the name of Christ, and whom he supposes to be "respectable, virtuous, and apparently devout," merely because they do not receive what he chooses to deem the essential doctrines of Christianity. Such persons he chooses to class with the open revilers of Christ and his religion, and who labor to uproot and destroy it. But can he be a Protestant who writes thus, one who acknowledges the sufficiency of the Scriptures and the right of private judgment? Is he not aware that the denunciations of the church of Rome are quite as violent against him and all Protestants, as his are against those whom he condemns? Is he not aware that Catholics are warned from his ministrations, and his publications, with quite as deep a horror as he warns his own followers against those whom he denounces? Is he not aware how feeble and small his voice is heard compared with the thunders of the Vatican; he a partisan

leader of small fragment, of a small division, of a small minority, beside the supreme Pontiff of the Eternal City, the acknowledged head of the most ancient and most numerous community of Christ's professed followers on earth?

The Presbyterian of whom I speak will perhaps answer to this, "There is a great difference between my denunciations of the Unitarians, and the Catholic's denunciations of me. *I know that I am right.* The Catholic does not know that he is right. Besides, the Unitarians have no religion. They do not go to conferences and prayer-meetings. They attend balls and parties of pleasure and conform to the world. A religion which produces such fruits is no religion at all. Charity to such a religion is treason to Christ." But if this be the standard of Christian character, what may not the Catholic priest say to him? He may say, "It is very evident that you have no religion. You do not go to mass at early dawn. You are comfortably reposing in your bed, while the Catholic is kneeling to his God. You do not fast on Friday, on which day our Lord was crucified, nor do penance for your sins. And as to conformity to the world, how can he have anything to say on that subject, who dresses richly and lives like men of the world, who has a wife and the comforts and luxuries of a family about him? A very different life this from 'giving up all for Christ.' O what a different religion this is from that of Christ and his apostles, the confessors and martyrs! 'Charity to such a religion is treason to Christ.'" The Presbyterian replies, "These are uncommanded austerities. There

is no warrant for them in the Scriptures. Christians are left in these respects to their own judgments and consciences." "Point me if you can," answers the Unitarian in his turn, "to a single passage of the Bible, which forbids those particular amusements you condemn. Christians therefore are left to their own judgments and consciences in these particulars."

It is a curious coincidence that the same objection of free living should have been made to Christ by the Pharisees of his days, on account of his neglecting to employ the common means of securing a reputation for sanctity, a sour deportment and a sanctimonious abstinence from the innocent festivities of life. "Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!"

The Presbyterian, to whom we have alluded, may rejoin: "I am sincere in my belief, that all Unitarians are lost." And is the Catholic any less to be believed, when he says it is his honest opinion that all Protestants are lost? "No, he cannot be sincere, because he sees we live a Christian life." But you have cut yourself off from this plea. The Catholic may turn round and condemn you out of your own mouth. He may take up your own words and say: "He who does not receive the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the doctrine of the supremacy of the Pope, and the doctrine of the intrinsic efficacy of the sacraments and of absolution, does not receive the Gospel, and is, consequently, no Christian. It follows irresistibly, to my mind, that he who rejects these fundamental truths, *however respectable, virtuous, and apparently devout, he may be, rejects Christianity*

as really, though not under precisely the same circumstances, yet as really, as any Deist ever did. And that he cannot, with propriety, be called a Christian, in any sense. Their preaching is to be avoided as blasphemy, their publications are to be abhorred as pestiferous, their ordinances are to be held unworthy of regard as Christian institutions; and these things being so, you ought to regard a proposition to go and hear them preach, or to read their publications, as you would a proposition to hear a preacher of open infidelity, or to read an artful publication of a follower of Herbert or Hume." Your lips are sealed. You cannot utter one word, not even bigotry or uncharitableness.

You openly profess to excommunicate and cut men off from the name and privileges of Christians, merely for the sake of opinion, without regard to moral and religious character, nay, in the face of their apparent existence. What more can the Catholic do? You answer: "In countries where he has the power, he burns the bodies and confiscates the estates of those who dissent from his creed. We do not this." We reply: The institutions of the country forbid it. You go as far as those institutions will allow. You attempt to deprive dissenters of their fair name, and to hold them up to the suspicion and odium of mankind, you attempt by legal means to drive them from their churches, and turn them from their flocks upon the world. If you go to the very limit of the institutions under which you live, is there any evidence that you would not go further if you had the power?

But, you say, the Catholic rejects the Bible as the

standard of faith, and refers to the authority of Popes and Councils. Do you try heresy by the Bible? No. You try it by the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the Divines at Westminster; and what is that, but throwing away the Bible and referring to the authority of Councils? You try heresy by the standard of the Council of Westminster, and they by standards established by Councils a few centuries earlier; and that is all the difference between you. The Catholic says, the Scriptures are an insufficient rule of faith; "they are a nose of wax," which you may turn just as you please. The Presbyterian rebukes him for his irreverence. But it is merely for saying, in coarse language, what he says in language a little more refined. For what do we now hear from all quarters of the Orthodox world! "The Scriptures are not a sufficient test of soundness in the faith. They are interpreted so many ways, that it is in vain to think of having a pure church without something more definite and explicit."

But suppose one unacquainted with the distinctions and tactics of Christian sects were to land on our shores and chance to read these charges, and then to enter a church where God is worshipped in the name of Christ in Unity and instead of Trinity; would he not find it difficult to reconcile what he saw and heard with what he read? "Can it be possible," he would exclaim, "that these people reject and disbelieve Christianity, and still build churches to teach, and hear, and maintain, and propagate it? Especially would they do so, if it subjects them to sacrifices and obloquy, when they might enjoy their unbelief unmolested, as many others

do, and profit by a fair reputation for Orthodoxy, merely by external conformity to some of the reigning sects, and saying nothing about their belief, or might withdraw without more injury to their rights or characters from any connection with Christianity at all? It is impossible; there must be either some mistake or some wilful misrepresentation."

While in the church he would hear God worshipped in the name and through the mediation of Christ. He would hear his Gospel read and expounded as a divine revelation, as the word of God, and containing the only infallible rule of faith and practice. He would hear the reality of his miracles acknowledged. He would see him commemorated in the Supper as having died for man, as having risen from the dead, and as now living in heaven. An unbeliever rejects all this. "Can men," he would exclaim, "believe, and not believe, at the same time? These men certainly do not reject, they receive Christianity; they have been either ignorantly, or maliciously slandered."

He wishes to examine further into the justice of this charge, and he makes inquiry what it is necessary to believe, in order to be a Christian. How is he to come at this? Why plainly, he must examine the arguments of believers with unbelievers, and see what the believer asserts and the unbeliever denies. He takes up a book on the Evidences of Christianity, perhaps those of Paley, and he finds the great proposition which his whole work was intended to sustain is this: "That there is satisfactory evidence, that many professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in

labors, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief in those accounts; and that they submitted from the same motives to new rules of conduct." Or, perhaps, he might have taken up the book on the Evidences, published lately in this country by bishop McIlvaine, a believer in all those disputed points we have been examining. The great question between the believer and the unbeliever is summed up by him in the following proposition: "Is the religion of Jesus, as exhibited in the New Testament, a revelation from God, and consequently possessed of a sovereign right to universal faith and obedience?"

The question between the believer and the unbeliever, according to both these defenders of the faith, is between miracles and no miracles, revelation and no revelation. He who believes in the miracles, and the reality of the revelation, receives Christianity, for it is the object of both to prove the truth of Christianity. He who rejects the miracles and the revelation, rejects Christianity. That class of men to which I referred as slandered, receive and believe the miracles, receive and believe the revelation. These books were written for the express purpose of converting infidels from unbelief to the belief of what? Precisely what Unitarians now believe, the Divine origin and authority of the Gospel. If these men have stated the question on its true merits, they may convert a man to the belief of Christianity, and still, according to our learned and charitable divine, he is an infidel. How can they be said, with the least regard to truth or candor, to reject Christianity? With

what truth, or fairness, or even decency, can those who receive the Christian miracles and the Gospel as a revelation from God, be classed with Herbert and Hume, who denied them both? It requires a meekness almost superhuman to bear a calumny so wanton and unjust.

Well and what do the Christian miracles prove? Do they prove that Christ was God, or a Person in God? By no means. What then do they prove? They prove that the doctrines he taught were from God. They prove his Divine inspiration, and nothing more. They do not touch his metaphysical nature at all. The revelation, when confirmed by miracles, is equally true and certain whatever may have been his nature. It is the same on every hypothesis. Hear himself on this subject. "But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me," not that I am this or that by nature, but "that the Father hath sent me."

The impartial examiner of the evidences and sects of Christianity, after this explanation, would know how to appreciate the denunciation he had read of the worshippers of one God in the name of Christ, as rejecting Christianity. He would perceive that the question as to the miracles, the inspiration, the Divine authority of Christ is fundamental, the turning point between belief and unbelief. But the question concerning Christ's metaphysical rank and nature, is a question of interpretation between the sects of Christianity. And the origin of this denunciation is the refusal of one sect to adopt the interpretation of another sect, which they attempt to dictate upon that common revelation which all receive, and



of which all have an equal right to judge. The worshippers of one God in one person, are denounced as unbelievers, as rejecting Christianity, not because they do actually reject the Gospel as a divine revelation, for they receive it as such, but because they reject the interpretation, which others choose to put upon it.

If we compare these things with Scripture, we shall find this simplicity of belief in admirable accordance with the confessions of faith made by some and required of others of the early Christians. Who was the first convert and member of the Christian Church? It was Peter. And what was his confession of faith? "Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God;" or, as it is reported in Mark, "Thou art the Christ." Jesus answered, "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Thou art my first convert, the corner stone of the new edifice, never to be destroyed. That "Christ," and "Son of God," were synonymous, I have already explained. They were both Jewish phrases, significative of the Divine commission and authority of their expected Messiah. This was the only confession of faith required of the eunuch, whom Philip converted and baptized: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." "If thou," says Paul to the Romans, "confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

These considerations, moreover, explain the propriety of the formula of baptism, as an epitome or abstract of faith, to be confessed in order to admission into the

Christian church. "Baptizing them in the name of the Father," into a profession of belief in one God, the Father Almighty, and "of the Son," that is, as we have before explained, the Divine authority of Jesus of Nazareth, and "of the Holy Ghost;" into a belief of the miracles by which his mission was proved and established, which are often in Scripture termed the Holy Ghost. Such is the simplicity of the Christian's Creed, for which the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. Christianity is the same now that it was then, and the same Creed which was sufficient then is sufficient now. We have arrived, then, at the answer of the first part of our present inquiry, what is it necessary for a man to believe in order to be a Christian? He must believe in the Divine origin of Christ's teaching and miracles, and that God raised him from the dead.

We now come to the second part of our inquiry, what is it necessary for a man to practise in order to be a Christian, and as such to be entitled to the name, privileges, and hopes of a Christian?

This part of our subject, I confess, is surrounded with more difficulties than the other, from the very nature of the case. Because it is more easy to judge of what is true or what is revealed in the language of the Scriptures, than to judge of human character and conduct. I confess that it is impossible to judge that we ourselves, much less any other persons whose hearts we do not and cannot know, are true Christians, in a state of salvation and acceptance with God. No one in this life, (such I believe to be the design of God,) can arrive at a state of perfect assurance. The most that we can do

is to entertain a hope, a strong confidence, that we are in that state; and that others, of whom we form an opinion, are also. On what is this hope and confidence founded, and on what ought it to be founded? We reply, upon the general tenor of the life and actions. This evidence is, indeed, imperfect, because we cannot see the heart and the motives; but it is the best, and only standard we can adopt. A good life, a Christian practice, is the only evidence that man can give or man can require of a Christian character. Our Saviour has given us this rule of judging: "By their fruits ye shall know them." We have already seen the Creed which it is necessary for a man to adopt in order to be a Christian. We now see what Creed is necessary in a practical sense for the same purpose, such a belief as produces a Christian life. When the most simple faith is accompanied with such a life, we cannot withhold the name and character of Christian. And where this practical character does not exist, no matter how long or how mysterious the Creed, the seal of true discipleship is wanting, and the name and hopes of a Christian are entertained in vain.

But is it not necessary for him to have some experiences to relate, to be able to tell when, how, and where, he became a Christian? Not in the least. If his life be truly Christian, such experiences are unnecessary. They add nothing of evidence. -If the life be not Christian, they are certainly deceptive. Nothing is more uncertain, equivocal, and suspicious, as a test of character, than mental exercises. They come and go, with health or disease, with excitement or tranquillity, with sympa-

thy or solitude. But a patient continuance in well doing, a calm and conscientious discharge of duty, accompanied by that faith in Christ which we have described, concerning these there is less danger of mistake ; and, as far as human judgment can go, they leave no doubt. Such is the endless variety of temperament, circumstance, education, that no invariable rule can be laid down for the formation of the Christian character. It is sufficient for us to know it when it really exists. The true follower of Christ is not he who believes him to be this or that in the scale of being, or who ranges himself under the name of Paul or Apollos, or of any peculiar sect, but he who *obeys and imitates him*. Here, then, is the true criterion. He who obeys and imitates Christ, he is the true Christian. Now we ask, if this is confined to any sect or denomination. "The grace of God" "hath appeared to all men, teaching us to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world." Are there not those who live thus among every division of the professed followers of Christ? We all know there are. Why, then, will not all sects acknowledge this? I lament to say it, but the truth must be spoken—it is mutual jealousy of each other. By acknowledging it, they would abase the pretensions of their own peculiarities from essentials into non-essentials, and allow the comparative unimportance of those points on which they have been accustomed to lay so much stress, and on which their very party was raised up and sustained. As soon as this is allowed, the means of building themselves up by terror and anathema are destroyed. As soon as it is allowed that any one can be saved out of the

pale of their church, then they can no longer exhort men to flee to it as the only ark of safety. Men are tempted, then, by two of the strongest principles in their nature, pride of opinion and self-interest, to make their peculiar dogmas indispensable to salvation. And it is a temptation, alas! which too few are able to resist. It is so much easier to play upon people's prejudices and fears and party attachments, than to enlighten and convince their understandings, that it requires a greater love of truth and more entire disinterestedness than even the best men possess, entirely to abstain from it.

But let it not be understood that because I would allow, and have others allow the Christian name, privileges and hopes to all who acknowledge the divine authority of Christ and at the same time exhibit the Christian character, that I would be or have others to be indifferent to truth. Let that be sought with all diligence. But in the mean time, while we are doing this, let us not denounce and anathematize each other. Let us examine calmly and dispassionately and without the biases of excited feeling and party spirit. What chance has the mind to arrive at the truth, if it have hanging over it the pains of exclusion and denunciation? What freedom has the mind to investigate the truth, if it have already subscribed to a Creed, and have learned to consider it as something to defend instead of something to examine? The Bible is then studied not to discover what is true or what it teaches, but is ransacked to find texts to corroborate a foregone conclusion. It is the contest for power and party, not the great and irreconcilable differences of creed and opinion, which gives asperity and

bitterness to sects and parties. For it is found that those are most hostile whose tenets are nearest each other, which shows that it is rivalry and not regard for important truth which is at the bottom of their strife and mutual denunciation. Let us investigate truth with zeal and earnestness, but let us not use the sacred and venerable name of Christian as an instrument of party power, by giving or withholding it, to build up or put down a sect whose interests we wish to serve or ruin.

The identity of the Christian character is the great bond of Christian union. Identity of sentiment and opinion can never be attained. Such are the diversities of external circumstances, of education, of degrees of light and knowledge, that the same truths will always appear differently to different minds. And so long as these unavoidable differences are embodied in Creeds, and made the fences and ramparts of sects, so long will they keep the Christian world divided. But as far as men are true Christians, so far are they all alike in moral qualities; and, on mutual acquaintance, will love and esteem each other. All true Christians venerate in others, above everything else on earth, those moral qualities which they cultivate in themselves; integrity, which may be relied on to the death, and with which you feel yourself forever safe; candor, which will make proper allowances for your weaknesses and your prejudices, and will not use them to crush and ruin you; just appreciation of your virtues, without envy or detraction, notwithstanding diversities of sentiment or clashing of interests; delight in whatsoever is pure, lovely and good. These are the qualities of a Christian; and these quali-

ties will draw the heart of every other true Christian to their possessor. It is the want of these characteristics of true practical religion, of real Christianity, and not wide disagreement of opinion, which is the occasion of strife and war among the followers of Christ. They fulfil the great token of discipleship which Christ has left us: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." They are to love each other, not because they belong to the same party, for conspirators may have that ground of attachment, but because there will be in them those amiable qualities pre-eminently which necessarily form a common bond between the truly good.

The Christian character has fortunately been delineated in the New Testament too plainly to be mistaken by any candid inquirer. The example of Christ himself is a practical commentary on his religion too obvious to be misunderstood. The spirit of Christ is more easily read than even his written commandments. And "if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law." "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ;" "for if ye do these things ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be

ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Such traits of character as these can never be mistaken. To believe in the divine authority of Jesus Christ and to lead a sober, righteous, and godly life, these constitute a Christian, and ought to constitute a bond of union among all who take upon them his sacred and venerable name. Such is the result of scriptural investigation, and it is corroborated by the dictates of charity and experience. For the moment you abandon this scriptural and charitable ground, as soon as you demand anything else, you shatter the Christian church into a thousand fragments, and make Christianity, instead of a bond of union and affection among mankind, an apology for hatred and strife, and the indulgence of the very worst passions of our nature. As soon as you assert that a Christian life, accompanied by an acknowledgment of Christ's divine authority, is not sufficient, and that it requires the mysterious leaven of some peculiar faith to sanctify it and make it acceptable to God, then every petty sect in Christendom will insist on putting in their own peculiar dogmas and shutting the kingdom of heaven against all who will not subscribe to them. The moment you allow any one to say that a good life is not good and acceptable to God because it does not proceed from the right principle, the right motive, the right faith, then you reverse the rule of our Saviour and judge the fruit by the tree instead of the tree by the fruit; you must allow each man to define that sanctifying principle to be his own peculiarities of faith, and thus subject the best of men to be judged and condemned and persecuted by the worst.



I allow that the sect which adopts this enlarged, liberal, and Christian principle, does not consult best for its rapid spread and spiritual domination, for it strikes at the very root of sectarianism itself. It forbids the use of the great engine of party, party spirit. It forbids the propagation of the sentiments of a party for the sake of its growth. It forbids that spirit of exclusion and censoriousness so grateful to the pride of the human heart; for no one condemns another without secretly flattering himself. It can grow only with the increase of light, candour, and charity, with a love of the truth for its own sake, and not for the advantages which may be made of it, the benefits of social combination and a fair public standing and reputation.

Persecution was once thought a religious duty, and a backwardness to exercise it a sure symptom of lukewarmness and want of zeal in the cause of Christ. And civil toleration was represented as a certain mark of indifference to truth, and the readiest way to destroy all religion. Time and experience have corrected these mistakes, and proved that piety flourishes most where there is the least external restraint, where the rights of conscience are most respected. The only vestige of that spirit which now remains is the combination to withhold the Christian name and privileges from those who vary from the popular faith. That, however, is likewise in a fair way of being corrected. The real unbelievers, the real rejecters of Christ and his religion, are showing and avowing themselves in such a manner as to leave no doubt as to the true nature of unbelief, and of the readiness of those who have rejected the faith, to cast off

likewise the name of Christians. That the worshippers of one God in one Person in the name of Christ, do not range themselves on that side, ought to be sufficient evidence to all candid minds that they share neither in their sentiments nor their feelings.

I conclude, by exhorting all who hear me to examine themselves whether they be in the faith, whether they have this belief in Christ and his revelation strong within them. If they have it, whether it be living or dead, whether it be a cold speculation of the brain, or an active principle pervading the whole life. I would entreat you to examine whether it merely fills the mind occasionally with fear and regret, or be a "faith which worketh by love," purifies the heart, and overcomes the world.

## LECTURE XIII.

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### HOW DOES A MAN BECOME A CHRISTIAN.

TITUS II. 11, 12.

“FOR THE GRACE OF GOD THAT BRINGETH SALVATION HATH APPEARED TO ALL MEN, TEACHING US, THAT DENYING UNGODLINESS AND WORLDLY LUSTS, WE SHOULD LIVE SOBERLY, RIGHTEOUSLY, AND GODLY IN THIS PRESENT WORLD.”

THE subject which we propose to consider this evening, is comprehended in the following inquiry: How does a man become a Christian? What is necessary to be done for a man, and what must he do for himself in order to be a Christian?

This, you perceive to be an inquiry of great doctrinal and practical importance. It touches a very nice question in speculative investigation, the limits of human and Divine agency in the process of salvation, spiritual improvement, the formation of the Christian character. Its practical bearing is to show those, who on an examination of themselves, find they are not what they would be, or what their own convictions assure them they ought to be, where the fault has been, whether in themselves or somewhere else, and how this fault may be corrected in future.

How then, we inquire, does a man become a Christian? Some truths are set in a stronger light by describing their opposites. Perhaps it may be so in the present case. Let us then ask how a man becomes the opposite of a Christian, a heathen in a Christian land. In the first place, he is suffered to grow up without Christian knowledge. He is not taught to read the Bible by those who have the care of his early years; he does not form the habit himself. The truths, motives, and principles of the Gospel do not operate in his mind, or on his conduct and life. He is not taught to pray, nor does he cultivate habits of devotion himself, and is therefore destitute of its sanctifying influence. He never reads religious or devotional books, so that he never forms a moral and devotional taste. He scarcely ever goes to church, or puts himself in the way of serious reflection or sacred instruction; he turns his back on the ordinances, and generally on the means of religion. He has no idea of what religion and devotion are, nor does he care to know. Suppose this, and you have the way in which a man becomes the opposite of a Christian, a heathen in a Christian land. He may be in some degree moral, and so were heathens. He may, he must to a certain extent, catch the general spirit, and take the tone of the society in which he lives and moves, which has been elevated by Christianity. But he is merely passive in this, and would have floated on the level of any society in which his lot was cast, Christian or Pagan.

But as religious faith, principle and habit are the great and most efficient antidote to sin, the probability

is, that he will not be moral. Without this preservative, the probability is, that he will fall into bad company, and into many temptations, and that he will yield to them. His natural innocence will be corrupted, his good and upright feelings vitiated, and his will, originally free to good as well as evil, will become gradually enslaved to evil habit. He is then evidently not only not in the kingdom of God, but far from it.

Reverse this process, and you have the way in which men ordinarily become Christians. They at an early age, with the very dawning of their minds, receive Christian knowledge. They are taught and they learn the few and simple, but the great, spiritual, all-pervading, all-comprehending truths and doctrines of the Gospel. This takes place not by a single, undivided agency, but by the combined agency of God, of Christ, of parents or instructors, and of the mind of the child; of God, who gave the revelation through Christ; of Christ who taught it to men, who exemplified it in his conduct, and laid down his life to prove it and seal it with his blood; of the parent or instructor, who takes these doctrines from the written records of Christ's teaching, and communicates them to the child; of the child, who applies his mind to understand and remember them, and practise upon them when called as life advances, into scenes where moral choice must be exercised. He is taught to pray. By this exercise all the truths of religion, and all he has been taught of God come to bear directly on the mind, are the means of immediate spiritual influence. God comes in this way to act directly on the mind for its spiritual improvement, not by vio-

lating its laws and working a miracle, but in accordance with its laws, by operating through the understanding and the will, by being made the subject of thought, and communion, and affection. As he grows older, and his understanding is developed, he comes to read and understand the Scriptures himself, he listens to the instructions of the sanctuary and is profited by them. He forms a taste for religious reading and devotional engagements, and when his character is sufficiently matured and confirmed, he feels constrained by his affectionate regard for the Saviour, to honor his memory by celebrating the ordinance of his institution. Thus he is trained up when he is young in the way he should go, and when he is older he will not depart from it. In this way, I believe more Christians are made than in any other, according to the confession of all religious teachers of every denomination. Even those who put their chief reliance on periodical excitements, are constrained to admit that most of the subjects of permanent impressions are from religious families, and if any are brought in from the ignorant and vicious, the probability of their steadfastness is in direct proportion to their previous religious knowledge and education, and in an inverse ratio to their ignorance and their vices. So you perceive that according to our text, the great reliance is to be placed on teaching, on forming instead of changing, the character. "The grace of God" "hath appeared to all men, *teaching* us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly."—When the character is once formed and matured without Christian knowledge, with-

out Christian principles, without Christian habits, the probability of its change is, I confess, but small under any circumstances. There is a difficulty then on the very threshold, to secure the requisite degree of attention to religious truth. "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things," if nothing worse, have come in and occupied the mind so exclusively, that divine things either are not attended to at all, or so hastily and superficially as to make no lasting impression. The chief hope then is from another source. The teacher then to be relied on, is the course of Divine Providence, and the experience of life. Affliction then may speak with a voice sufficiently impressive, to be heard to the inmost depths of the soul. The loss of friends may draw the heart to him, who came to comfort those who mourn. The arrow of misfortune may pierce so deeply, as to send the sufferer to the Great Physician of souls. The unsatisfactoriness of all earthly things may bring the inquirer for real good, to the fountain of living waters springing up into everlasting life. The natural retributions of sin, the nausea, sorrow and disgust, which must sooner or later overtake the deluded devotee of pleasure, may lead him to "ahhor" himself, "and repent in dust and ashes." The mad outcast of profligacy and vice, may at last come to his right mind, and be found sitting at the feet of Jesus. Such, before they become true Christians, must become as little children. They must go over this same process of learning of our common Master, must form themselves to the practice of every duty they have hitherto neglected. They must acquire

by study, endeavor and experience, Christian knowledge, Christian principles, Christian habits, and then they will be Christians indeed.

But it will be objected to this, I know, by a certain class of religionists, that the process of becoming a Christian is the work of the Spirit of God. We answer, this is granted. So is the process by which the seed that is sown in the earth becomes a harvest, the work of God's Spirit. The Spirit of God is the power of God in action. The Spirit, agency, efficiency, energy of God, is the only power which connects any cause with its effect, and a moral as much as a physical cause with its effect. There is no power in the seed of itself to spring up and bear fruit, without the immediate agency of God. So there is no power in any idea or truth, when conveyed to the mind of man, to give him any knowledge or excite him to any good affection or holy action without the immediate agency of God. But the Spirit works through means in both cases, and not without them. And those means man may use or not just as he chooses. Man must plant the seed in the earth and cultivate it, or God will give him no harvest. So God will not work in his mind if he leave it a mere blank, if he sow no seed and use no means through which and in which the Spirit may operate. He must read God's word, or pray, or hear religious discourse, or meditate on his works or providence, or there will be no operation of the Spirit in his mind, any more than there will be in the field where no seed is sown.

But such religionists will rejoin, there must be some



distinguishing, special operations of God's Spirit or power, in all those cases where the means of religion are effectual. We answer, that this assertion is a mere assumption, entirely destitute of any proof or any evidence whatever. It is only a necessary part of a baseless, artificial system of divinity, dishonorable alike to God and man. Consequences follow immediately from it most derogatory from the moral character and government of God. It will follow from it that of two persons equally sincere and earnest in the use of means, and equally deserving the aid of the Spirit, which alone makes those means effectual, it is withheld from one and bestowed on the other by arbitrary will, caprice, partiality, favoritism; so one is lost, not through his own fault, for he did all he could, and the other is saved, not because he was any more meritorious. To evade this, is it said that though special, it is always bestowed on the sincere? Then it is always bestowed according to a certain rule. It is always bestowed under certain circumstances; then it is no longer special and distinguishing. Every one is sure of receiving the effectual aid of the Spirit who is sincere; or in other words, the effectual aid of the Spirit always accompanies the means of religion when sincerely used.

But it will not do, it may be said, to tell people so. They will not feel sufficiently their dependence. They will form presumptuous ideas of the goodness of God, and his readiness to receive them at any time. They will trust too much to their own power of using the means of religion effectually at any hour, and so put it off. I answer, that I would tell the truth at any rate,

and let consequences take care of themselves. I would honestly tell them the truth on this and every other subject, as I went along, and rely on one truth to correct what, to my short sighted vision, seemed calculated to produce an injurious effect in another. I would tell them that the probability that they would use the means of religion at all, is growing less and less every moment, as the time in which it must be done is growing shorter and bad habits are continually strengthening, and therefore the probability of sincerity, the grand requisite, is diminishing every day.

We cannot certainly be more dependent on God for the means of sustaining spiritual life, and their efficacy for that purpose, than we are for the means of sustaining animal life, and their efficacy for that purpose. And yet no one thinks of preaching that every act of the Deity by which this is extended to us is a special act, in order to keep up men's sense of dependence upon God for the food which sustains life, and for the power which it momentarily receives from God to effect that purpose. I see not therefore, why we should make a distinction between these two cases, when there is no difference. This preaching and shaping doctrines merely to produce an effect, I cannot approve. It savours more of human cunning and pious fraud, than of godly honesty and sincerity. I shall say something on this head in the present Lecture before I close.

There is a sense, and an important sense, in which a man's becoming a Christian is the effect of the operation, the miraculous operation of the Spirit of God. God by his Spirit, by a violation of the common laws of

nature, revealed the Gospel to Jesus and his apostles. God gave him the Spirit without measure. God gave him all his doctrines, requiring superhuman wisdom and knowledge. "My doctrine," said he, "is not mine, but his that sent me." "I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me." These doctrines were proved to be from God by the miraculous operation of the Spirit. "The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." And this same miraculous power accompanied the apostles during their ministry, which established Christianity in the world. "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall *he* do also, and greater works shall he do." Without this miraculous communication of knowledge and wisdom, which constitutes the Gospel, it plainly could never have existed on earth, and without the external miracles, particularly Christ's resurrection from the dead, it could never have been authenticated and established as a divine revelation. That Gospel was committed to writing, and has come down to us just as it then existed. Time has made no change in it, though the generations of men have passed away. For though "all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." Whoever then now learns of the Gospel, and is convinced of its truth by its superhuman wisdom, and the miracles which accompanied it, is as really taught by the Spirit of God, as those who listened to it

from the lips of him to whom it was first communicated. And those who are convinced by the evidence we have of the miracles, owe their faith to the Spirit of God.

And there is a still further point of resemblance. It does not appear that there was any influence exerted immediately on the minds of the first converts to make them believe and obey the Gospel. They appear to have been left to the exercise of their natural powers. We have no evidence of any miraculous influence on their minds to cause them to believe, or before they believed. The miracles were wrought to give the Gospel external evidence, external I mean to the minds of those to whom it was preached. The miracles were wrought to give them evidence ; but none, of which we have any account, to predispose their minds to receive it, or to act according to their convictions when it was received. This could not have been done, without infringing upon their moral freedom and accountability. And this brings to view a very important consideration. They welcomed or resisted their convictions according to their previous moral condition ; and they obeyed or disobeyed their convictions, in a great measure, according to their accustomed habits of action—a principle of universal application. It is as true now as it was in the days of Christ and his apostles. The bad effects of sin extend not only to the affections and the will, to deprave the affections and enslave the will, but they likewise embarrass the understanding in the investigation of truth, and prompt the mind to resist instead of seeking conviction. A bad man was less likely to believe on Christ than a good man, because he would feel himself

interested in parrying the force of the evidence, in not giving it a fair and full examination. "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

Those then, who by a life of probity and honesty had prepared themselves to receive and believe in Christ, were entitled to that advantage in respect to their convictions, in the operations of their understandings even, which they possessed over the vicious and unprincipled; who by their wickedness had made themselves enemies of the light, and opposed to the acknowledgment of a moral Reformer. Conversion by miraculous impulse, would destroy this just distinction, as well as preclude entirely whatever moral character there might be in embracing truth. Any interference afterward acting upon the mind, to determine its choice to obey its convictions, would certainly destroy free agency and all merit.

The Spirit of God, or the power of God, was exerted to impart the revelation, and to give sufficient evidence of it; but never, as far as we are taught, was it exerted to make this or that man believe and receive it, or to bias his will to act according to his belief or convictions when he had received it. The human mind was left to its own natural laws and its own freedom of choice. Otherwise the same benevolence which prompted God to send the Gospel, and Christ to teach it with toil, suffering and death, would have prompted to cause all men instead of a few, to believe on and obey him. The Gospel itself is a miraculous agency upon the minds of

men. For it was given by miracle, and proved by miracles. Wherever it was preached, then as now, it contained all that influence upon the mind of man which God saw fit to address to it. More was not consistent with that freedom of moral action which is necessary to good or ill desert, or the formation of character. It contains just that degree and amount of instruction, persuasion, motive, inducement, which infinite wisdom saw was compatible with human liberty and moral probation. To say then, that it required another act of the Spirit or power of God to prepare the heart for its effectual reception, or to give it light and force in the mind, is to assert that the former act of the Spirit was imperfect and insufficient for the very purpose for which it was exerted, is to assert that God's revelation is so defective for its purpose, that it requires another revelation to explain and give it efficacy.

My estimate of the revelation of Christ is not so low as this. I do not think so meanly of the sacred Scriptures. I believe that the religion of Christ is the most powerful agency and influence which God exerts upon the soul of man. I believe that it comes up to the very point where more light and more power would destroy the balance of the choice, and overwhelm the freedom of the will. Much more would a direct, irresistible power exerted immediately on the mind to produce conviction and obedience, have that effect. Accordingly we find, that when miracles ceased with the age of the apostles, in the Christian Church, reliance was placed on instruction to make Christians. It was supposed by those who lived nearest to the age of miracles, that no further vio-

lation of the laws of nature was to be expected. The Christian religion was left to be propagated and perpetuated by the operation of the common laws of human agency and the human mind. They therefore instituted a course of systematic instruction for the young, beginning in their tenderest years to instil into them the simplest principles of the Christian religion. And this system of instruction went upon the very rational supposition, that the Gospel was competent to that purpose for which it was given by God, to make men wise to salvation, and with his blessing would be efficient for the accomplishment of that end, just as any other means which he has in his wisdom instituted, is for any other purpose. And we have every reason to believe that they were not disappointed, for that was the age of saints, and martyrs, and confessors.

Moses, according to the wisdom given to him, had left instructions ages before, on this point. "And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." And this system of instruction went upon the supposition that children come into the world free to choose good or evil, and immediately when capable of moral action, begin to form characters either good or bad by their good or bad actions, which will have a bearing on their whole future existence. As the mind always acts with reference to the principles there are in it, this system took care that the first principles which entered it should be Christian principles. This continued the practice of the church for many ages, till new doctrines were introduced entirely subversive of the theory

upon which this system of instruction was founded. St. Augustine, in the fifth century, broached the doctrine that man is by nature totally depraved; and incapable of any religious action, till his nature is changed. This of course rendered the theory of being made Christians by instruction absurd and preposterous. Because, according to that supposition, they are made Christians, not by the spiritual agency of God through the Gospel in which others and they themselves might be instrumental, but by direct, arbitrary action of God upon the soul, which none but he could hasten or retard. It is certainly a waste of time and effort to impart religious instruction to a being incapable of religion. It is certainly a mockery to lay motive and inducement before a being who has no power to obey them. There is certainly no inducement to sow seed which has no vitality in it, or in a soil which has no power to nourish and fructify it.

This speculation of St. Augustine seems never, however, to have been carried out in practice, nor to have influenced the usages of the Catholic church. But since its revival by Calvin at the Reformation, it has entered more largely into both speculative and practical theology. And it now threatens, where the peculiar tenets of that Reformer prevail, entirely to revolutionize the administration of the Christian religion. Once admit the shocking hypothesis that man is born under the wrath and curse of God, incapable of willing or doing anything good or pleasing to God, is under the necessity of sinning in every act, then there must be a change wrought in him by the arbitrary, irresistible power of



God, before he becomes a moral agent even, so far as religion is concerned. As he cannot advance that change, so he cannot retard it. It is as entirely useless, according to this theory, to instil into the mind the principles and truths of the Gospel, as to sow seed in a desert of sand. The soul must sin at any rate, and it is of little consequence whether its sins are greater or less, fewer or more, as it cannot be more than totally depraved, or merit more than God's wrath, curse, and damnation. Nay, it is sometimes asserted, that the more like Christians people are educated, the more excellent their characters, provided this change has not been wrought, the further they are from the kingdom of God; and the greater the sinner, the more likely to be made a saint. All we can say of such a doctrine as this, is, that it is a worthy part and parcel of a system of religion, which begins with calumniating the character of the Deity, and ends by contradicting every law and phenomenon of the human mind.

But, as we before said, wherever these doctrines prevail, the tendency is to conform to them the whole administration of Christianity. Although in theory it is maintained that none but God can change the heart, and nothing that man can do will have any influence to induce him to do it, still means are adopted, which apparently have for their object to induce him to produce that change. Means are adopted which certainly, if they have no influence with God according to this system, to induce him to change the hearts of the subjects of these means, are calculated and are apparently intended to bring on a crisis in their state of feeling, which makes

them imagine that their hearts are changed. That thousands, by their endeavors afterward to act accordingly, may form a Christian character, we do not doubt. But there can come no good on the whole, from mistake and deception ; and where there is one person benefited by such measures, there are probably many who suffer irreparable injury.

But here, perhaps, I may be asked, if I wish to be understood to speak in disparagement of religious excitements, and what are technically called, in the language of the day, Revivals of religion ? I answer that I would speak of them with caution and discrimination. Where I saw a minister who had not labored up to the limit of his strength, and time, and talents, becoming more earnest and assiduous in his duties, studying more, and discharging his public functions with more force and impressiveness :—if I should see a congregation, which had been cold and negligent, waking up to a cooperation with their minister, more constant at church, more devout while there, becoming alive to the importance and practice of family religion, who should dedicate their children to God, and then be careful to instruct them, or have them instructed in the great truths and principles of Christianity ;—if I should see the bonds of family affection strengthening, and a greater degree of interest and regard in each member of the society for every other ;—if, in this state of things, I should see more and more from time to time, prompted by the strength and sincerity of their religious feelings and their affection toward the Saviour, to surround the table of his dying love ;—if I should see all this take place with-

out officious intermeddling with each other's concerns, without affected and artificial solemnity, without harsh and censorious judgments of each other, this I should welcome as a revival of religion indeed. I should hail it as "that wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." For such a revival as this, I would spend and be spent. For this I would labor and pray, so long as God permitted me to be an ambassador of Christ.

So far as a revival of religion bore these marks and corresponded to this description, I should approve and rejoice in it. But were I to hear of a religious excitement in any place; in order to form my judgment of it, I should first inquire whether the pastor had adopted those measures which are usually resorted to to produce an excitement, from his own judgment, or whether he were driven into them by the over-persuasion of his neighboring brethren, or their threats of denunciation; or brought into it to gratify some of the restless, but weak spirits of his own society. I should inquire whether it were or were not, an expedient resorted to in order to support a tottering church, a tottering man, or a tottering cause. I should endeavor to ascertain whether or not it were employed in order to sustain, by the supposed divine approbation which it might be thought to involve, the claims of a declining faith, which can no longer be defended by argument. I should ask, if among the foreign assistance usually called in on such occasions, those who figured most conspicuously were men in the places from which they came, noted for their in-

tegrity, their sound sense, and the purity of their morals ; or whether they were the vain, the conceited, and the equivocal of fame. I should wish to be informed whether the measures adopted met the approbation of the wisest heads and the soundest hearts of the congregation, or only of the enthusiastic, the volatile, and unstable, and were merely tolerated by the wise, for fear of opposing what was in some way connected with the cause of religion. I should inquire, moreover, what doctrines had been preached. If I found among them, as I probably should, if the excitement had been great, the Divine Sovereignty in the persons, modes, and times of conversion ; and that revivals are the effect of the extraordinary operation of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men ; I should then question how it could be reconciled with plain honesty for those to preach these doctrines, who were conscious of bringing about these excitements by human machinery. How can they say that a revival is the result of the extraordinary operation of the Spirit of God, who have in council determined beforehand to bring that revival to pass by preconcerted means ? I should look upon this accidental coincidence of the determination of God to pour out his Spirit in a certain place, with a determination of a certain set of men to have a revival there, as being something more than suspicious. The human agents in these excitements, in order to sustain their claim to be the immediate work of God must maintain, in those cases in which conversion took place in a preconcerted revival, either that the extraordinary operations of the Spirit were exercised in consequence of the use of the means, or that they them-

selves were prompted by the special influences of the Spirit to use those means. If they say in consequence of the use of means, their use of means controlled and prescribed the operations of the Spirit to a certain time and a certain place. If so, what becomes of the Divine Sovereignty? If they say that the revival is the effect of the operation of the Spirit of God in the sense of prompting them to undertake it, then they share the pretension to inspiration with a class of persons in modern times, of whose fellowship we should not suppose them to be at all ambitious. If they mean that it is the result of the blessing of God, which always accompanies the sincere employment of the means which he has appointed, then let them say so. If they believe it is common and invariable, let them not say it is special. Let them not claim Divine sanctions for their doctrines from special operations of the Spirit, which they know to be common.

But I should perhaps be told, that there was great solemnity, great distress of mind, and perhaps convulsions of body. I should proceed to inquire further, what doctrines were preached? If they were total depravity, which means man's being created under God's wrath and curse, and his being doomed inevitably to eternal damnation, without the interposition of almighty power, unable to do the least thing to secure his salvation; and in connection with these the Divine Sovereignty, which means arbitrary selection of the individuals to be saved; I should say, solemnly, I marvel rather that they were not made mad, if they believed these doctrines. If they were true, the heavens should be hung in black, and the universe shrouded in gloom;

for they take away our heavenly Father, and substitute in his place a stern and capricious tyrant without justice and without love.

But it would be said that there was great penitence produced. Penitence for what? I would ask. For their wicked deeds, or their wicked nature, derived from Adam?—for their real sins or for their imaginary guilt? But there was great joy and peace succeeding. I answer, it is as easy to work upon the imagination one way as another, to throw off as to bring upon the soul a load of unspecified and fictitious guilt; their real, every-day transgressions would have been more difficult to dispose of. But then they were brought so entirely to submit to God. To man, I fear, quite as much as to God. They are proselyted to a sect and pledged unscrupulously to go all lengths with them, on pain of denunciation as backsliders. But they bring forth the fruit of goodness in after life. I answer, that they have committed themselves in such a way that it puts it out of my power, and I fear out of their own, to determine whether they act from religious motives or not. They are now placed in a condition to consider, when about to act, not so much what is right and good in itself, what conscience and God's word sanction, *as what other people may think will become their Christian profession.* It is impossible for me to tell, or perhaps for themselves, whether they have or have not true religion. To ascertain this, it would be necessary to remove them to another sphere and to other associations. If they did not there float just on the level of society, and take their tone from those about them, that is, if

they ceased to refer everything to a conventional conscience instead of their own, then it would be certain that they possessed true religion. I should, in a place where a revival had been, expect to find much abstinence for a time at least, in obedience to this conventional conscience, from gay dressing and public amusements. I should desire to know whether there was as much abstinence from private scandal, wrath, strife, bitterness, and evil speaking. I should be told, many had become men of prayer; I should prefer that it should be more in their closets and less in the corners of the street, more in the spirit of the Publican and less in the spirit of the Pharisee. I would have them offer up their prayers for others more in the spirit of affectionate intercession, and less in the spirit of an overbearing indictment.

The religion of revivals, I am sorry to say, is essentially bigoted and uncharitable. You never can get a young convert, fresh from the heat of these excitements, to own that there are any true Christians who have not been through a similar process, or whose piety has been the growth of years, instead of the convulsion of a day. All the coin in circulation is counterfeit, spurious, and worthless to them, which does not bear the newness and stamp of the last few years. Even their own fathers and mothers, who were serving God years before they were born, they come to look upon as unconverted and no better than heathens, because they cannot tell the precise moment when they were brought out of darkness into light. It sets up a false standard of character, and makes religion to consist not so much in a faithful

discharge of the common duties of life, as in experiences and going the round of meetings and excitements. It produces a bigoted attachment to a certain set of doctrines which precludes all candid examination. They become too much personally interested in the truth of certain doctrines to suppose the possibility of their being untrue. Their hopes of salvation are derived not so much from the tenor of their daily life, as from the confident belief that at a particular time they underwent the mysterious, irreversible change. Any inquiry casting doubt on the miraculousness or the irreversible nature of that change, is resisted with alarm and indignation as undermining their hopes, as abolishing their title to spiritual privilege and aristocracy, and reducing them to take their chance among the common herd of mankind, and to be judged according to the deeds done in the body.

Let it not be understood, however, that I would deny there is some good done on these occasions, even the most fanatical. But I see no reason to resort to miracles for the good effects, whatever they may be. There is a general waking up of attention to the subject, there is a multiplication of the means of religion, reading and hearing the word of God, and prayer. These we have reason to believe are always efficacious, when sincerely used, and precisely to the extent of that sincerity. We have no reason to believe that all, on these occasions, use these for effect upon other people. Some do it sincerely and for their own improvement, and such are blessed by God under all circumstances. But the difficulty is, these new measures soon become old, and lose



their efficacy. They produce no more effect than the the old measures, and when the power of excitement is worn out, a return to the ordinary means of grace seems cold, dull, and insipid. These things being so, would it not be more modest, more safe, and more true, for the conductors of these revivals, as they are called, if they must publish a statement of them to the world, instead of the inflation and exaggeration in which they indulge, of the special visitation of the Spirit, to say there had been an unusual attention to the means of religion, and it had been followed by the happiest results? But such a statement would rob the peculiar doctrines exhibited of the confirmation, seal, and sanction of God's truth which is intended to be given them, sink the agents in the scene from the especial and infallible interpreters of God's word, into mere, common, and fallible men, and tear the veil from the wire-working and machinery they had used.

Much is said at this time of the danger of the spread of the Catholic faith. I fear there is much more to be apprehended from the spread of the Catholic spirit, if that spirit be as its enemies represent it, the spirit of priestly domination. The greatest obstruction truth now meets is, that the inquiry is not what doctrines of religion are true and Scriptural, but what will give the priesthood the most power. The greatest obstruction to charity, which is the bond of perfection and the essence of Christianity, is the holy horror which the leaders of sects think it expedient to inspire in their followers against all other sects, in order to retain their allegiance, and thus the ministry of the Gospel of Christ is in dan-

ger of being degraded from a pure, dignified, and holy calling, into a pitiful partisan warfare, in which peace, and truth, and charity, are to be sacrificed together.

We return to the subject from which we have digressed. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." We believe that the efficacy of those means of grace which we enumerated at the commencement of this discourse, is fully sustained by the representations of the Scriptures. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." "Moreover by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them, there is great reward." "Now ye are clean," or pure, says our Saviour, "through the word which I have spoken unto you." "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." 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." "Receive with meekness the engrafted word which is able to save your souls." Quotations of this kind might be multiplied almost without limit. No more, we trust, are needed to show that the sacred Scriptures are a divine agency upon the soul of man, sufficient to sanctify and save it, when studied with

earnestness and sincerity. They are the fountain of living waters sufficient for all the spiritual wants of the soul.

As full and explicit is the sacred testimony to the efficacy of prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." "If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things," or as Luke reports it, "the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." "Watch ye, and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." "They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." If any of you are conscious to yourselves that you are not Christians in heart and life, it is not because divine influence has been withheld; but because you have not earnestly and sincerely used the means of grace, which God has appointed.

## LECTURE XIV.

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### ORIGIN, NATURE, AND TENDENCY OF CREEDS.

MATTHEW, XXIII. 8.

“BUT BE NOT YE CALLED RABBI; FOR ONE IS YOUR MASTER, EVEN CHRIST, AND ALL YE ARE BRETHERN.”

PERHAPS there is nothing which demonstrates more strikingly the Divine wisdom which dwelt in Christ, than this charge to his disciples concerning the usurpation of spiritual power. That this is his object, appears from the connection in which it stands, for he takes occasion to give this warning from the exhibition of this disposition in the Scribes and Pharisees. They were the religious teachers of that day, they abused their trust and substituted the commandments of men for the law and truth of God. “The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.” They “love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to

be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." Our Lord knew what was in man. He knew that there is in him a strong desire of power, love of dictation, fondness for eminence and respect. He saw it in the Scribes and Pharisees, and he knew that the teachers of his own pure faith would be beset with the same temptation of legislating and lording it over the consciences of their brethren. This he strictly forbids. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." As if he had said, "Let none of my followers, when I am gone, assume my seat or presume to dictate to his brethren. The allegiance of every Christian is due directly to me. I am the all-sufficient teacher. No human being need receive, or believe, or practise anything which I have not explicitly taught. My doctrines lie level with the meanest capacity. They contain everything which is necessary to salvation, and in the best possible mode of expression. Let no one then of my disciples, usurp dominion, let no one submit to the dictation of his brethren in my church, of which I am the only head."

Such was the charge of Christ. But need I tell you that the apostles were hardly in their graves before this spirit broke out among his followers, and has reigned from that day to this? Four centuries had not passed before the seat of Christ was as full of doctors as that of Moses had been, all as eager as they were, to bind heavy burdens and lay them upon the shoulders of men. Then it became not sufficient to assent to what Christ

and his apostles had said, to constitute a Christian, but to the interpretation which these doctors chose to put upon it.

But spiritual tyranny was revived in the Christian Church under circumstances of much greater cruelty and oppression, than it had existed in the Jewish. For it does not appear that the Jews ever invented that greatest of all impositions and engines of spiritual usurpation,—a CREED. The Jewish sects were ready enough to persecute each other, but they never chanced to adopt the expedient of legalizing and systematizing persecution by the means of a formulary of faith. Though the Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, it appears that they had more respect for him than to reduce his religion to a written Creed of their own, and then force it upon other people. This is an indignity which their Scriptures escaped. And let it not be considered harsh that I speak of Creeds in such terms of unqualified condemnation. For they can be shown to be the instrument and occasion of all the persecution, torture, and bloodshed which have been perpetrated in the Christian Church since its establishment. Men have always been persecuted, and tortured, and murdered, as heretics, for heresy. But it is only by the establishment of a Creed, that heresy can be ascertained and the heretic convicted. So long as you keep to the words of the Bible you can convict no man of heresy. For if he hold to the Bible at all, he will admit everything there is in it. But he will not assent to your sense of it. And you have no right to demand it of him. He has just as much right to require of you to

assent to his sense, as you have to require him to assent to yours. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." But if I, you may answer, can get another person to agree with me, then we can decree that ours is the true sense, and then we can convict the third person of heresy. Or at least we have the power to make him a heretic, right or wrong, and we have the power to treat him as a heretic, to cut him off from our society and communion; we may persecute him, and if we can persuade ourselves to believe it is right and for the glory of God, we may kill him for not assenting to God's truth. This is but a plain, unvarnished statement of the principle upon which all Creeds are built. And we ask if anything in the compass of imagination can be more oppressive and unjust, or more directly in violation of the express commandment of Christ? What then is a Creed? It is the sense which a majority agree to put upon the words of Scripture, and force upon the minority, or cast them out from their communion, and cut them off from the name, and rights, and privileges of Christians.

In discussing the subject of Creeds, as we propose to do in this Lecture, we shall first notice the manner of their introduction into the Christian Church, and then examine their propriety, authority and effects.

I shall notice the introduction of Creeds into the church the more readily, as their history will discover to us the elements, the rise, the growth and establishment of the doctrine of the Trinity. As it happens, the first public Creed which was established in the church and forced upon men by the civil arm, was that

of Nice, which, though it did not establish the doctrine of the Trinity in the modern sense of the term, established something which finally led to it. By comparing this first monument of secular and spiritual usurpation, which bears date of the year 325, with what went before, with the New Testament, and what came after, we may perceive from what the doctrine of the Trinity arose, how far it had then proceeded, and how it was afterward brought to its present state.

At first sight it might seem utterly unaccountable how the doctrine of the Trinity could have grown out of the pure Monotheism of the Jews. At the time of Christ, no such thing had ever been heard of among them, and nothing could be more abhorrent to all their conceptions of God. The Holy Spirit had been spoken of in the Old Testament in the same manner that it was afterwards in the New. But no one had ever dreamt of understanding it as a person. It was always considered by the Jews, who certainly ought to have understood the force of their own language better than any one else, as the power of God in general or special action, and is so considered to this day. What at this time could have led to its deification and addition as an object of worship?

Jesus of Nazareth had appeared among the Jews and claimed to be, and was proved by God to be, their Messiah. But no Jew certainly ever mistook him for that God who sent him, or for a Person of God, for nothing could be more revolting to a Jew, than anything which would impair, in the remotest degree, the Divine unity. During the days of the apostles we find



no trace of the association of Christ or the Holy Spirit with God, as objects of worship. There is no trace of such a doctrine in the preaching of the apostles for thirty years recorded in the Acts. And so the New Testament closed. The apostles slept with their fathers, the Jewish nation was destroyed, and the Gospel fell into the hands of those who had been educated in heathenism and idolatry. The men of learning who succeeded the apostles as teachers in the Christian Church, and by their writings and speculations formed and guided the opinions of its members, had been heathen philosophers. And what could heathen philosophers find in the New Testament as the elements, the basis on which to build such a stupendous doctrine as the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth? These elements they found in two phrases, "Son of God," and "Logos," word, or wisdom, or reason. "Son of God," with the Jews, as we have already demonstrated in the second Lecture, was a title merely equivalent to Messiah, and was applied by Nathaniel to Jesus before he knew of his miraculous birth even, while he thought him the son of Joseph. "Logos," word, or wisdom, or reason, was applied by John to that Divine wisdom and power which God manifested through Jesus, and by which he had created the universe. But these phrases were caught up by these heathen philosophers, and made to mean something entirely different. To them, heathens as they had been, the idea of a derived and subordinate God, or a complexity in the Divine Nature, was not at all shocking. They, therefore, carried the phrase "Son of God," which in the mind of a Jew, conveyed no

idea of a superior nature, back into eternity, and made Christ instead of a created being, one derived immediately from God, and of the same nature. And what confirmed them in this notion, was the coincidence of the word Logos, which John used to express the power and wisdom of God which dwelt in Christ, with the same term Logos in their own philosophy, which they had learned of Plato and his followers.

The philosophical speculations of that age, which were a mixture of the Platonic and the Oriental, were very loose on the subject of the Unity of God. They both allowed of derived Divinity, of emanations from God, still partaking of the Divine Nature. Plato had spoken of the Logos, or reason of God, as somehow distinct from his essential being, by which he created the world, and his followers had spoken of it as a distinct Being. Philo, a learned Jew, a contemporary of the apostles in the latter part of his life, had amalgamated in some measure, this Platonic heathen philosophy with the Jewish theology. He represented this Logos, or reason of God, as a Person, as a Being emanated or begotten, not uncreated like the great Supreme, nor created like other beings, but a medium between the two. This Logos he called "first born Son," and represents all things as created, preserved and governed by him. This is he who appeared to the patriarchs of the Old Testament; for the Supreme God, who cannot be limited by any place, could not appear in a visible form. From this time the Logos became the advocate of men with God. God sends him into virtuous souls, who are instructed by him. He is the

secondary God, who is subordinate to the Supreme. Now these were speculations entered into by a Jewish-heathen philosopher before the Gospels were written, who had, it is probable, never heard of Jesus of Nazareth, or his doctrines. Here then we have the very elements, of a purely heathen origin, the materials, the substratum of what afterwards was formed into the Second Person of the Trinity, and the Divine Nature of Christ. Plato had personified the Intellectual Energy of God, by which he planned, created and governs all things. His followers made it a real Person, an emanation from God. Philo, the Jew, and others with him probably, introduced this doctrine into the Jewish Theology, and corrupted with it their pure Theism, by representing this intermediate Being, this Platonic Logos, to have been the medium through which the Jehovah of the Jews created the world and held intercourse with the patriarchs. Afterwards the Gospels were written. Three of them, which certainly contain all that is essential to Christian doctrine, have no expression, with the exception of "Son of God," and that as an equivalent to Messiah, which could furnish the remotest analogy between Jesus of Nazareth, and the Logos of Plato and Philo. John does use the word Logos, in the sense of that wisdom and power of God which were manifested in Jesus, but as far as we can perceive without any idea of personality, hardly of personification, much less of dividing the Divine Nature. Here then was the point of coincidence and conjunction. The Christian Fathers, who had been heathen philosophers, into whose hands the administration of

Christianity fell after the apostles, joined these two together, the Jewish Messiah and the Platonic Logos. And hence resulted that strange fancy of a human and a Divine nature combined in one Person, and the still stranger introduction of a Second Person into the Jehovah of the Jews. *The first elements of the Trinity then, grew out of putting heathen meanings on Jewish words, terms, and phrases.* "Son of God," which with a Jew had no reference to nature at all when applied to the Messiah, was carried back into the ages of eternity, and made to mean derivation from the substance of God. And "Logos" was made to mean, not the wisdom and power of God manifested in Jesus of Nazareth, but the Platonic Logos, an attribute or portion of God, become a Person.

To be convinced that this was the origin of the doctrine of the Trinity, so abhorrent to the Theism, both of the Jews, and of the religion of Jesus, it is only necessary to examine the philosophical speculations of that age, in connection with the writings of the Christian Fathers before the council of Nice. Of the use they made of these two phrases "Son" and "Logos," I shall give you some specimens. I shall make these quotations from the Christian Fathers, to show of what elements they constructed the Trinity, how far it had advanced in their hands, how much more in these speculations it is like the Platonic system we have been examining, than like the theology of the Jews, or modern and perfected Trinitarianism. My quotations from them will be taken from a work of Professor Stuart, of Andover, a witness in no way friendly to the conclu-

sions I draw from his premises, and therefore the more likely to be impartial. The conclusion which he avows, after having carefully examined this whole subject, is summed up in these words. "The great body of the early and influential Christian Fathers, whose works are extant, believed that the Son of God was begotten at a period not long before the creation of the world; or in other words, that he became a separate hypostasis at or near the time when the work of creation was to be performed."

The first writer of eminence after the apostles, whose writings are extant, was Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, who flourished about the close of the first century. In his writings there is such a passage as this: "There is ONE GOD, who revealed himself by Jesus Christ his Son, who is his eternal Logos not proceeding from Silence." Who does not perceive that this is as identical with the Platonic Lógos as it is repugnant to the one Jehovah of the Jews, and the three equal persons of the modern Trinity?

The next distinguished Father I quote is Justin Martyr, a native of Palestine, and who flourished about the middle of the second century. He had been a heathen philosopher, and he thus expresses his ideas of the Divine Nature. "God in the beginning, before anything was created, begat a Rational Power from himself; which is called by the Holy Ghost, Glory of the Lord, and sometimes Son, Wisdom, Angel, God, Lord, Logos. Sometimes also he calls him Leader.

In the form of a man he appeared to Joshua, the Son of Nun. All the above names he bears because he min-

isters to the will of the Father, and was begotten by the will of the Father." How this wisdom or reason of God could have emanated from him, he goes on to describe. "Something like this we see happens to ourselves. When we utter a reasonable word, we beget reason, or logos, but not by abscission, so that our reason is diminished. Another thing like this we see, in respect to fire; which suffers no diminution by kindling another fire, but still remains the same."

In another place he says; "The Father of the Universe who is unbegotten, has no name; for to have a proper name, implies that there is one antecedent to the person named, who has given the appellation. For the titles, Father, God, Creator, Lord, Sovereign, are not proper names, but appellations deduced from his beneficence and his operations. But his Son, who only is properly called Son, the Logos, who existed with him," (or in him,) "before the creation, and was generated when in the beginning he created and adorned all things by him, is called Christ, because God anointed and adorned all things by him." Who does not see in this strange medley the Platonic Logos, which Philo had interpolated into the Jehovah of the Jews, and made the medium of his creating the world and conversing with the patriarchs, fitted and joined to the names, titles, and phrases applied to the Jewish Messiah? Christ, or Anointed, was a title which Jesus shared with the kings and priests and eminent men of the Old Testament, from the anointing oil of consecration. But by this Platonic Christian Father it is carried back to the creation, and applied to the Logos by which God

created the world, "because God anointed and adorned all things by him."

The Logos of John is made identical with the Logos of Plato. And "Son of God," which the Jewish Messiah shared with the good and eminent of the olden time, though in a pre-eminent but not specifically different sense, was perverted in the same way, and made to mean that this imaginary Person was begotten immediately from the substance of God.

We have room for extracts from only one more of the Ante-Nicene Fathers. Tertullian, a Latin, born in Carthage, and who wrote about the end of the second century, expresses himself thus of the Divine nature. "Before the creation, God was alone, his own world and place; alone, because there was nothing extrinsic to him. Yet not alone, for he had with him what he had in him, viz. his own reason. For God is a rational Being, and his reason was in him first, and so all things were derived from him, which reason is his understanding. The Greeks call this Logos, and we Sermo. On this account we are accustomed, by simply translating the word (Logos) to say, that the Word was in the beginning with God; when we should say, to speak correctly, Reason was first; for God from the beginning was not a speaking but a reasoning Being." How this word or wisdom of God became Son he goes on to declare. "Then the Word himself assumed his form and beauty, sound and voice, when God said, Let there be light. This is the perfect nativity of the Word, when he proceeds from God, formed by him, first mentally by the name of wisdom, then generated in fact. By

this procession became he the first born Son, before anything else was born ; and the only begotten."

Again: "He (God) is not Father always, because he is always God. For he could not be a Father before he had a Son ; as there cannot be a judge before there is a crime. There was a time when the Son was not, who might make the Lord a Father." Again: "Let Hemogenes acknowledge that the wisdom of God is spoken of as born and formed, lest we should believe that anything besides God only was unborn and unformed. For if within God, what was from him and in him, was not without a beginning, namely, his Wisdom, born and formed from the time when the mind of God began to be agitated about the formation of the world ; much more must we deny that what was without God is eternal."

Such were the opinions of the Fathers of the Christian Church before the Nicene council, and such was the orthodoxy of that age ; since the only real definition of orthodoxy is the opinion of the majority for the time being.

I might go on to quote pages of such language from the principal writers of that period, but I deem it unnecessary. Enough has been quoted, we hope, to show out of what materials the Trinity was formed. Enough has been quoted to show how the pure Theism of the Jews was corrupted by amalgamation with Pagan philosophy, and how the Platonic Logos was engrafted upon certain expressions of the New Testament. We see how the one Jehovah of the Jews was corrupted at this period, but at the same time how entirely different



was the orthodoxy of that time from the modern three equal Persons in one God. Had the Gospel always remained in the hands of the Jews, and had they never been tinctured with heathen philosophy, it is hardly possible that such a doctrine as the Trinity could ever have been invented. It is hardly probable that they would have ever violated the Unity of their Jehovah by interpolating their Messiah into his being, who was to be a lineal descendant of David. And it is not more likely that they would have deified the Holy Spirit, which they had known from the commencement of their Scriptures as the power and influence of God ; especially as neither Christ nor his apostles taught any new doctrines as to the Divine Nature. The heathen, or those who had been educated heathens, into whose hands the Gospel fell, were not thus fortified against misconception. They were prepared for it. There was no objection to derived Divinity in the mind of a man whose conceptions of the spirituality of the Divine Nature were as low as those of the heathen were, and who had been accustomed to the idea of one God being derived from another. And the Platonic doctrine of the Logos, had prepared them to put the just construction upon the language of the New Testament, which they actually did put upon it. There was another influence which led to the same result. The cross of Christ bore heavily upon the first converts from Paganism. The opprobrium of being followers of a crucified malefactor made them turn eagerly to anything which might exalt their master in the eyes of their vilifiers. What could do this more effectually than establishing his identity with the Platonic Logos ?

But what, it may be asked, has all this to do with Creeds? We shall soon see. The elements of which this intermediate, imaginary Being (for he was not yet exalted to anything like an equal Person of a Trinity) was made up, were somewhat incongruous, and contained, as experience afterward showed, the materials of endless dispute. The two principal terms in the New Testament on which the Platonic Logos was engrafted were the words Logos and Son. A dispute arose which should have the most influence in settling his nature, Logos or Son. Logos, which means reason, when applied to God must mean the reason of God. This was of course always in him. But Son, on the other hand, expresses and implies derivation, a beginning to exist. Hence the dispute between the Arians and Athanasians which gave rise to the Nicene council and Creed. This was in the year 325. Before this, however, there had been attempts to cast off Platonism and to return to the pure Theism of the Jews and of the New Testament. Particularly Sabellius had attempted to reconcile the Logos of Plato with the Logos of St. John, in the following manner. "The Word or Logos never proceeds out of the Father, but as our reason proceeds, as I may say, out of us, when it makes known by words and commands what are our thoughts and our desires. So the Word or Logos which was in Jesus Christ, is only a declarative Word, which manifested to Jesus the knowledge of salvation; and an operative Word which conferred upon him miraculous power. It is only an operation of the Deity, a full effusion of the divine wisdom and power in the soul of our Lord."\* But as the

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\* Lardner, vol. iii. 76.

Platonists constituted the great majority of the church, and of course their sentiments were orthodox, Sabellius and his followers were considered as heretics, and were able to effect but little.

But the dispute between the Arians and Athanasians was between two parties both Platonists, both holding to the personality of the Logos. Both thought him an emanation from God. But the dispute was as to the *manner* of that emanation. Arius said, as he was Son he must have been derived, must have begun to exist. Athanasius said, that as he was the Logos, the reason of the Father, he must always have existed in him, or at least the substance or material out of which he was produced. Such was the nature of a dispute which set the whole Christian church in a blaze; a dispute, you have seen, on a question of heathen philosophy rather than Christian theology, and which occasioned the Council of Nice.

Constantine was then on the throne of the Roman Empire, and he was the first emperor who embraced the Christian faith. He had undertaken to patronize the Christian church, and this dispute caused him great uneasiness. In order to settle it he assembled a council of bishops from the different parts of the Roman Empire at the city of Nice in Bythinia. The Emperor was there in person, and present during their deliberations. The sentiments of one of the parties on this occasion we learn from Arius himself. "We cannot assent to those expressions, always Father, always Son, at the same time Father, at the same time Son; that the Son always co-exists with the Father; that the Father has

no pre-existence before the Son, not so much as in thought, or a moment. But this we think and teach, that the Son is not unbegotten nor a part of the unbegotten by any means. Nor is he made out of any pre-existent thing; but by the will and pleasure of the Father he existed before time and ages, the only begotten God, unchangeable; and that before he was begotten, or made, or founded, or designed, he was not. But we are persecuted, because we say, that the Son had a beginning, and that God had no beginning. For this we are persecuted, and because we say, the Son is out of nothing. Which we therefore say, because he is not a part of God, nor made out of any pre-existent thing." What was the opinion of the Athanasians, we learn from the Creed which they, happening to be the majority, established as truth. It was this. "We believe in One God the Father Almighty, the Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father; God of God," (or as it is in the original *Θεος εκ Θεου*, God out of, or from or derived from God) "Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made; of the same substance with the Father; by whom all things were made, that are in heaven, and that are in earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, descended, and was incarnate, and became man; suffered and rose again the third day, ascended into the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead; and in the Holy Spirit. But those who say that there was a time when he was not, and that he was not before he was begot-

ten, and that he was made out of nothing ; or affirm that he is of any other substance or essence ; or that the Son of God is created, and mutable or changeable, the Catholic church doth pronounce accursed.”

The point you perceive, which is decided in this curious mixture of Platonism and Christianity, is the predominance given to the term Logos or reason over Son, in the composition of that imaginary Being whom the Platonists imported into Christianity and engrafted on these two phrases in the Gospels. As the Logos was the reason of God, it must always have been, and though at a certain point of duration he might have become Son, still though emanated he did not begin to exist, or at least the substance out of which he was made was not created as Arius held he was, out of nothing, or out of what did not before exist. How far the point decided by this council was one of Pagan philosophy or Christian theology we leave every one to judge. Still there was a difficulty. The word Son yet remained, and Arius' objection was still lurking in it. How could a Being be a Son or begotten, and still not be begotten at some point in duration, or begin to be? They invented an expedient to reconcile the eternal Logos with the begotten Son by saying he was eternally begotten, always proceeding from God as light does from the sun, and hence the expression of the Creed, “Light of Light,” light emanating from light.

Such was the Nicene Creed, such the causes which led to its enactment, and so wide was it of all the points of the more enlightened controversies of modern days. It was not, it is true, the first Creed that had been

enacted. Others had been before it by smaller councils. They belonged to the time and the disputes of the age, and they passed away with the age that gave them birth. So would this have done but for the circumstances under which it was established. It was under the patronage of a Roman Emperor. And dissent from it became something different from dissent from a council of mere ecclesiastics, unbacked by the civil power. Arius and his party were banished; and the solemnization of the connection between church and state was marked by its natural consequence, civil persecution.

I said at the commencement of this discourse, that the history of Creeds gives us a view of the foreign elements of which the doctrine of the Trinity was formed. That I am confident has already been demonstrated. I said likewise that they furnish the evidence of its gradual growth and of the several stages of its progress. That assertion I shall now attempt to make good. The Nicene Creed of the year 325, shows where it stood at that period. It occupies, as you perceive, a middle ground between the pure Monotheism of the Jews and of the New Testament, and the three equal Persons of the modern Trinity. The apostles' Creed, which in all its essential articles dates further back, and occupies about the same middle ground between the Nicene Creed and the New Testament as the Athanasian, which is much later, does between the same Creed and the modern Trinitarianism.

The apostles' Creed, as it is erroneously called, you need not be reminded has no claim to be considered

the composition of the apostles. So far from it, that we have no authentic copy of it, even so far back as the council of Nice. But then we have the substance of it in several Creeds, in the writings of the ante-Nicene Fathers, with this exception, which is somewhat material to our present subject. In the apostles' Creed, as read in our churches, it begins, "I believe in God the Father," etc. In the Fathers it is, I believe in ONE God the Father, (in the Greek *εἰς θεός* or *ένα θεον*) in the Latin, One only God (*unicum Deum*). It was not only not written by the apostles, but bears the marks of having been the gradual growth of many ages.

In all the Creeds of the primitive ages, long as they at length became, we recognize various and successive metamorphoses of the form of baptism. As it stands in the Gospels, it contains a summary of the Christian Faith to be taught by the apostles to the world, and acknowledged by their converts. The belief in one God, the Divine mission of Jesus, that he was the Son of God, or the Messiah of the Jews, and in the Holy Spirit, that is, the reality of the miracles which proved the Gospel true. And these are precisely the points which are labored in all treatises on the Evidences of Christianity, by all sects and parties at the present day. That there was no scrupulous adherence to the precise form, appears in the probability there is from the baptism of Philip, that with the Jews or Jewish proselytes to whom the one God was already known, the name of Jesus only was used. And likewise from a form of baptism, which appears in the works of Justin Martyr, in the second century. "They are baptized in the name

of God the Father and Sovereign of all," or of the universe, "and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit." This was a summary of doctrine to be taught, and of faith to be received. So it appears in the original commission: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing," or, as it evidently means, Go teach and baptize all nations into the faith of one God, etc. After suitable instruction in these and other points of the Christian faith, the converts in the early church assented to their belief of them at, and by the ceremony of baptism. It was gradually drawn out, as we have seen it in the case of Justin Martyr, by the explicit statement of the things implied in it, and by other causes which I shall mention, into the Apostles' Creed, which is as follows: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, who was conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. The third day he rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge both the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." The descent into hell, and the communion of saints, are of a date subsequent to the Council of Nice. Besides the drawing out of what was supposed to be implied by all parties in the form of baptism, some clauses were inserted in opposition to certain heresies which sprung up one after another. His "being conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary,"



was introduced in opposition, as it would seem, to the Cerinthians and others, who denied the miraculous birth. "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried," in opposition to the Gnostics, who asserted that Christ was a man in appearance only; "the remission of sins," against the Montanists, who held that only those sins could be forgiven which were committed before baptism, etc. However these things may be, as far as the Divine Nature is concerned, there is nothing to which the most scrupulous stickler for the Unity of God can object. The phrases are all scriptural, and assert nothing more than the same phrases in the Gospels. The Platonic Nature of Christ is not so much as hinted at, or even his pre-existence, unless it may be thought to be in the epithet "only," or "only begotten," which at that period was merely synonymous with well beloved.

As to the Holy Spirit, not so much as its personality is asserted either in this or the Nicene Creed. There was no danger that this Creed would mislead any one as to the Unity of God, as it says, "I believe in God," (or "one God," as the Creeds of that time have it,) "and in Jesus Christ." There was no danger that one who was born, crucified and buried, and afterwards sat on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, would be mistaken for, or confounded with that God at whose right hand he sat. "One God the Father Almighty and Jesus Christ, etc. and the Holy Spirit," conveys a very different idea of Deity from One God *consisting* of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The only other Creed which I have room to mention,

and to which I have already alluded as occupying a middle ground between the Nicene Creed and modern Trinitarianism, is the Athanasian. I should have said that it went the whole length with the modern Trinity, were there not a remnant of derivation in some of its clauses, such as these: "The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding." This Creed, as is well known, was not composed by Athanasius, nor cited till four hundred years after his death; nor, of course, till about eight hundred years after Christ.

In order to give you at one view the rise, progress, and perfection of the Trinity, as well as a sketch of the gradual advance of imposition upon the human mind by means of formularies of faith, I shall give you, in order, the Creeds we have noticed.

I begin with the doctrine of Christ and of the New Testament concerning the Divine Nature.

"Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord." Or, as it is quoted from Moses: "Jehovah, your God, Jehovah is one." "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." "To us there is one God the Father."

The form of baptism: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." The same form, as it was used and understood by Justin Martyr, in the second century: "In the name of God, the Father and Sovereign of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit."

The Apostles' Creed, which grew out of this form in

the first ages : " I believe in God, (or, as some Creeds have it, " one," and some, " one only God,") the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. The third day he rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge both the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, in the Holy Catholic church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

The Nicene Creed in the year 325, with its Platonic Logos interpolated, which I insert in italics, that the additions may be more apparent : " We believe in one God the Father Almighty, the Maker of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, *begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, (or out of God, or derived from God,) Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, of the same substance with the Father, by whom all things were made that are in heaven and that are in earth, who for us men, and for our salvation, descended and was incarnate, and became man, suffered, and rose again the third day, ascended into the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead ; and in the Holy Spirit. But those who say there was a time when he was not, and that he was not before he was begotten, and that he was made out of nothing, or affirm that he is of any other substance or essence, or that the Son of God is created,*

and mutable, or changeable, the Catholic church doth pronounce accursed.”

Lastly, the Athanasian Creed, received in the ninth or tenth century : “ Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith. Which faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic faith is this : That we worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity. Neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one ; the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal : And yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal. As also there are not three incomprehensibles nor three uncreated ; but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty : And yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God : And yet there are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise, the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord : And yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity, to acknowledge every Person by himself to

be God and Lord ; so are we forbidden by the Catholic religion to say, there be three Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of none, neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son ; neither made nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers ; one Son, not three Sons ; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this trinity none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another ; but the whole three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal. So that in all things, as is aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity. Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation, that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right faith is, that we believe and confess, That our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man ; God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds ; and Man of the substance of his mother, born in the world ; perfect God, and perfect man, of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting ; equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead ; and inferior to the Father, as touching his manhood. Who, although he be God and man, yet he is not two, but one Christ ; One ; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God ; One altogether ; not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. For, as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ ; who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose

again the third day from the dead ; he ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty ; from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good, shall go into life everlasting ; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire. This is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved."

To this I subjoin the modern doctrine of the Trinity : "There are three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. These three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory."

These Creeds, you perceive, when compared with each other, exhibit most clearly the gradual formation of the Trinity, or rather its interpolation into Christianity. In the doctrine of Jesus and his apostles, in the form of baptism as interpreted by its own elements, by Justin Martyr, and in the Apostles' Creed, we have the same pure doctrine of one God the Father Almighty, and the miraculous character and divine mission of Christ, but no intimation nor allusion to the Personality, much less the separate Deity of the Holy Spirit. In the Nicene Creed, we have an approximation to the deification of Christ, by identifying him with the Platonic Logos. But still no more is made of the Holy Spirit than in the form of baptism, or in the Apostles' Creed. In the Athanasian Creed, eight hundred years after Christ, we have Christ and the Spirit exalted to full Deity, with the slight exception of derivation, which was no objection in those days.

In the same doctrine in modern days, this faint vestige of Platonism disappears, the scaffolding falls away, and we have the Trinity complete, three equal persons in one God.

As to the Athanasian Creed, though it was enacted by no council, it is a fair specimen of Theological speculation of the age in which it originated. It bears marks on the very face of it of being the production of some idle monk of the dark ages, who had nothing better to do than to exercise his scholastic ingenuity in stringing together a chain of monstrous and startling paradoxes on the received doctrine of the Trinity, which appearing to assert the most astounding propositions, really assert nothing but what depends upon a fictitious and quibbling distinction between created and begotten, which when applied to God, with those who have any just idea of the spirituality and unchangeableness of the Divine Nature, can have no meaning; and between begotten and proceeding, a distinction quite as trifling and ridiculous.

The awkward figure which derived Divinity makes in these enlightened days, may be sufficiently learned in the attempts to connect the modern Theology with that of the Schools. "The Father," says one, "by generation communicated his whole and perfect essence to the Son, and retained the whole of it to himself, because it is infinite."

I have now, I hope, redeemed the pledges I gave at the commencement of this discourse, to show by the history and progress of Creeds the origin and formation of the doctrine of the Trinity, the elements from which

it sprung, and the steps of its advancement, and its final completion. And are these the things, it may be indignantly asked, which still hold their place in the nineteenth century as the infallible interpretation of the word of God? Are these the fetters which are fastened upon the mind of this age? Can it be a fact that any one can impose, or any one submit to such a mingled mass of Paganism and Christianity? Can it be possible that one of the most enlightened nations of Europe dispenses not only ecclesiastical but civil honors and emoluments to those only who will subscribe to these relics of the dark ages? Is there any enlightened Christian who does not perceive that it is equally in violation of the express commands of Christ to form, as to assent to a Creed?

By what right can any body of men impose a Creed? By none other than that of a majority. And is a majority the infallible seal of truth? And can a Protestant resort to such an authority as this? If in one class of Christians the majority have a right to enact a Creed for the minority, then the majority of the whole Christian name have an equal right to enact a Creed for the church universal. And who does not know that were the whole church represented according to numbers, the Protestants would be found in a minority, and be compelled inevitably, on these principles, to surrender all the glorious achievements of the Reformation and return to the Mother Church? Who does not perceive that there is not and never can be uniformity of opinion? Subscription, therefore, if it be meant to be literal and exact, must be, in a majority of cases, insincere



and dishonest. If it allow latitude, who is to prescribe the bounds of that latitude? And if they are not prescribed, the Creed is a mockery, and ought to be abandoned. When honor and station are attached to it, who does not see that it operates as a privilege to the insincere, and a bar only to the conscientious? Is truth the exclusive discovery of one age? Is it rational or tolerable for one age to dictate opinions to its successors forever? Where then is the sense of Christian ministers repeating to their congregations the decision of a council of the fourth century upon a point of heathen philosophy, the merits of which neither they nor their hearers comprehend? Is reasonable faith promoted by repeating a form of words, without any increase of evidence, or without any evidence at all? But such is the force of custom that it binds together, by its continuous and lengthening chain, the most distant ages in the reception of the same errors and abuses, as well as the same truths. Creeds, whenever formed and fastened on the mind, especially when incorporated with ecclesiastical and civil organization, cramp its faculties, discourage inquiry, and produce indifference to truth; and nothing short of some great convulsion in society has power to throw them off. Resting as they do on the imaginary authority of many, no one has the moral courage to assume the responsibility of abandoning them, or calling them in question. Even if the conviction arises in the mind of any that it ought to be done, there is a disposition to delay; so day glides on after day, till ages are numbered, and nothing is done. In many weak and timid minds there seems to be an apprehension, most

derogatory to truth and the Scriptures, as if they rested on Creeds for their support; and that if Creeds were swept away, all is over with the cause of religion. It is not safe to trust the human mind with itself and the Bible. It is difficult to say whether this idea is most dishonorable to man, reproachful to God, disparaging to the Bible, or inconsistent with itself. Must man take God's revelation at second hand? Must God's revelation be revised by man before it is either safe or effectual? Are not those who make Creeds, fallible men too, as well as those who receive them? Are not the men of this age as capable of drawing truth from the Bible as their predecessors, an enlightened age as one comparatively dark and ignorant?

The reign of Creeds, however, is gone by. Their chief support has been the connection of church and State, which has prevailed more or less since the time of Constantine in the fourth century. As one great truth after another rises in our firmament, and pours on our world a broad and general light, Creeds are destined to wane, and fade, and disappear.

THE END.

















