

# CONTROVERSIAL LECTURES

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CHARLES WICKSTEED









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# CONTROVERSIAL LECTURES

BY THE

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EDITED BY THE

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LONDON

BRITISH AND FOREIGN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

ESSEX HALL, ESSEX STREET, STRAND

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1887

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## P R E F A C E.



THE "Controversial Lectures" contained in this volume were delivered by Mr. Wicksteed in different parts of England and Scotland, during the period covered by the active exercise of a "General Lectureship and Ministry at Large," to which he was called by some of his friends, provisionally in 1873, and definitely in 1875, and from the duties of which he only withdrew when, in 1881, he finally retired from active life.

The views alike of those who promoted and supported Mr. Wicksteed's lecturing tours, and of those who now desire to publish some of his Lectures, may best be gathered from a letter on the subject addressed by the Rev. J. Hamilton Thom to the Council of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, a portion of which is, by his kind permission, here reproduced as a word of introduction to the Lectures:—

"Though in this office [Mr. Wicksteed's 'Ministry at Large'] he was supported not by the Association, but by a number of the friends of the cause he so ably represented, who believed him to unite in an unusual degree

competent learning and fervour of address, with an un-sparing fidelity of service to the limits of his strength, it was really the essential aims of the Association, in its highest spirit, he was promoting by these labours. To vindicate and diffuse spiritual Christianity was his object, and this could not be effected without serving the noblest and most enduring purpose of our Association, in superseding dogmatic conditions of salvation, and founding the Universal Church on its living Rock of Spiritual Communion. I feel confident that the publication of these Lectures, as far as that is now practicable, is a tribute due to our lamented friend, that will be safe and honourable to the Association."

It need only be added that none of the Lectures had been actually prepared for the press by their author, and that the last two had certainly not been thrown into the form which he would have given them for publication, but it has been the wish of the editor to confine within the narrowest possible limits the discretion he had necessarily to exercise in arranging them for the printer, and especially to observe a scrupulous fidelity to the original in all matters of conviction or opinion.

LECTURE I.

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WHY I AM A UNITARIAN.

PART I.



# WHY I AM A UNITARIAN.

## PART I.

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I AM a Unitarian because I believe that at the basis of all true religion and all pure worship there reposes this eternal fact—that there is one God, and that there is none other but He, and that to love and serve Him with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and understanding is the *First* Commandment.

In this great truth I rejoice to unite in a common profession—at least in words and in intention—with four hundred millions of my fellow-creatures. Four hundred millions of the human race consent in the professed rejection of Polytheism and in the avowal of belief in one God, the Creator and Governor of all. These constitute what, in the language of theological division, are called the Monotheists of the earth, and they consist of three great branches—Christians constituting the majority, Mahometans a very large minority, and Jews a considerable number, of the whole.

Agreeing, then, with four hundred millions of our race—that is, with the whole of Western, and a large

part of Eastern civilization—and with the wisest and best men that in any age, or in any country, have adorned and enlightened that race, in their profession of belief that there is one God, and regarding this, I say, as the great central truth of all religion, and the great characteristic of all pure worship, I *dissent* from the errors which seem to me to throw the reality of that belief into question, from the inconsistencies which seem to me to imperil its purity, and the trespasses which narrowly threaten, if they do not in a large degree practically destroy, its existence.

I am a Unitarian because I desire my profession of belief in one sole supreme Creator and Governor and God and Father of all to be an utter, genuine, thorough, unperplexed, and consistent belief, and because I see coupled with the prevailing Christian profession of that same belief an irreconcilable inconsistency, which, as it seems to me, strikes at the root of it. For, although others may be able—or may think that they are able—to reconcile the doctrine of a Tri-Personality in the Divine Being, such as authorized creeds and confessions of faith propound, with this acknowledged truth of the Unity of God, *I* am utterly unable to effect any such reconciliation. The doctrine of the existence of three Divine Persons, each with all the peculiar attributes of God, and each with his distinct office of mercy towards man, necessarily militates against and weakens the doctrine that there is but one God, in any form in which the idea can present itself to my mind.

I can, indeed, believe in one God, manifesting him-

self as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and existing as but one Divine Being, notwithstanding, and under, these different manifestations of himself. But this very rational and conceivable view of a variety of relations in the Divine Being has been repudiated by the several Churches holding the doctrine of the Trinity as an *untrue* representation of it, as indeed it is, and has been formally condemned and repudiated as the heresy and misrepresentation of Sabellius.

But even if I admitted this to be, and were allowed by the Churches and their standards to receive this as, the true doctrine of the Trinity, I should be obliged to add, that while I saw no objection, or anything inconsistent with the great truth of the Divine Unity, in worshipping God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, I yet could see no reason why I should limit the number of these manifestations to three. Such manifestations to me would be manifold—nay, innumerable. I should believe in the Divine Being as manifesting himself, not only as the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of man, but as the Preserver and Provider, the ever-present Hearer and Seer, the Guide, the Teacher, the Consoler, the Rewarder, the Judge, and the Punisher of man. There would be no adequate reason, to my mind, for *extending* the specific manifestation of the Divine Existence to three forms, or *limiting* it to three.

I should believe in that manifestation (and especially under the recent lights of knowledge, and the enormous multiplication of the revelations of God, so to speak, in science, in creation, in history, in what we call soul, in

what we call matter, in the wonderful floods of light that are continuously and increasingly pouring in upon our minds from all quarters of this wonderful universe of Thoughts and Things)—I should believe in that manifestation, as countless in number and limitless in measure, or as limited only by the power of God's creatures to discern it.

But since the Christian doctrine, as declared in the authorized creeds of Churches (and you will understand, my friends, that I am contending against no man's private views of this doctrine—I must rest my argument on the accepted declarations of the great body of the Christian Churches)—I say, then, since the Christian doctrine, as declared in the authorized creeds of Christian Churches, propounds no such view as this of Sabellius, but distinctly asserts that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are distinct Divine Persons; that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; that each has his own personal existence, his own distinct will, his own appropriate offices and functions; that none is before or after the other; none greater or less than the other; that none is to be confounded or confused with the other; that the whole Three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal; that such as the Father is such is the Son, and such the Holy Ghost—their glory equal, their majesty co-eternal; that doctrine appears to me as manifest an incompatibility with, and contradiction to, the doctrine of their being but one God as “no” is the destruction of “yes” and “three” the opposed numeral of “one.”



I am a Unitarian, however, not only because I regard this truth of the unity of the Divine Being, in person, in purpose, and in providence, to be the basis of all pure and enlightened religion, but, further, because I am a Christian, and take as my guide the spirit and teaching of Jesus Christ, my Lord ; and no conviction lies deeper down in my soul, and no persuasion stands clearer out before my mind, than that this doctrine of the Trinity is *absent* from the Scriptures, and is the product and the growth of Ecclesiastical antiquity.

But persons are in the habit of fixing their attention on a few isolated words of Scripture—often obscure, and always very far between—and regarding these as a sufficient justification of their neglect of the pervading spirit, and the prevailing testimony of the general body of the Scripture evidence.

Thus there is no fact, I suppose, of any kind, in any age, more clearly stamped upon any national literature, or any national character, than that the Jehovah of the Jews was intended to be represented as one distinct independent Being, and that the authorized and accredited religion of the Old Testament and of the Jewish people was strictly Monotheistic or Unitarian. This is assigned, you remember, as the very cause of Abraham's early call from the midst of a Polytheistic family ; of the careful separation of his descendants from the other nations of the world through two thousand years, and of their discipline, instruction, and guidance, by Law-giver, Priest, and Prophet.

The whole arrangements of that dispensation appear

to have been constructed with a view to restore and root in the heart of the world the great truth, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord, and thou shalt serve only him"; and to the immutability of this great truth the race of Israel, amidst scorn, and obloquy, and injury, and degradation, have continued to bear an unchanging, unflinching, and most honourable testimony to this day.

Now, in opposition to this great truth, stamped, I say, with an unparalleled distinctness upon the whole of the Old Testament precept and legislation, throughout which there is no authorized approach to the assertion that there are two, three, or any other number of persons in the Godhead, but only one, we are met with two or three phrases that, in the prevalent ignorance of the laws of ancient language and thought, *sound* like arguments to prove the contrary.

Thus people are taught to think that the expression, "Let us make man in our own image," proves that there is a plurality of Gods, or, at least, of Divine Persons, in the Godhead; and they are taught to think that the thrice-repeated expression in another, and a distant part of the Scripture (Isaiah vi. 3), written in a different age, and by a different author—"Holy, holy, holy,"—proves that they are three.

I should hesitate to adduce such an argument myself, though it has been often advanced by advocates of this doctrine—so ignorant and puerile does it appear to me, and so anxious am I not to throw any intentional or unnecessary ridicule on a subject so serious—but within

recent years this very argument has been reinforced by such distinguished members of the Church of England as Dr. Liddon and Canon Girdleston.

What does it really amount to? Here we have (1st) an expression of majesty, as some think, "Let us make man in our own image," as our Kings and Queens and Emperors say "We wish," or "It is our pleasure"; or, as is perhaps more probable, the remnant of an old polytheistic state of belief, preserved to later times in common language, as Cicero and Seneca continued to speak of *Dei*, and *Deos*, Gods—in conformity with usage still prevailing in their time, though quite ceasing themselves to believe in a plurality of Gods; and (2nd) a form of expression used to signify *intensity*, like the repeating a thing thrice, or a greater number of times, as "terque, quaterque, beati," with the Latins, or as among these very Hebrews, "O earth, earth, earth" (Jer. xxii. 29)—by which, of course, it was not intended to be conveyed that there were three earths, each of them a complete earth, and yet that there was but *one* earth—and "Holy, holy, holy," by which, obviously, was meant not three holies, but thrice-holy, the *Ter Sanctus*;—here, I say, we have these two passages so pressed upon people's attention, as conveying proofs that the Old Testament contained the doctrine of a plurality, and notably a trine plurality of Gods, or, as it is termed, of Divine Persons in the Godhead, as to make them, in their uncertainty, in their obscurity, in their miserable paucity, outweigh the clear, abundant, pervading testimony of a whole history and legislation,

from the unbiassed and unprepossessed reading of which no one could possibly arise with any other impression than that they were intended, without qualification, to teach the doctrine of the Divine Unity.

The childishness of this argument from plural forms is irresistibly exposed by the fact that a plural form is applied to Abraham, who is spoken of as "Masters" (Gen. xxiv. 9, 10) (twice Adonai); to the River-Horse or Hippopotamus, in Job (xl. 15), who is spoken of in the plural as Behemoth, and of whom it is nevertheless said, in the singular, "He eateth grass like an ox"; and other instances occur of plural forms applied to single things, or persons. But who would suppose that their use implied a plurality, and not only so but a definitely trine plurality of persons in those to whom they are applied? I can only say that if such a system of interpretation is to be applied to an ancient literature, confounding poetry with prose, making conventional or erroneous forms of speech the exact expression of literal and eternal facts, and mere intensity of feeling and language the definition of Divine realities, there is no truth of common sense and common certainty, in earth or in heaven, that can remain safe one hour.

In like manner, when we turn to the New Testament, I find there the same truth of the Divine Unity not only assumed, as the basis of religious truth, but distinctly re-asserted and reinforced by our Lord and his Apostles. Our Lord, when asked, which is the first commandment, solemnly re-asserts the great foundation

truth of the older Dispensation, and replies:—"The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." He tells the Samaritan woman, that "the true worshippers worship the Father." When asked by the disciples to teach them to pray, he bids them say, "Our Father who art in Heaven." He himself uniformly observes the same rule of prayer; and once, in praying to his and our Father, uses this strong and decisive expression, recognizing him in it, not only as God, but as the only true God:—and if there are any who are in the habit of attaching decisive and final authority to a single verse of the Scriptures, or clause of a verse, I beseech them to listen with becoming awe, and to attach also a Divine authority to *these* words, remembering that it is the Son, the supposed second person in an equal and united Trinity, who is addressing the Father, supposed not the whole of that Trinity but only the first person in it; and that it is he who utters in that prayer the words that follow,—“And this is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John xvii. 3).

And so, among the Apostles, St. Paul says, “There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. ii. 5); and again, “Then shall the Son himself be subject unto him which put all things under him, that God may be all in all.” And still further, and more strongly even—“To us, there is but one God—the Father.” And then those glorious words of his in the Epistle to the Ephesians—“One

Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

Now, in a Dispensation the great object of which is to bring man near to God, to realize and expand the relations which exist between the Holy Spirit of the Creator and the imperfect spirit of the creature, in which Jesus Christ himself is the great medium, and is, for that purpose, brought into special communion with the Supreme, and thus, and therefore, has the Holy Spirit poured out upon him without measure, there will necessarily be a more manifest intermingling, so to speak, of the Divine and Human, and a nearer approach and coherence of the one to the other, and a closer alliance and proximity of Man to God, and God, as it were, to Man.

And our blessed Lord, so regarded as the great inter-communicator, must thus of necessity be most closely allied, on the one hand,—by the perpetual communion of his spirit with the Father, and the perpetual descent of the Father’s spirit upon him,—with the Divine; and allied, on the other hand,—by the very nature which he perfectly shared with man, by his knowledge of man’s wants, and weaknesses, and infirmities, bearing them all, and sympathizing with them all, in his own person,—with the Human.

And there was, therefore, likely to arise, and there has arisen, in the New Testament, for the purpose of expressing these lofty truths, these near and dear spiritual relationships between God and man, and between Christ

and both, a class of ideas and phrases unknown to the older and colder religions ; more intense, more earnest, more affectionate, more closely binding together, and, if it were possible, more identifying and commingling God with his creatures, the Human with the Divine.

Thus all religions had taught us that we were creatures of God and made by him. But the religion of Jesus Christ stood forth to tell us that we were children of God, and born of him. All religions had taught us that we were servants of God, and subject to him ; but Christ declared that we were sons of God and loved of him. We, then, are sons of God, introduced, as it were, to this relation by Jesus Christ ; not that Jesus Christ made this relation, God forbid !—it is our inheritance, our birthright ; we are born children of God ;—but that Jesus Christ made the reality of this relation clear, and near, and dear to our hearts, made us to understand it quite distinctly and to feel it quite securely. We are able, therefore, to look up into the infinite abyss, and to cry across it to the Great Power of all this universe —“Abba ! Father, we are Thy sons !”

And are we to deny to him who brought this dear conviction home to our hearts, are we to deny to himself the title and the relation we claim for ourselves ? No ; surely Jesus Christ also is the Son of God, not only so, he is the dearly-beloved Son ; nay, go as far as you like in this panting struggle of the heart after an adequate expression of its feelings of reverence and gratitude, and call him God's only-begotten Son.

But remember that if St. John, and St. John alone of

all the Apostles, does speak of Christ as the only-begotten Son — thus expressing, in Oriental phrase, his sense of the uniqueness, of the dearness of this Child of God to his Father—St. Paul speaks of those whom he has brought into the light and love of the Gospel as “begotten” by himself (1 Cor. iv. 15); and St. John again speaks of holy men as “begotten of God” (1 John v. 18, *γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ*); and Job implies that the drops of dew are begotten of God (Job xxxviii. 28).

And surely it is not wise in us to bring a prosaic Western precision of language to the interpretation of these glowing expressions of the imagination and the heart; or, to borrow from Athens, or from Alexandria, or from Constantinople, a Greek subtlety of metaphysical analysis, and seek to map out in distinct outline the relations of the Infinite, and chain within the logic of a definition the very pulsations of our hearts, and make whole assemblies of simple Christians stand up every Sunday and, in the Nicene Creed, declare, as an essential article of their Christian belief—as if they knew, or *could* know, anything in the world about it—that Christ was not *made* by God, but *begotten* by him.

Now, I sometimes have heard it said that Unitarians are wanting in reverence for holy things; but, believe me, we have our feelings too, and some of us are very much shocked, when we go into an assembly of our fellow-creatures, prostrate in their and in our insignificance before the mighty Creator of this universe, and hear them parcelling out, as it were, and dividing and



arranging those Infinite Divine Relations. Surely, we say, there is some need of caution and of reverence and of spiritual discernment in these things, to prevent us from thus venturing to stereotype in Creeds our own imperfect conceptions of high spiritual truths, and the deep mystery of the inter-communion of the Human and the Divine — making, in fact, a poverty in our language a leading article of our faith.

We read through the whole of the New Testament, then, and find no hint of the retraction, or modification, or further development of the primitive doctrine that God is one. There is not one passage in the Bible, it is admitted, which *states* this doctrine of the Trinity. There are several which, it is said, imply it, and from which first one and then another of its *portions* may be inferred. But there is not one single passage in the Bible which puts into language the doctrine of the Trinity ; still less is there one which *defines* it—still less is there one that *enforces* it—still less is there one which enforces it on the peril of the eternal perdition of an immortal soul.

The words which come nearest to stating the doctrine —though if you will think for a moment of the full doctrine of the Trinity, you will see how far they really are from conveying such a meaning—are found in our Bibles in 1 John v. 7: “There are Three that bear record in Heaven—the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One. And there are three that bear witness on earth, the spirit, and the water,

and the blood ; and these three agree in one. Now, if we knew that even these words—far as they are from expressing the complete and full doctrine of the Trinity—had really been written by an Apostle of Jesus Christ, they might have given us, as Christians, a moment's pause. But, as most of you, I suppose, are aware, they are now given up on every side as an insertion of a comparatively recent age, and accordingly they will, because they must, disappear from the Revised Version of the Scriptures now preparing for public use under the auspices of the Convocation of the Church of England.\*

The Trinity, then, not being stated in the Scriptures, as Roman Catholic divines, and some of their sympathizers, the Anglican clergy, admit,—for, as you are aware, one of their great arguments for the necessity of having an authorized teacher of Christian truth, such as the Church, is the fact that some of what they regard as the most important truths, and among them that of the Holy Trinity, not being clearly proclaimed in the Scriptures, would, except for the authoritative teaching of the Church, be without sanction, and in danger of being lost,—how is it that this strange doctrine has grafted itself on the simple teachings of Jesus Christ ?

The manner in which it has done so is shown by the successive centuries of ecclesiastical history. In the earlier of these it appeared in a timid, modest, and imperfect form, the common people being disinclined to

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\* It is hardly necessary to say that this expectation was fulfilled when the Revised Version of the New Testament appeared in 1881.—ED.

it, and sometimes even receiving a name from this disinclination, and being called Monarchians (say A.D. 200) or believers in one sole Supreme Power, in contradistinction to the scholastic defenders of a triplicity or 'economy,' just as people are now called Unitarians, in contradistinction to Trinitarians. By degrees, however, the simple people were out-talked, out-written, out-argued; the priests and the scholastic divines obtained the victory, and the Trinity took its footing in the Christian Church. But every man's "Book of Common Prayer" supplies him with marks and traces of this fragment of ecclesiastical history, for you have only to look at the Three Creeds to see the growth, progress, and history of the doctrine:—the Apostles' Creed—the earliest and the oldest—being Unitarian, declaring belief in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; the Nicene Creed, propounded in the fourth century, asserting the Deity of Christ; and the Creed called by the name of Athanasius, of certainly a far later century—probably as late as the ninth—being the first of all the Three Creeds boldly and clearly to propound the doctrine, as it seems to me, of three Gods in one.

I am a Unitarian, then, because I am a Christian; and the doctrine of the Trinity was not taught by our Lord and his Apostles.

I am a Unitarian, and a professed and avowed one, in the third place, because I believe the honour of the Christian faith, and the probability of its wider acceptance among mankind, to be most seriously im-

perilled by the prevalent insistence on a contrary doctrine. I believe that this loading, and weakening, and corrupting of the great truth of the Divine Unity by these mixed, impure, and tri-personal adjuncts, are, and always have been, and as long as they exist always will be, a most serious obstruction to the reception of Christian truth by individuals, and of the Christian religion by the nations of the earth.

We have an early, striking, and, as it ought to have proved, an awakening and alarming instance of this in the circumstances in which the religion of Mohammed took its rise. That religion found the chief pretext for its establishment in this great corruption of the purity of religious faith. It is a most serious thing to have alienated more than one hundred and fifty millions of Monotheists—or believers in one God—from the holy Christian fold, by making admission into that fold involve the acknowledgment of a form of doctrine which, as their founder thought, and truly thought, trespassed on the great and eternal principle of the Divine Unity, and therefore could not be true.

At the period in which Mahometanism arose—outside the Christian Church, and in unhappy and injurious opposition to it,—the chief ground of that opposition lay in the Christian corruption of the doctrine of the Divine Unity. This corruption took the form among the divines and the theologians, as we have seen, of a Trinity consisting of three Divine Persons, each of them equal to the other, each of them God, and all together forming but one God.

But the people could not then, they cannot now, they never will, and, as it is no part of Christianity, they never need, comprehend this scholastic and metaphysical theory of the generation and relation of infinite Divine Thoughts and Powers. But, as they had to believe, they were told, a Trinity of some sort, they made one for themselves, nearer to the sphere of their own knowledge and feelings, and built up a Family Trinity, a type of the families of the earth—the Trinity which prevails at this moment in Roman Catholic countries, and which consists of Father and *Mother* and Son.

This was the popular result of the mystifying efforts of the divines; and Mohammed protested, and justly protested, against both forms, but especially the one actually prevalent among the people; particularly as he saw that the process thus inaugurated by the divines was not stopping, but was indissolubly connected with, and had led to, the worship of Angels, Archangels, and Saints, so that the pure belief and worship of one only living and true God was in danger of being dispersed and scattered amid an assembly of Gods—a Pantheon.

Therefore it was that he provided for the incessant iteration of the truth of the Absolute Divine Unity in the ears of his followers at all hours of prayer, and meeting, and salutation; and still, after the lapse of 1,200 years, while we are sitting here, the pensive cry of the Muezzin, rising and falling in pathetic cadence, rings from the minarets of a thousand mosques—"To prayer, to prayer! There is no God but God."

Therefore it was he declared, "Verily, Jesus Christ,

the Son of Mary, is the Apostle of God and his Word," and warned mankind "to believe in God and his Apostles, and *not* to say there are three Gods, but to forbear this, because God is but one God."

And listen to this beautiful remonstrance from the Korân—a remonstrance which it would do us Christians good to lay to heart—"And when God shall say unto Jesus, at the last day, 'O Jesus, Son of Mary, hast thou said unto men, "Take me and my Mother for two Gods, beside God,"' he shall answer—'Praise be unto Thee ; it is not for me to say that which I ought not. I have not spoken unto them any other than what Thou didst command me—namely, "Worship God *my* Lord and *your* Lord."'"

In like manner, this corruption of the Divine truth, to the preservation of which their nation was specially consecrated, has contributed more than anything else, unless it were the persecution and oppression of Christians, to repel and alienate the whole nation of the Jews from the Christian faith.

It has long been acting, and is still acting, in the same way on the professors of other forms of religion, and especially in that country where our influence, if unencumbered by these errors, would be so great and salutary, I mean in India—*India*, with its increasing number of minds throwing off their old Pagan corruptions, and rising into the profession of the great Monotheistic truth, that there is one God, but dissatisfied and at war with its Christian corruptions !

Nay, not only in India, but in almost every land into

which our missionaries penetrate, this doctrine, with its accompanying ones of a material incarnation, and vicarious sacrifice, and eternal suffering, are the great obstacles with all people of any culture, and with all even of any thoughtfulness, to the reception of the religion which is supposed to teach such things.

This found Bishop Colenso in South Africa. This found that devoted and well-meaning man, Bishop Mackenzie. What does he say of some Arab Islanders he met with? "They are not at all disposed to quarrel on points of religion. On the contrary, nothing interested them more than comparing our stories of the Old Testament with their Korân." And then comes this remarkable addition, which shows the fatal obstacle these doctrines are to our attempts to diffuse Christianity. "But, of course, when it came to the main points of our faith" (that is, no doubt, these very doctrines, which are in fact nothing but sorrowful corruptions of the Christian faith), "the same disbelief which makes Mahometanism so antagonistic to our religion was present with them."

And this corrupt representation of Christianity is no doubt acting in like manner on a vast multitude of minds, from the highest to the humblest classes, in countries already professing the Christian faith, and is holding them off individually from a hearty, satisfied and trusting reception of its truths. This is the case in France; this is the case in Italy; this is the case in Germany; this is the case in Holland; yes, and this is the case in England. More than half of our men of science, and a large part of our intelligent working men,

are beginning to regard the Christian faith, in the corrupted form in which it is now preached, as little better than a superstition, and to wonder where the intellect can be of the clergy who teach it.

Nay, more. There is a very numerous body of intelligent men of the world who are absolutely now beginning to resent and to abjure the very names of Christ and Christianity, as symbols to them of archaic errors and of mental slavery, and they look upon their own past adherence to it as to a dreary night of mental darkness, in which they had been long helplessly immersed, and which they never, their lives through, will be able to dissociate from this dishonoured teaching of Jesus Christ; and that very name that is, to you and to me, I trust, the sign and symbol of light, and knowledge, and freedom, and holy faith and love, is to them the synonym of a blinding superstition. For they say, "We go into our churches to ask for light, and help, and guidance, amid the mysteries of Divine Providence and the probation of human life, and what do they offer us? Highly questionable Creeds; and positive yet irrational dogmas, in which, so far as we can trace their influence, we can see nothing but the enemies of knowledge, the destroyers of charity, the separators of man. We go to these Creeds for the embodiment of light, and help, and guidance. But they seem to offer us everything that is uncertain and incomprehensible, and to forget everything that is real and of any vital importance to us. They seem entirely to ignore or to forget the fact that God is our Father,



and that our duty is to love and serve him. They seem to forget that man is our brother, and what we have to do for him. They seem to forget that we have children and parents, and brothers and sisters, and husbands and wives. They seem to forget that we have sicknesses of the body, and sufferings of the mind, and temptations of the heart, and sorrows of the soul. They seem to forget that life is a scene of the most testing discipline, requiring all the strength that earth or heaven, that man or God, can give us, to enable us to pass through it righteously. They seem to forget that it is full of varied knowledge, and varied interests, and varied joys, and varied trials. They seem to forget that the great thing around us is life, and the great thing before us is progress, and they fasten their little logic on the '*must-be's*' of the Infinite Divine Existence, insisting on the difference between being of the *same* substance and being of a *like* substance, between being made and being begotten, between being made and begotten and *proceeding*. And their authors and compilers go back from their Councils of Nicæa, and Constance, and Constantinople and Tridentum (and now we must add, of the Vatican), a crowd of pedants, and celibates, and metaphysicians, to their childless, fatherless, brotherless, motherless, sisterless, wifeless homes, without one touch of terror or remorse upon their souls that they have been offering to the world, in the name of the Divine religion of Jesus Christ, a handful of husks, and condemning to eternal sorrow every soul that will not receive these husks as the very bread from heaven !”

I am a Unitarian, in the fourth place, because I believe this truth to be of the greatest practical importance to the simplicity, fervour, and availingness of worship—fixing the soul's concentrated homage on one Supreme object of adoration. I am inclined to think that most religious minds pay an unconscious tribute to the truth of this assertion.

Are there many persons, for instance, within the whole extent of Christendom, who offer up their adorations as often and as earnestly to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Ghost, as to the First or to the Second? I am inclined to believe that there are not, though there may be some who try to do so, when they think of it. I am inclined to believe that, notwithstanding the declaration of the Creeds that none of the Three Persons of the Trinity is before or after the other, there is a real, though perhaps but partially conscious, precedence in love, devotion, and worship assigned in most churches and in most prayers, and in the hearts of most individual believers (so strong are nature and truth) to the one Almighty God, the Father, who is accordingly believed in and addressed, not *with* the Son, and *with* the Holy Ghost, but *through* the Son, and *in* his Holy Spirit, which I, as a Unitarian, hold to be the Christian verity.

Having thus dwelt, though very generally, upon the main grounds which induce me to regard the principal distinguishing theological feature of the Unitarian form of Christianity as eternally necessary, and scripturally

true, I must now allude to a few of the collateral considerations which attach me to this system of faith.

I am attached to Unitarianism because of its spirit of liberty and allowance. I know of no religious association among men where the rights of the individual conscience are so much respected, where a man can hold and publicly express his own honest convictions so unmolestedly, where (for the number) so great a variety of individual opinion from *personal* reflection exists. I listen with pride and gratitude to those kind and generous words of the late Dr. Robert Vaughan, whose name is well known in England as a historian, and especially as a scholar and divine among the great Congregationalist body of this country. "There are no men living," he says, "in whom there is a finer sense of truthfulness and honour than in our English Unitarians. Nor," he adds (not without a touch of pathos as well as truth), "nor is there any religious body that has to pay so great a price as the cost of following their convictions." This spirit of liberty and of outspokenness, and this desire to preserve individual honesty of profession, are cherished characteristics of the body to which I belong.

Although there are many great principles in which we must in the main agree (or we could not meet in harmony as worshippers, or as meditators on truth and duty), yet we have no *Articles* of faith, no Creed, no form of words, no theological Shibboleth to which all must yield a real or virtual assent and any deviation from which is resented. Practically, as well as theoretically,

there is more personal liberty of thought, more unrestrained variety of opinion *openly permitted* among us than in any Christian body that I know.

I am attached to Unitarianism because it regards all truth as homogeneous, and pursues it freely and faithfully under every form. It does not look upon Reason as teaching any truth opposed to Divine Truth, or Science as teaching any truth that can be opposed to Religious Truth.

It has a perfect confidence in the harmony of all truths, and believes that God, in the various means of teaching a knowledge of himself, and the truth which he has given us,—whether by the affections of our own hearts and the voices of the nature within us; by the search of careful reasoning; by the dictates of the cultivated religious conscience; by Science, and the observation and study of Nature; by the experience and knowledge of human life and history; or by the voice of Jesus Christ and holy prophets and apostles, and righteous men of all ages and all climes,—is not the Author of confusion but of concord; that there is no schism in his truth, or opposition in the voices of his merciful revelations.

I am attached to Unitarianism because I believe it to be, as Christianity itself, an eminently practical religion. I believe that, like the Gospel, it aims to teach men that there is no short and royal road to salvation, which may be sped in a moment, and the goal of which may be reached by the emotion of an hour, or the profession of a belief in the last or any previous moment of

human life, but that the true salvation is a moral and spiritual process, and a moral and spiritual result, worked upon the soul itself by the disciplinary processes of life and of religion.

It teaches me that Christ, in his benign, self-sacrificing love, gave himself for me—not *instead* of me, but *for* me ; was righteousness and holiness for me—not *instead* of me, but *for* me ; was, and is, and will be, if I will truly and devoutly accept his guidance and take him to my heart, justification and sanctification to me—not *instead* of me, but *to* me. It teaches me that he *lived* for me, that he bore the wrongs and insults, the sins and wickedness, of mankind for me, taught, and laboured, and suffered for me. It teaches me that he went up Calvary, and gave his body to be crucified for me. It teaches me that he submitted to his Father's whole Will concerning him, to be an *example* to me ; and passed through death to life, as a type and emblem, and assurance of deathlessness in *me* too ; and it fills me with a tender, reverent, grateful, heart-deep love for that dear and holy spirit, that sweet and sacred life.

Unitarianism, then, offers me, in Christ, not a substitute, but an incentive ; not a warder off of a Father's curse, but a leader on to a Father's blessing ; not a being to be good *instead* of me, or *saved* instead of me, or *punished* instead of me, but a being who will help me myself to go unto the Father, and who, by showing me this happy way to escape all the baseness and poverty of my life, and to reach a lofty world of light, and right, and purity, will be a true Saviour to me.

I am attached to Unitarianism because it does not sink me down, on the one hand, into the depths of despair, by telling me that God has made me, in Adam, a child of the Devil, of wrath, of utter, inevitable, hereditary depravity, in order that it may lift me up, on the other hand, into the heights of triumphant joy, by telling me that the same God has, in Christ, unmade the first work, and received me as a child of grace, and glory, and sanctification; but because it gives me just and rational views of my nature, views which coincide with the teachings of the Scriptures, with the universal facts of human history, and with the knowledge of my own heart; for it tells me that I am not by nature utterly depraved and incapable of any good thought or thing—and *I know that I am not*—but am capable of virtue and improvement, of the love of God and of good—and *I know that I am*; although, at the same time, it teaches me that I am ever liable to fall and err, and require the utmost exercise of my watchfulness, and culture, and diligence, and devotion, to keep me in the paths of righteousness and duty; and even at last, in the midst of so many sins or follies, needing the loving-kindness and the tender, forgiving mercy of the Almighty to take me, unworthy, unto Himself, and to accept the unequal and faltering step with which I have been striving to approach the Mount of His Holiness, for the firmer, steadier step with which I would fain have trod, and *ought* to have trod, that heaven-ward journey.

Yes! I am attached to Unitarianism because it teaches me that God is my Father! Tears may bedew my path

of life, and trials press upon my progress, but I know that God is my Father! My children and my beloved ones may die away from me, and I be left desolate of their sweet companionship, but I know that God is my undying Friend and my upholding Father, and I do not feel alone. Misfortune may overtake me, weariness and grief depress me, pain and sickness crush me, but I lift up my eyes above, and see the eternal light still shining there, and know that God is my Father yet

I perceive that even I—with all my ignorance, and perhaps my negligence and my selfishness—am sincerely and heartily anxious to guide my children through the mingled discipline of instruction and command, of struggle and trial, on to the footstool of God and the home of the happy, because the home of the good; and I know that *I* have more reason for trust and confidence in *my* Father than *they* have in *theirs*, for *I* have a Father above me who will never leave me nor forsake me, and who can never make a mistake.

Lastly, I am attached to Unitarianism because of the support and comfort it gives me, as regards the solemn world of the unseen future which awaits our race beyond the sepulchre of death. There I see no dread, irremediable, infinite separation between beings who have walked this earth together, and between the least worthy of whom among the saved, and the least unworthy of whom among the condemned, there has been no

such moral or spiritual difference as to render just, or merciful, or possible, the distinction in the destination to eternal woe on the one side, or eternal bliss on the other.

No! blessed be God, in parting even with the unworthy on this earth, my religion teaches me that the mercies of God are still living even to that soul, amidst the punishing, it may be, but amending discipline of that solemn stage of being, in the great succession of worlds, on which it hath entered on leaving this. No parent, among us, lingers over the form of his dying child—no child, among us, watches by the couch of a departing parent—no brother or sister—no husband or wife—no friend or relative—no neighbour or companion, among us, stands in the presence of a departing spirit anguished by the racking doubt whether that soul is gone to its home of woe to suffer for ever, or gone to God, to be eternally at peace. No! we believe they are all still within the circle of those wide-embracing arms, all still under the guiding discipline of God, in the home of their Father.—Some, indeed, enjoying at once the sweet peace which is the reward of their own pure lives; and some reaping, in the continued discipline of their future home, the whirlwind which has sprung from the wind themselves have sown; but all to move on through the world that succeeds world, and the life that follows life, under the wisely directing hand of their Creator, till the last enemy, sin, shall be subdued, and God, our Father, shall be all in all.



Would that we were more worthy of the possession of these great truths—the best, the brightest, the happiest, the holiest, it is given this earth to afford to man! Would that we lived lives more consistent with our faith, lives of a deeper love to God and a more instant prayer, lives of a profounder interest in, and more loving labour for, our fellow-men, lives of a deeper faith, and a more heroic courage in the avowal of it!

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ, his well-beloved Son, our Lord.

I believe that, by his sacred words and wisdom, by his tender love and helpfulness, by his holy life and conversation, by his obedient death and triumphant immortality, he was sent of God to save us from our sins, and to assure us of, and prepare us for, a future life with God.

I believe that, in giving us this solemn lesson, he laid down his dear life, not instead of us, but for us, that he might bring many sons to glory.

I believe that we are made capable of goodness, but liable to sin, placed on this earth for our growth and progress, and in preparation for a succession of higher states of being, and that eventually, when, by our mingled discipline of struggle and triumph, of trial and joy, we shall have attained the completion of our spiritual nature, that then God shall wipe away all tears, and there shall be no more crying, and no more death, and no more appalling sin, that the burden of the mystery, the heavy

and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world,\* shall lift its pressure off our souls, that our life shall be full of light and peace, and that God, our Father, shall reign omnipotent in our souls.

Is this Christianity?—This, at least, is my Unitarianism.

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\* That blessed mood  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened.”—WORDSWORTH'S *Tintern Abbey*.

LECTURE II.

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WHY I AM A UNITARIAN.

PART II.

(JESUS CHRIST.)



# WHY I AM A UNITARIAN,

## PART II.

### (JESUS CHRIST.)

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To be a Unitarian, that is, to believe the Unity—in Nature, in Purpose, and in Character—of the Great Power that created this universe, is not so strange and isolated a mental condition as the divisions and nomenclatures of our modern theological world would at first lead us to suppose. In profession, at least, all the Monotheists of this earth—400,000,000—are Unitarian.

The Jews are Unitarian, but they take their exposition of the doctrine from Moses. The Mahomedans are Unitarian, but they take their exposition of the doctrine from Mohammed. I am a Unitarian, but I take my exposition of the doctrine from Jesus Christ.

The Church of England is Unitarian, but by its Articles, Creeds and Standards, it maintains the co-existence of Three Divine Persons, each equal to and distinct from the other, and each God; and that seems to me Tritheism, and as such a contradiction of its own profession. The Swedenborgians are Unitarians, but

while they believe in one Almighty God, they believe that one God to be Jesus Christ.

Besides churches and peoples, individual men have declared their Unitarianism. Milton was a Unitarian, because he believed in one omnipotent Father, though he believed that this Father had a Son, the first of created beings, afterwards made by the Supreme Father (as his delegate and instrument) the creator of all other things. Sir Isaac Newton was a Unitarian, declaring the, to me, more consistent belief that there is one God, the Father ; that all worship is to be directed to him, and that he alone created us. The moral philosopher and statistician, Dr. Price, was a Unitarian, believing at the same time that Christ, though a created being, began his existence in another life and world, before he entered this. Dr. Priestley was a Unitarian, believing that Christ began his existence on this earth as other human beings do. And Dr. Channing was a Unitarian, protesting (to use his own strong language) against "the irrational and unscriptural doctrine of the Trinity, as subverting in effect the Unity of God," and he attached to the uncorrupted truth of God's Unity "infinite importance." He believed too in the unity of Jesus Christ—that he also is "one soul, one being, a being distinct from the one God," and that he does not consist of two souls and two minds, the one divine and the other human ; the one weak, the other almighty ; the one ignorant, the other omniscient. He says, "This is to make Christ two beings, to abuse and confound language, to throw darkness over all our conceptions of intelligent natures, and

to disfigure the simple truth of Jesus." William Penn in his early days, and Isaac Watts in his later days, enforced the same great doctrine, in their way, and Theodore Parker did the same, in his way.

And though I am now speaking, and can speak, for no one but myself, I will yet accept no narrower definition of the truth, and no narrower interpretation of the name, than shall include, under the same over-reaching canopy, each one of this band of glorious confessors of a glorious and eternal truth, however high his opinion of Christ's dignity may ascend, or however near a simple humanity he may place that beautiful Nature.

In the former part of this lecture I have given several reasons why I am a Unitarian—some ethical, some intellectual, some affectional, and some spiritual. But the chief theological reason I have given is that no such doctrine as that of the Trinity is to be found in the necessity of things, in the reason of things, or in the Christian Scriptures.

Now it is a remarkable fact, that in the many discussions and conversations which have followed the delivery of this lecture in various parts of the country scarcely a voice has been raised in vindication of the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the Deity of the Holy Ghost as a distinct Person in the Trinity, but many voices have been raised in assertion, at least, if not in proof, of the Deity of Jesus Christ.

I shall now speak therefore particularly of Jesus Christ, and, in order to speak with authority I have to ascertain how the New Testament speaks of him. What

does it tell us about him, and the nature he was supposed to bear, and the character he was believed to sustain? And what kind of designations of him are used, and how comes it to pass that these designations of him, which are the form and embodiment of the thoughts that were entertained of him, are so far different from those we hear of in after ages, and that are applied to him now?

To some persons it may seem very simple in me to neglect all the intervening learning and teaching of the Churches upon this subject, and go back to the New Testament. But the only authority I recognize, or know of, on this subject, is the contemporaneous literature of the New Testament,—or rather, the literature which, if not *all* strictly contemporaneous, is yet the most nearly contemporaneous that we have.

And I want to know, as far as I can, independently of the accretions of after ages, what his contemporaries—those who knew him, and saw him, and lived with him—thought of him; and how they treated him, and how they spoke of him, and how, as the Romans used to say, they ‘hailed him.’

How does the New Testament introduce the subject of this discourse to me? As the Lord God from heaven? As the Maker of this Universe come down to earth to visit us? No! but as a devout and excellent young man, who passed among his family and friends, and afterwards among his disciples and the public, under the very simple name of Jesus. This was a common name among the Jews, as Richard or



William might be among us. Though a not unnatural or unbecoming reverence has prevented its being handed down to, or used by us with similar frequency, yet in our Lord's own time and country it was commonly given. Joshua is only an Old Testament form of Jesus.

The translator and editor of the Apocryphal Book of Ecclesiasticus (commonly called The Wisdom of Jesus), speaks in the prologue of his grandfather Jesus. The sorcerer spoken of in the Acts is called Bar-Jesus—son of Jesus. Justus, St. Paul speaks of as more familiarly known as Jesus. And even that miserable creature (who, like other mean things accidentally associated in the mixtures of this life with the high and the divine, owes his very existence in our present consciousness to his association with our Lord), the brigand Barabbas, was named Jesus. For though reverence has dropped it out of the text, Tischendorf says (and I think there is little doubt of it) that the original reported words of Pilate were, "Whom will ye that I shall release unto you? Jesus, son of Abba (Barabbas), or Jesus, called Christ?"

Now, by this name—an ordinary name of his time and country—our Lord was domestically, commonly, and popularly known. And it is always pleasant to me to hear him called Jesus. It sounds so like that habit of our own, to call our friends, after they grow up to manhood, and even to celebrity and distinction, still by their Christian and personal names; so that, however great a man becomes in after life, we go on calling him James, or

William, or John, as we, and all those who have known him from his childhood, were wont to call him.

And so it was this young man "Jesus" who began to preach; it was "Jesus" whom the whole city went out to meet; it was "Jesus" who knew their thoughts, had compassion on them, and touched their eyes. Even later on it was still "Jesus" who was hailed as the Prophet of Nazareth; it was "Jesus" who took bread and blessed it; it was "Jesus" who was crucified; and it was "Jesus" to the end, when he cried out with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost.

And the uniformity with which our Lord is thus spoken of by his simple name of Jesus is not only a striking, and I think sometimes a not sufficiently appreciated indication of the very early existence of a large part of the Gospel records, but is also a very significant proof of the simplicity, so to speak, with which the person of Christ was regarded at the beginning, and through a very considerable period of the Christian history.

As, indeed, the graciousness, and the wisdom, and the goodness of this simple "Jesus" came to be more and more discerned, the people about him began naturally to regard him with an increasing respect, and to address him and speak of him accordingly. With the natural courtesy of Eastern society, they extended to him, too, the mark of respect usually accorded by pupils to their professors, and called him Rabbi, Master; *Didaskalos*, Teacher. Why our translators, from the time of Wycliffe downwards, have so constantly rendered the word

*Didaskalos*, not Teacher, but Master, I know not, unless they shared at all in the very unworthy sentiment of Cicero—"docere non habet dignitatem," and followed the example of the Romans in their *Ludi Magister*, and ourselves in our *Head-Master*. But be that as it may, it is simply stupid to apply the one term "master" to the pilot of a ship (*κυβερνήτης*) to Beelzebub (as *οικοδεσπότης*), or the owner of the house in the parables, and to Jesus as *διδάσκαλος*, or teacher; thereby clumsily mixing up the appropriate terms of the original, and destroying their natural and graceful variety.

This was the less necessary because this very feeling of reverence was indicated and provided for in the original by another most appropriate term constantly applied to Jesus—*κύριος*—(Lord). But such are the misery and the mischief of a bad translation, that the very utterance of this word "Lord," opens out upon us the floodgates of a tide of the most serious errors.

For our translators of the Old Testament, professing to follow the Hebrew original, have in fact, in too many instances, followed the Greek of the Septuagint; or have adopted the substituted word (*Adonai*) of a later Rabbinical tradition, instead of what they found in their text; or have followed the Latin of the Vulgate; and have thus, almost throughout the Old Testament, rendered the ineffable name of the Deity by "Lord."

Now, conceive of the misleading influence of this mistranslation. The ordinary reader goes through the Old Testament, hearing Almighty God constantly called "The Lord," and he comes to the New Testament and finds

Jesus Christ called the same. And how can he know, unless he is told, and believes *when* he is told, that the word "Lord" in the first case, as used in the Old Testament, represents the special incommunicable name of the Almighty Self-existent God, and that the same word in the second case, as used in the New Testament, is one that is given, for example, to Philip of Bethsaida (John xii. 20); to the gentleman in the parable who sent out invitations to his dinner (Luke xiv. 21); to an owner of a vineyard; to him whom Mary Magdalene supposed to be the gardener; to Pilate; and to many more, who are all called *kurios* (lord); though our translation often very properly renders the word "sir," in which sense it is still used every day in modern Greek?

Thus, you see, great as was the growing respect for Christ, it never occurred to any one, so far, to indicate it by any description or address that was not applied to numbers of other indifferent persons, his fellow-countrymen and contemporaries. We too, then, affirm with the Gospels, and in their sense, that he is Lord and Master.

As time got on, however, and the greatness, and the grandeur, and the world-value of this Man began to dawn upon the minds of his disciples, they saw in him rather more than a Teacher and a Master; they began to feel that he was destined to realize the long-deferred hopes of their oppressed nation—to restore, and himself to sit upon, the throne of David; and, as the Jews were great genealogists, and the fact actually appearing that he could genealogically trace up his

origin to the "Grand Monarque" of the Hebrews, they soon began to recognize him as the Son of David. But it took them not long to see in him more than this, and to anticipate in him the fulfilment of greater promises even than those involved in his royal descent. They believed he was Prophet as well as King, that he was not only appointed to rule as Monarch, but set apart to inaugurate the new Kingdom of Heaven as Messiah.

But let us not exaggerate or misconceive the nature of the dignity even thus accorded to him. To be a Christ, or Messiah, or anointed of God, was not a privilege or a dignity accorded to Jesus of Nazareth exclusively. What says David of his predecessor on the throne, Saul?—"The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's (Jehovah's) Messiah, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the Messiah of Jehovah" (1 Sam. xxiv. 6). And again, when the young Amalekite confesses that, at Saul's request, he stood upon him and slew him, David asks him, "Wert thou not afraid to stretch forth thy hand to destroy the Lord's Messiah?" (2 Sam. i. 14, 16), and condemns the young man to instant death because, he said, "Thine own mouth hath testified against thee, saying I have slain the Messiah of Jehovah." And speaking of this same Saul, Samuel had before challenged the people to maintain any charge they had against him before Jehovah and before his Messiah—that is Saul. The same term is applied, and still more directly, in Isaiah to Cyrus, King of

Persia, "Thus saith the Lord to his Messiah, Cyrus (xlv. 1).

Our English version, indeed, in these cases has very properly used the word "Anointed," but, nevertheless, the word so rendered is "*Messiah*"; and it is extremely important, if we wish to attain the truth, not to confound subsequent, derived, and developed meanings of words with their original significance, and the essential idea conveyed by them.

Nor can any one consider such an access of dignity and trust, in the case of our Lord, unseemly or unsuitable, for he surely, if any, *was* anointed of the Lord; he surely, if any, *was* anointed to preach glad tidings; he surely *was* anointed with the oil of God's gladness above his fellows, and was the Christ of God. We, therefore, affirm this likewise, as it is affirmed in the Gospels.

But, as I have said, as the reverence for our Lord deepened, and the perception of the wisdom and holiness of his soul, and the greatness and the grandeur of his work, became clearer and stronger in the minds of his disciples and evangelists, feelings of a constantly profounder homage would most naturally occur. These feelings were expressed in the title of Saviour; for though not very often actually applied to him in the New Testament, yet, when it was once suggested, who could withhold such an ascription from Jesus?

Ancient writers and prophets had spoken of the son of Nun, who led his people into the Promised Land, and

of Othniel, the son of Kenaz, who delivered them from their enemies, as Saviours (Judges iii. 9). They had said of one who led them successfully against the Syrian foe, and enabled them "once again to dwell in their tents as aforesaid," that "the Lord had given Israel a Saviour" (2 Kings xiii. 5). And should they not say of this great deliverer from the worst of foes—blindness of heart and sickness of soul—of this great uplifter of our life, that God had exalted him to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins?

And yet I have to remark that this appellation, given though it was from the first to others, and now not uncommonly bestowed by ourselves of the after ages, was applied very sparingly—more sparingly, I think, than you would be inclined before examining to suppose—by the writers of the New Testament to our Lord. So much so, that the combined phrase of reverence, now so commonly and, I think, so properly in use among Christians of our own time, "Lord and Saviour," is never, that I remember, in a single instance, applied to Jesus in the Gospels, and only a few times in the rest of the New Testament; and all of those times, I believe, occur in the Second Epistle of Peter, the authenticity of which has always been a subject of doubt. But "Saviour" surely was no extravagant growth of discipular reverence. Men call Washington the saviour of his country; and I, though not an American, will call him so too. Nay, I have heard a man, nearer our own time, and in a neighbouring nation, termed "Saviour of Society."

But think! "A Saviour of Society," because to stave off a pressing evil hour you deluge with blood the streets of your metropolis, and appal into stillness, by means of successful massacre, the wild and brutal element that you can only curb and tame, but never hope or dream to purify, and direct, and put into its right mind. And shall you scruple to accord the same title of homage to the dear spirit that came to breathe light and love and peace upon this earth; to wean and win from sin; to reveal to us a Father, and to speak to us of a home with him forever and forever in the heavens?

No! give words their own meanings, and all will be right. Drop the Ecclesiastical adjuncts which tell you, perhaps, that because God is called Saviour, and Jesus is called Saviour, that Jesus is God, as though it would not prove also that Joshua was God. Lay on one side the accretions of fancy and the dreams of the theologians, that tell you that there is but one salvation known to their gross conceptions, the salvation from a hell of eternal torment—and what a grand and large idea stands before your mind in this word Saviour, full of pure and rich and simple meaning, making Christ a reality himself, and incorporating him in, and making him part of, the great realities of the world. We too, then, affirm, with the Gospels, that he is our Saviour.

Then Christ is declared to be the Son of Man. And by this name he had often designated himself, seldom indeed using any other or higher phrase when compelled to self-description. "Son of man" was a familiar



phrase in the Old Testament, and the prophet Ezekiel, for instance, uses it nearly a hundred times in the short record of his preaching, as a description of himself. It was surely a modest, and a not undesignedly modest, term, borrowed by our Lord from an ancient seer of his country, by which to designate his prophetic claims and character.

But though he thus designated himself, as the perception of his real spiritual power grew upon them, Apostles and Evangelists struggled for words and designations of proportionately increased sublimity and reverence. "Son of *man*" indeed he stood confessed before them, in the very presence of his body; but in the presence of his soul and spirit he rose before admiring followers and loving friends as also "Son of *God*." How indeed could *they* do less than accord such a title to him, who, speaking even of themselves, declared "now are we the sons of God"; or who could lay it down as a universal truth, "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God"? Need we wonder, then, that, in their loving reverence, the New Testament writers intensify for Christ this relation, shared in fact by themselves, and speak of him as God's *own* Son, as his dear Son, just as he had once, while in life, been called the "Beloved Son"?

At length, as though the force of language could no further go, St. John, in his First Epistle, culminates in the, to us, strange Oriental phrase, "only-begotten Son of God," thus attaching to him the general meaning of Son of God with a peculiar, intense, and loving force,

as to one who had achieved in highest measure the essential Apostolic idea of Sonship, in being, more than any other, "like to God," and thus, indeed, "the first-born of many brethren." "Only-begotten," in St. John, means just what "I was my Father's Son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my Mother," means in the Proverbs.

But this language (so like a nation that stood so close to, and spoke so simply of, all its natural conditions and relations), coming into contact, on the one hand, with the morbid spiritual imagination of a later Oriental age, and subsequently, on the other hand, with the literal, unimaginative, dogmatic mental habits of the Western races,—borrowing its exactness of definition, perhaps, in part from the jurisprudence of Rome,—has become associated with I know not what follies and profanities of meaning, so that one of the Creeds, in the first form in which it passed at Nicæa, dared, with an unparalleled and adventurous absurdity, to make an essential article of faith of some inexplicable, unrealizable differences which it chose to extract from this metaphorical, indeed, but still in itself intelligible expression of the nearness, of the dearness of this Son of God to his Father, and insisted—with a daring and arrogant precision of language, and with an iteration of the phraseology, to me intellectually disgusting—that Christ was "begotten" of the Father, and not "made of him," was "the only-begotten" of the Father, was begotten "of his very own substance," and therefore was "of the same substance as the Father"! And all this astounding theory,

founded on a phrase that is only applied to Jesus once in the New Testament, and is once also applied to Isaac—who, nevertheless, was *not* the “only” son of Abraham!

I, for my part, beg it to be very distinctly understood—though I speak only for myself, and in so speaking may not be speaking for many possibly now present—that I regard our Lord Jesus Christ as, in his entire nature, a perfect, true, and real Man; as begotten of God, as we are; as created of God, as we are; and no ascription to him and no description of him that we have as yet encountered in the New Testament, or as I think shall ever encounter there, is in any real or manifest sense inconsistent with this fact.

It may, indeed, be said to me, “You have quoted from a part of Scripture the giving by anticipation of the name of Jesus to him. That same portion of Scripture teaches you that he was not begotten as we are, and was not conceived as we are. Do you believe in that portion of Scripture?” I answer, “No, I do not.” I do not disbelieve it because of the consequences that would follow if it were true, although the first consequence would be to destroy what the Church of England justly proclaims as a great truth—“the Perfect Humanity of Christ”—since it would make Christ not a man at all, but a new order of being, known to the fables of Paganism, but not known to Christianity—a large part God, and a part only man; a composite being it might be, but certainly a being that could in no consistency of language be called human. I do not dis-

believe, however, the narratives in the beginning of St. Matthew and St. Luke on account of these fatal consequences, but because the narratives themselves bear it written upon their faces that they are not history, but legend. Scarcely any one, I should think, on reading them even once carefully, and not already enthralled by received dogma, could fail to see their absolutely legendary character.

Now remember, I do not speak of rejecting the Star, the visit of the Wise Men, the Song of the Angels, as poetical and beautiful myths. This I think they are, and I delight in their associations for the heart and their inner meaning in the Christmas songs as much as any one. But we are called on to receive them as actual reliable history of actual and literal fact. Remember, too, I am not denying the reality of a holy child, born of a holy mother. This is a grand truth of heredity. But I am speaking of a supposed miraculous conception—of a supposed commingling of God with one of his creatures—and I say this partakes of the character of the myths of Paganism, and has no shadow of likeness to the simplicity of the genuine Gospels. It is clearly, in spirit and in incident, a fragment of some of the Apocryphal Gospels, which it greatly resembles in character, and was only subsequently added to the accredited Gospels. The early disciples and Apostles knew nothing about it. It is never alluded to again. It stands by itself, unconnected and alone in the Christian records.

And yet is it not—I will not say a disgraceful—but is

is not a truly sorrowful fact that the Churches of Christendom not only receive all this as a narrative divinely true, but actually base their whole theology upon it? And is it, indeed, our duty, is it right and honourable in us, is it just to Jesus Christ, is it reverential to the God who gave him to us, is it being faithful to truth and to humanity, that we should stand quietly by and see this mythology crushing out the Divine religion of our Master, and loading it with ridicule in the eyes of intellectual men?

That none of the false and, as he himself would have considered it, blasphemous honours of Deity were accorded to him, the whole treatment of Jesus as a child and a youth shows. For how did his parents and his own family regard him? Just as you might expect they would. In the earlier stages of this appreciation and development which I have attempted to describe, so far from looking upon him as a *divine* child, as a special offspring of God set among them, and treating him in consequence with extraordinary respect, they are, I think, at times a little wanting in proper consideration for him.

And the people, too, and his own Apostles among them, how do they treat him to the very last? They crowd about with an unrestrained pressure that compels him to get into a boat and push off from the shore, that he may be able to speak to them. They are always asking him to come and see them, and inviting him to dinner. Sometimes they are "offended" with him, sometimes they throw contempt upon the town where he lived. Sometimes they call him an emissary

of Beelzebub. Sometimes they wish to pitch him headlong down the rock out of their city. And what do they *say* of him? "Who is this? Is he not the carpenter? Is he not the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?" The blind man said, "A man called Jesus healed me"! When the multitude came together to such an extent that neither he nor they could so much as eat bread, his friends went out to lay hold of him, for they said, "He is beside himself."

Was this Almighty God—the Creator and Governor of this illimitable universe—that they had unconsciously among them, and spoke of, and thought of, and handled in this way? No such monstrous idea entered a single human brain, till (ages after) metaphysicians and divines struck out this metempsychosis in their studies, borrowing it from the surrounding atmosphere of oriental religion; and the marvel-loving, ignorant, and superstitious people seized upon it with avidity, feeling an appalled attraction in the thought that creatures had crucified their Creator, and slain their God. Slain him that they might be saved from his own vengeance! Slain him as the only atonement for an infinite sin against an Infinite Being! The Infinite slain that other worlds might not be encouraged to fall into sin, by hoping that the sacrifice might be made again for them! And this is the religion taught the masses of the people this day.

Alas, for the theology of our otherwise great nation! How can we be surprised that it should excite little but neglect and contempt among the people to whom we are nevertheless so zealously carrying it? With arts,

with industries, with science, with culture, with bravery—with a code of morals the purest and most heavenly ever offered man, and its presentation in a life of holiness and goodness which shames us all—with a grand Monotheistic faith, which Science can never destroy, and does not wish to destroy—we stand among these peoples, like the powerful nation that we are, and armed with the means of enormous good ; while in theology we bring to these same peoples only part of their own worn-out and despised theogonies, rendered more incredible from the savage additions—unknown to any faith in any time before—and only insisted on in this corrupted form of what is the best faith of all—the savage additions of a merciless God, exacting the uttermost farthing and punishing even the innocent, and an undying hell. In all secular and public social life we stand before them as strong men, while in our theology we come to them worse than children.

So far, then, in the character and estimates of Jesus by his disciples and contemporaries, we find nothing above or beyond a perfect and beautiful humanity, adorned with the choicest graces, and enriched with the divinest gifts our nature is capable of receiving.

In these Scriptures he is designated Son of Man (the title which he himself selected, and by which he usually designated himself) eighty-six times. He is called a man seventy-two times, the Sent of God, fifty-six times, Jesus of Nazareth eighteen times, the Son of Abraham ten times, the Son of Joseph six times.

No doubt, as I have indicated, as time got on, a process of what is called by musicians "crescendo" succeeded, and he comes before us as Messiah, Saviour, Son of God. None of such descriptions, however, is exclusively applied to him ; every one of them, as we have seen, is applied to others, and some of them to many others. Nowhere in Scripture is there the slightest authority for the ecclesiastical representations of later date ; nowhere is there the slightest authority for such a designation as God the Son.

And yet I for one do not think the cold, irreverent and undescriptive expression of " Mere Man " applicable to Jesus. He is no mere man to me. He was humanity raised into the ideal of its excellence, and the perfection of its spiritual possibility. He seems to me to have been as near to God, and as like to God, as it was possible for man to be. As the Colossus which stands at the harbour, and by which ships sail into their quiet haven, though in human form, yet exceeds all ordinary stature of man, so, in the proportion of his spiritual stature, doth, to my vision, our blessed Lord exceed the stature of those he came to teach, to strengthen, and console—seen afar off on life's billowy waters, guiding into the haven of Heaven's pure peace and joy, and offering rest and safety to every wave-tossed wanderer on the sea of life.

But here all the natural increase of reverence, all the legitimate crescendo of which I have spoken, ceases, and we have to examine a far different form of exaltation :



the labouring pen of Apostles, and the frank utterances of our Lord himself—free, and beautiful, and suggestive as they are—cease.

Here, in our later ecclesiastical Confessions, we hear but little of the Vine, of the Son, of the Shepherd, of the good King, of the Master of the feast, and all those other rich suggestive images under which are brought out, in real characters, the thoughts and purposes of his heart, the practical, benignant, tender offices of his mission. High terms of external homage and official dignity meet us, stately and artificial in their character. They come upon us, and they grow upon us, indeed, gradually. For even in ecclesiastical progress, the artificial, as in Scripture the natural, “*crescendo*” is remarkable. And the way in which the early Fathers of the first three centuries speak of him, though sometimes in excess of the simple language of the Scriptures, yet never approaches the glowing phraseology of later times.

I could, did opportunity allow me, show you how gradually our present theology grew up, as the supposed logical outcome of certain assumed premises; and how, slowly, and in the course of centuries alone, the sweet and real Christ of the Gospel was utterly lost, a dying God, and a stern last-day Judge substituted for him, and our dear Lord and Master taken away from us; how, in the place of that Divine Reality, the logic of the Schoolmen, and the dreams of the theologians, and the unreasoning, accepting superstition of the people, substituted a nondescript existence, a being that, affecting the impossibility of being both God and man, was

neither God nor man, but, in a sort, took away from us both the God and the Man we had before; so that you might have thought it was in the very pathos of a prophetic warning against what was happening that our Lord had uttered the impressive farewell words, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; unto my God, and your God."

But when once was accomplished the change of "Son of God"—a Scriptural account of Christ—into "God the Son," the inverted description of the Churches, then was the simple Scripture itself tortured to yield up a forced and most unwilling and unreal assent to this accretion, and then for the first time we meet with proofs from Scripture that Jesus of Nazareth was Almighty God, such as these that I will now adduce, among several more that I might quote.

"I and my Father are one" (John x. 30): That proves that Christ was God.—Then, our reply is, the following words must prove that the disciples were also God, as in them our Lord prays "that they may be one as we are one." But as he himself supplies a much truer interpretation of his own words in both these cases, I prefer it to that of any other—"That they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John xvii, 22, 23).

"Before Abraham was, I am" (John viii. 58): This proves that Christ was Almighty God.—I should have thought it indicated nothing of the kind, but that, if it proved any theological position at all, it must have been that of those who believe in our Lord's pre-existence

before the usual time assigned for his birth. To me it seems—according to the analogy of similar passages where the ellipsis is filled up (“I am he”), and the explanations afforded in this very chapter—to mean that in the eternal counsels of God he was the foreseen and fore-ordained expounder and exemplar to us of his holy will (cf. viii. 24).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Here, in what is commonly called the Proem of St. John’s Gospel, we have a kind of philosophical and metaphysical theory of the mode in which Wisdom presided at the creation, was present in the divine work of God, afterwards benignly mingling with humanity and its affairs, and particularly manifesting itself in the great work of Jesus Christ, speaking to us, through him, and thus becoming the Logos, Word, or spoken Wisdom of God.

Now, I am sure that when that proem was written the crescendo process I have described had reached, as far as the Scriptures are concerned, its culminating point, and that there was, after all, in the mind of the writer, nothing more than a strong and reverential desire to show that that Wisdom which, according to an already received mode of expression in Hebrew thought, presided at, and took part in, creation, also spoke in Christ, and thus became the uttered Wisdom of God, or the Divine Logos in the new spiritual creation.

It was not a new idea. Learned writers will take you to Plato for one form of it, and they will tell you there is another form of it in Philo, whom Renan calls “le

frère aîné" of Jesus, wishing they had met. But I need not go beyond the Scriptures themselves. You will find a nearly perfect parallel to the proem of St. John's Gospel in the 8th chapter of Proverbs—"I [Wisdom] was set up from everlasting." "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way." Or, as St. John expresses the same idea, "In the beginning was the Logos (or Wisdom), and the Logos was with God." "When he prepared the heavens," continues Wisdom, "I was there; . . . when he appointed the foundations of the earth, . . . I was by him;" or, as St. John expresses it of the Logos, "The same was in the beginning with God, and all things were made by him." "Rejoicing," continues the description in Proverbs, "in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men;" or, as St. John more succinctly says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." (See also *Ecclesiasticus* xxiv. ; and *Wisdom of Solomon* viii., &c.)

In fact, so far from identifying Jesus with the Almighty Creator of this universe, the very object and intention of this passage in John, and of the theories of the Athenian and Alexandrian Philosophies I have referred to, was to remove the Infinite even from his own works, and to create, in imagination at least, some intervening and delegated attribute or Æon to be the immediate agent of creation. So that Jesus of Nazareth is actually by this doctrine placed at a greater distance, so to speak, from God, and is removed from direct intercourse with him, by the intervention of some imaginary power, or some real attribute from the great

original of all things, and is made to receive his wisdom and his mission through that attribute or intermediate Power.

In language by which some here will at once understand my meaning, the wisdom of the Infinite might speak in Jesus ; but that does not mean that Jesus was the infinite Wisdom, or that that Wisdom found in him its completion and its counterpart. In truth, the Logos included Jesus, but Jesus did not exhaust the Logos.

The Word, or Logos, spoke in a similar manner in the Prophets, and it is said in Matthew's Gospel that Jehovah spoke, or sent his word, through the prophet Isaiah, and also the prophet Hosea, and the word was thus in a similar manner "made flesh" in these men, and dwelt among us, and these might be called the Incarnate Word as well as Jesus ; the real truth being that the Word was incarnate in the two prophets, and in Jesus ; none of them being the Word, or exhausting the Word, but representing it, carrying it to men, drawing from it, as the wide and lofty source of all great works, and all illumination.

But to the ear of my imagination, indeed of my experience, these words—possibly from some one now present—arise : "Suppose this explanation of yours is true, yet Jesus Christ, as the Son, is directly spoken of as God in the Epistle to the Hebrews (i. 8), where God is represented as addressing the Son thus : "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever."

It might be so. At any rate, be it so. But I cannot admit an argument of this kind from the Epistle to the

Hebrews without reminding you that this Epistle has never had a secure footing in the Canon, being from very early times reckoned among the *ἀντιλεγόμενα*, or disputed books. Jerome says that some of the Latins rejected it, and in more recent times Calvin and Grotius, amongst others, denied its authorship by Paul; and after considering all the arguments, such a man as Coleridge has with great solemnity and reluctance declared his resulting conviction that it was not written by St. Paul. There is little doubt, in fact, that it was of post-apostolic origin, and therefore of sub-apostolic authority. It repeats, in somewhat fuller and ampler form, the doctrine of the Logos, already met with in the proem to the Fourth Gospel, and in the *crescendo* style I have been speaking of.

But I will take the words exactly as they stand, and exactly as they are translated, and I still maintain that they afford not the least proof that Jesus, or the Son, is Almighty God; and I warn our eager theologians not to be so quick to catch up single words and phrases, occurring anywhere, as in themselves proofs of a tremendous doctrine.

Will you call to mind some familiar words in the 138th Psalm—"I will praise thee with my whole heart; before [*i.e.*, in the presence of] the Gods will I sing praise unto thee" (*Elohim*, in the Hebrew—*ἀγγέλων* in the LXX.). Did the Psalmist mean that he would praise the Almighty before the Almighty's equals—Gods in the same sense in which *He* was God? The Septuagint, I observe, translates gods, *ἄγγελοι* (*ἐναντίον*

ἀγγέλων). Our Lord himself says (John x. 35) that the Law called them Gods, to whom the word of God came.

Suppose the writer of this Epistle to the Hebrews said that Christ's throne should exist, as most Christians believe it will, for ever and ever, and suppose he even, according to the growing form of expressions of homage, made the Almighty address him as "O God," not only should such passages as I have quoted make us pause before we admit that by such an expression of honour the writer meant to convey that he was the Almighty Creator of this universe, but we should also remember how the same Being who is represented as thus addressing the Son, also adds, "therefore God, even *thy* God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above *thy* fellows."

Let us beware of rash and hasty dogmatic conclusions from intense and highly-wrought language, which has always been current in the East, and as every modern traveller knows is current still; in reference to which no greater mistake of real meaning could be made then, or can be made now, than to translate it into, as an equivalent, the literal prose of unpoetic times, and the realistic language of occidental races.

The same desire to find Scriptural support for later ecclesiastical dogmas has led to the assertion that Christ is called in Scripture "The Mighty God," "The Everlasting Father" (Isaiah ix. 6). Now, to say nothing of the hopeless confusion of ideas that, after carefully

supporting the distinction between the Son, the Second Person in the Holy Trinity, and Father, the First, can carelessly suppose the term "Everlasting Father" to be one authoritatively applied to the Son, I have to remark that, in his prophecies, Isaiah four times introduces to us children with significant names—two, if not three of them, being children of his own.

But in the case before us the child is to have a princely, or royal number of names, such as is not uncommon in our own times. A nephew of our present Queen (Count Gleichen) was christened "Victor Ferdinand Francis Eugène Gustave Adolphus Constantine Frederick." So this child in the time of Isaiah was to be named in Hebrew, Peleh Yoetz El-Gibbor Abi-Ad Sar-Shalom, "The Wonder," "The Counsellor," "The Mighty God," "Father of the Ages," "Prince of Peace"; and our translators have chosen in this instance, instead of preserving the names in Hebrew, to give us a rather imperfect translation of them into English. But what authority is there (except by this system of ecclesiastical accommodation and forced and fanciful applications) for applying the names of any one of these children to Jesus Christ?

The most imposing authority in modern times that I know of for this application is the great composer Handel, and as he has in his "Messiah" married these words in their unauthorized application to immortal music, that unauthorized application, and that unfortunate mistranslation, have become fixed in the popular ear, and will probably be handed down to our posterity for



generations to come. But even were there any authority for this application, why should the name of "Mighty God" any more indicate the Godhead of its owner than Elijah (God Jehovah) should indicate the godhead of Elijah?

One of the children to whom Isaiah gives a significant name was called "Emmanuel" (God with us), and this title is applied—and I for one think most appropriately—to our Lord. But why should we think, because an ancient Jew called a child "Emmanuel," he meant that the child so called was "Almighty God," any more than a modern European sovereign, when he calls his son by that name, means to convey such a monstrous idea? Why, one of the names of the late Prince Consort was Emmanuel.—And because the late King of Italy's father called his child by names which in themselves mean (have you ever thought what the name of the late King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel, does mean?) "The Conquering God with us," would it enter into the brain of any man of sense to suppose that he meant to convey the idea that his son was the creator of this universe?

I really assure you, my brethren, when I reflect upon these arguments, adduced up to this present day by our divines in their instructions to the people, I do not sometimes know whether to be most sorry for the people, or most ashamed of the divines.

Still I know that good people, in their anxious desire to bring down the Divine upon this earth of ours, to cheer and warm it with the rays of that Holy Light and

Presence and to make our Creator and our Father very near us, feel that it is most really done—in fact, can alone be really done—by this Deification of our Blessed Lord, and do not seem to know how the Creator can be brought near to his creatures, as a father to his children, except by the process of derivation and generation through the person of Jesus Christ, and so talk of an “Eternal Sonship,” of “God the Son,” of “God of God,” and use many other phrases unknown to the simpler times of the Scripture, unrealizable to common sense, and unfitted for the highest reverence.

For, I ask—in the face of the fact that a Son must imply a Father, and that a Father must imply at least precedence and priority to his Son—what rational or intelligible meaning can possibly be attached to the words “Eternal Sonship”—a Sonship that had no beginning, and was coæval with its Author?

The fact is, we have been long treating this jargon of theological metaphysic with too much respect. We have suffered ourselves to be misled, and are at this moment suffering ourselves to be misled, by the general learning and accomplishments, and, above all, by the dignified official position of the defenders of these incredible and impossible assumptions, wasting the time, and talents, and learning of some of our first men in laboriously analyzing and refuting them, till absolutely, at last, a short time since we found a considerable portion of the best intellects of our age seriously discussing the question whether an aged living man at Rome was virtually Almighty God, the infallible director of the

thoughts, and the omniscient controller of the actions, of our race ; and it is Science alone, with its rough, healthy, welcome breeze of a new life and a new hope to man, that has come in to disperse our dreams, break through our restraining courtesies of a false reverence, and tell us the naked truth that we must not, as rational creatures, be in subordination to them any more.

These ecclesiastical affirmations are not the affirmations of the Gospels, but their negation. The system they introduce and sanction is a mistake from end to end, and in its essence a destructive mistake. To me, at least, it takes away both my Father and my Brother ; it takes away God by making him Man ; it takes away Man by making him God ; it destroys the completeness and the perfectness of each, leaving me neither an Infinite and Eternal Power, the superhuman Author of all things, nor a Brother Man, the very fulfilment and completion of my own nature.

I cling to both, and by my reading of Scripture am blessed with the possession of both. I have an Infinite Almighty Creator, perfect and changeless, yet shedding the light of his Wisdom, and the warmth of his Love, perceptibly and consciously, upon me —making the condescension of his near approach to me all the sweeter for his greatness. And I have a perfect, bright, and rich humanity, to be my comforter and counsellor, a very brother in my home and in my heart, a very present help in the time of my trouble and temptation.

Take not away from me this Father-God, by telling me

that He was once wrapped in swaddling-clothes, became a human babe, and died ; and take not away from me this home-like Brother—tempted, suffering, as I am, yet noble and conquering, as I must also strive to be,—by telling me that he was this only for a time, and in outward form, for that he was all the while, in reality, the disguised Creator of the universe. *Both* he could not have been ; and by trying to make him both, you make him neither. No ! leave me my God, and leave me my Lord ! Leave me the Infinite and the Omnipotent, and leave me also that dear being who, a man himself, knew what was *in* man ; a saint himself, knew, better than I, the sanctity of God ; who, so human, was yet so good ; so humble, was yet so wise. Leave him to me to cling to and to love. Leave him to me, that I may know that one with my very own exposure to sin, and suffering, and sorrow, passed through this life immaculate, and could not be enchained by the fetters of death, but is alive now as I shall be. He is not my God indeed, but he will lead me to God. I will put my hand in his, and will go with him. I will lay my head upon his bosom, and he will weep with me when I weep, and rejoice with me when I rejoice. To whom else should I go ? He has the words of Eternal Life to me.

LECTURE III.

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THE SUFFERINGS OF THE BIBLE AT  
THE HANDS OF MEN.



## THE SUFFERINGS OF THE BIBLE AT THE HANDS OF MEN.

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THE first suffering the Bible undergoes at our hands is its name. We now call it "The Book," but this was not its ancient, and is not its proper, title. It consists of many Books, or *Writings*, and, therefore, what we now call "The Book" was anciently called "The Writings," or, in the Latin form, "The Scriptures"; sometimes "Biblia," or "Books," but never ἡ βιβλος, or "The Book." It consists of many Books, and therefore was called in the early times of the Church "Sancta Bibliotheca," the Holy Library.

Even Jerome's translation, "The Vulgate," went by the name of ἡ βιβλιοθήκη, the Library. This word means literally "Book Chest"; and the collection not improbably took this name originally to designate the writings preserved in the locked-up chest, or *Armorium*, of the Jewish Temple. It is not one book, but a collection of books; it is not one work, but a whole literature. Accordingly you read in the Old Testament of the Books or Bibles of Moses, the Books or Bibles of Samuel,

the Books of the Chronicles, the Book of Job, the Book of Psalms, the Book of the Prophet Isaiah.

But besides all these, so well known to us, there are references in the Old Testament to other books not now known to us—the Book of Jasher, the Book of the Acts of Solomon, the Book of Jehu, the Book of the Wars of the Lord. For though there are writers who suppose that some of these may be restored out of existing books, it is more likely that they are the titles of lost works; and surely if, as is stated in the Book of Kings (I. iv. 32, 33), Solomon uttered a far larger number of proverbs, and composed a far larger number of psalms (3,000, and 1,005 respectively) than are now preserved and attributed to him, and spake of trees, from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall, and also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes, some of all this knowledge must have been collected into books now lost to us.

The Bible, then, is *not* a Book, but a collection of Books, written at different times, by different authors, for different purposes, of different importance, and of different value. And these books form a considerable part, but not the whole, and an important part, but not the only important part, of works written by Jewish authors through many centuries, both before and about the time of Christ.

A second and very popular misnomer this collection of books has received is the “Word of God,” which it is often called by us, but which it never calls itself.



The Bible, doubtless, often speaks of the Word of God, but it never calls itself the Word of God. In the Scriptures, "the Word of God" always means something "spoken"—and usually spoken directly to some individual. The Word of God came to Nathan; the Word of God came to John in the wilderness. God spake to Moses; and, in times past, to the Fathers. Nay, he has not lost his voice yet, but speaks still to his children. His Word has come to some of us now here this very day, or may come to us this very night. To apply this expression, the Word of God, exclusively to the *Writings* which now remain to us in the Bible, is exactly contrary to the Scriptural employment of the term, where it always means something *spoken* to the ear, or to the mind, and spoken directly to the individual, or individuals, and it never means a Book.

I entirely believe that, though the Bible can in no proper sense be called "*the Word* of God," yet that it contains, and conveys to us, *many* words of God. When it says, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," that is a Word of God. When it commands, "Thou shalt not kill—thou shalt not covet—abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good—love one another," all those are words of God. They who listened to the preaching of Paul—we learn from the Epistle to the Thessalonians (I. ii. 13)—received the Word of God. We hear that "the worlds (*αἰῶνες*) were framed by the Word of God," and that "the Word of God abideth in us" (I. John, ii. 14).

Praise be to the Almighty, there are *many* words of God, and our Father speaks to us in *many* voices. The heavens declare his glory, and the earth rejoices and is glad at the visitations of his love. All the order of Nature, all the decrees of a Wise Morality, all holy throbbings of our hearts, the grave counsels of a father, the pure eye of a mother, the teachings of holy Apostles, the sacred life and death and work and doctrine of Jesus Christ,—all are words of God to us. “For the Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. iv. 12).

The Bible contains and conveys the Word of God to us, as does creation, as does our own conscience, as does our own experience. But it is not itself the Word of God. It is a library, a literature, mixed in character, varying in date, diverse in authorship, unequal in authority. It contains many words of *man*, which are far from being the words of God; accounts of many deeds of man, which are works of darkness, and not of light. It is not only very untrue, and very unwise, but it is very wrong, and very misleading to call it, as a *whole*, and call it *all*, the Word of God. *It* suffers much, and *we* suffer much, from this misnaming and misunderstanding. It has caused men to deny its legitimate claims to our study, our gratitude, and our reverence, by advancing illegitimate claims for

it which it never advanced for itself, and the insisting upon which has done, and is now doing, irreparable mischief to truth, to religion, and to morality.

There are some persons here, perhaps, who will place more confidence in the justice of my objection to calling the Scriptures "the Word of God" if I tell them—if they do not know, and remind them, if they do—that the very first sentence in the Book of Homilies of the Church of England speaks of the Scriptures, not as being the Word of God, but as containing it. And this, I believe, is now adjudicated by the highest court in the country to be the doctrine of the Church of England.

The second suffering undergone by the Bible, and the second wrong we have done it, is that it has been, by part of the Christian Church and in the later centuries, too much shut up and consigned to the care of a privileged corporation to serve out, in suitable measure and convenient time, with exclusively its own glosses and interpretations upon it.

This wrong has been done to no other literature in the world, that I know of. Mankind have been left free to study the ancient literatures of Greece and Rome, and the modern literatures of France and England. The Mahometan is, I believe, exhorted—certainly is allowed—to read his Korân, and the Jew to read Moses and the Prophets. But, by a large portion of the Christian Church, the Christian has not been trusted with the Bible. The reading of it has been discouraged among the people at large as the reading of a *dangerous*

book. Yes! dangerous indeed, but not dangerous in itself, nor dangerous to religion, nor dangerous to the people, but dangerous to the chartered interpreters of it, and to the Church and the system which have been so strangely built upon it.

Now this was not always so. The Jews were great readers of their Scriptures. Timothy had known the Holy Scriptures from a child. The Bereans searched the Scriptures daily (Acts xvii. 11); and Christ said to his auditors at Jerusalem, "Search the Scriptures"—of course meaning the Hebrew Scriptures, the only ones then in existence. When the Christian literature was in course of formation *its* Scriptures were added to the Hebrew as material to be studied. "When this Epistle" (writes St. Paul to the Colossians) "is read among you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewise read the Epistle from Laodicea" (Col. iv. 16).

It seems also to have been regarded as a duty among the Christians of the early centuries to read the Scriptures as much as it is among Protestants now. The most eloquent and popular, the most practical and delightful preacher, perhaps, of the first thousand years of the Church, was John Archbishop of Constantinople, who flourished about the fourth century after Christ. He was called, from his charming gifts of thought and graces of speech, Chrysostomos—Chrysostom, the golden-mouthed. He was the author of that lovely prayer which closes the service of the Church of England—"Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time

with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee, and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests ; fulfil now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be most expedient for them, granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting.” The sermons of this great preacher and divine are so earnest, practical, and interesting, that I wish the clergy of the Church of England would adopt them almost wholesale. Those of them that I have read are far more enlightened, and far more lively, and immensely nearer to the simple teachings of Jesus Christ, than most of those, called Evangelical, that I now hear in that Church. The greater part both of our theology and our preaching has deteriorated since the time of Chrysostom. Well ! what is the voice of the Church as heard through this great golden-mouthed Archbishop of Constantinople—what does *he* urge on the subject of the general reading of the Scriptures ? First of all he shut himself up in a solitary cavern, it is said, and committed the whole Bible to memory, so that he knew something about the matter on which he spoke. He was continually exhorting and urging his crowded audiences at Constantinople and elsewhere themselves to study the Holy Scriptures. He says in one of his Sermons, or, as they are called, Homilies (the word, however, simply being the Greek for assemblies, and hence applied to the discourse—sometimes a conversational one—addressed to those assemblies), “ I am always speaking to you on this subject, and I will

never forbear speaking to you of it." "If you would know" (he says in another of his Homilies), "the benefit the reading of the Scriptures would be to you, consider what a disposition you are in when you are reading Psalms, and when you are reading devilish songs—when you are in church, and when you are in a place of inferior amusement—and you will wonder to see how your souls, when they are the same, are nevertheless so different from themselves on these occasions." Then he enumerates the readings and the occupations for which they do find time, and asks if they should not find some time for reading the Scriptures? "What are your excuses," he asks, "for neglecting this duty? 'I am no monk or solitary,' you tell me; 'I have a wife and children—a family to take care of.'" And then he adds, "This is that which ruins all nowadays, your imagining that none but monks ought to read the Holy Scriptures." "Lend me but two hours on a Sunday for this purpose—nay, not lend to me, but to yourselves!"

How does it happen, then, and is it true, that the Church, or what we call, to indicate a certain epoch of Church history, the Roman Catholic Church, subsequently appears to have discouraged among the laity what St. Chrysostom, in his time, 400 years after Christ, so earnestly recommended and enforced? I have taken some pains to institute an independent examination into this matter; not by adopting on one side the assertions of Dr. Cumming and Dr. McNeil, or any other of that school of anti-Romanist divines; nor, on the other hand, by accepting the often too subtle and sophistical argu-

ments of Roman Catholic bishops in their charges, and Roman Catholic writers in their books, anxious to vindicate their Church against the charge of shutting up the Scriptures from the people; but by endeavouring to collect the actual evidence as it presents itself in well-authenticated history, and in the authoritative edicts, decrees, and usages of the Church; and I find the matter stands something in this way:—

The early practice of the Church was not only not to check or restrain, but to encourage and promote the reading and the circulation of the Scriptures. In addition to those earnest and unqualified exhortations I have already quoted from St. Chrysostom, Pope Gregory (at the end of the sixth and beginning of the seventh century after Christ) urges even the most ignorant and illiterate to the reading of the Scriptures, in so strong a tone that no modern Protestant Bibliolater could exceed it, asking, “What are they but letters sent us from our Creator, by which our hearts are warmed, and our love kept from being quenched and growing cold through iniquity.” “You would at once,” he says, “read a letter from an Emperor; why delay, when it is from your God?”

There were translations, too, not only into the prevailing Latin, or vulgar tongue, but into the provincial languages—of Syria, Æthiopia, Persia, and England. The Venerable Bede (died 735 A.D.) spent the last days of his life in translating into Saxon the Gospel of St. John, and our own King Alfred afterwards translated portions into the Anglo-Saxon, or prevailing language of his time,

for the express use of the common people. So Anglo-Norman translations followed these, as the common language of the country modified and changed, till Wycliffe's celebrated translation into English appeared at the close of the fourteenth century. Now Wycliffe, you must remember, was a Roman Catholic priest when he began, and when he finished, and when he circulated his translation, and was never molested in the work. He died in 1384, but still without the Church making any sign of condemnation or objection.

It is true that, in 1390, a Bill was brought into the House of Lords (remember the *English House of Lords*) with a view to suppress this English translation; but for the honour (for the time being at least) of our country it was thrown out; John of Gaunt—a man who, with many faults, yet had an English heart, and whom Shakespeare makes King Richard the Second address as “Old John of Gaunt, time-honoured Lancaster”—declaring that he would support the circulation of the Scriptures in England against those who brought in the Bill, whoever they might be. And he appealed to his fellow-countrymen on the ground of their nationality, and their national character. “Seeing other nations,” he said, “had the Law of God, which is the law of our faith, written in their own language, we will not be the dregs of all.”

So in the charges brought by the Roman Church against other heretics or Reformers, I do not find any against them for reading or circulating the Scriptures. Among, for instance, the so-called heretics of the valleys of Piedmont, in the process of the Inquisition of 1492



(the MS. of which in Latin is preserved in the Public Library of Cambridge), I do not find a single question asked which would involve a charge of this kind. I do not mean to say that in these later centuries the reading of the Scriptures was at all sedulously encouraged by the Church of Rome ; or, in fact, that in ages when barons could scarcely sign their names, or clergy read their breviaries, there was, or could have been, any general reading of the Scriptures at all. But what I mean to say is this, that there never was any formal discouragement of the reading or circulation of the Scriptures by direct Papal authority, or that of General Councils, through the first fourteen centuries, and that to this day there has never been any absolute prohibition, though there were, it is said, local edicts for this purpose. The difficulties and impediments which the Roman Church has created in the later centuries were the results of an after-thought.

It was not till that Church observed the consequences of the wider reading and study of the Scriptures, that it began to discourage the habit. It was not till it observed the effects that it began to denounce the cause. What were the charges against Wycliffe? Not the translation and circulation of the Scriptures, but the being unorthodox on the subject of the bodily presence of the Creator in the Eucharist, and on the unconditional power of the Popes, as such, whether good or bad, wise or foolish. What were the charges against the Waldenses? Not the reading and circulation of the Scriptures, but their declaring that the One God, who created the

heavens and the earth, is alone to be adored, and that the doctrine of a Purgatory was an invention of the priests to extort money. When it was found that the new translators and the new readers of the Bible began to doubt whether all that the Church had been building up during a thousand years was consistent with the Scriptures, and an increasing number to assert that it was not, then the Church began to forbid all unauthorized translation, all unauthorized circulation, all unauthorized reading of the Scriptures, public or private, and distrusting that Gospel, which, it has been well said, is not the property of critics and scholars, but the gift of God to all men, it closed the clasp of the sacred volume, said to the nations, "Hold off your hands and shut your eyes, and leave to us to administer this to you in such translations, in such interpretations, in such portions and proportions as we may judge to be best for you."

And so in the year 1408, nearly a quarter of a century after Wycliffe's death, a Convocation met at Oxford, under Arundel, the Archhishop of Canterbury, at which was passed this Constitution:—"We decree and ordain that from henceforward no unauthorized person shall translate any part of the Holy Scripture into English or any other language, under any form of book or treatise; neither shall any such book, treatise, or version, made either in Wycliffe's time, or since, be read, either in whole or in part, publicly or privately, under the penalty of the greater excommunication, till the said translation shall be approved either by the Bishop of the Diocese, or a provisional council, as occasion shall require."

And what is the ridiculous reason assigned for this prohibition when it does come—and observe, it comes from English prelates, sanctioned by English statesmen—why, that Jerome, when putting forth *his* translation in the fourth century, had said (which is perfectly true) that a perfect version is difficult to make, and that he himself, and others who went before him, had mistaken the meaning of several texts ; and, therefore, forsooth, it is a dangerous thing to translate the Holy Scriptures ! Why, of course, everything is dangerous. It is dangerous to light a fire, to boil water, to eat, to drink, to sleep ; but it is only out of this nettle danger we pluck this flower safety. Would it have been less dangerous if Jerome had left the errors of previous translators uncorrected, lest he should make some others himself ? Would it have been less dangerous, again, if Wycliffe had left Jerome's errors uncorrected, for the same reason ?

And is it a wise or a foolish thing, in our time, is it a dangerous or a safe thing, an English or an un-English thing, to resolve, as the Convocation of the Church of England did some years ago, to risk the danger of an amended Version, with some possible errors in it still, rather than incur the certain danger, together with the proved cowardice and dishonesty, of leaving the old errors to remain masters of the field ?

The course of discouragement and prohibition thus inaugurated proceeded onwards for a century and a half, according to the supposed exigencies of the various dioceses, or the dispositions of the various Bishops, in connection with the Roman Church all over the

world, till it was formulated and the rule made uniform at the time of the holding of the Council of Trent. That Council sat from 1545, with interruptions, some eighteen years ; but even then, so deliberate and tardy, so unformed and undigested, was the determination to restrict universally the free course of the Scriptures, that the Council actually separated without any decree upon the subject, and they left it to what we should call a kind of committee of inquiry — what they called an inquisition—to complete their work. This committee added to the index of pernicious books some rules, the fourth of which ran thus :—“ It being evident from experience that if the Bible, translated into the vulgar tongue, was allowed to all persons indifferently, the rashness of men would cause it to do more harm than good, we decree on this consideration that the matter be referred to the Bishop or Inquisitor, who, with the advice of a Curate, or Confessor, may give those leave to read the Bible in a known tongue translated by Catholic authors, to whom they judge such reading will not be prejudicial, but rather promote their faith and piety, and such are to have this permission in writing.”

This rule was passed after the Council had concluded its regular sittings, was confirmed by Pope Pius IV. (1564), and by subsequent Popes ; and on this rule to this day the Catholic Church takes its stand. And thus you have reconciled the apparent contradiction which exists, and which has puzzled many hearers and readers, between the zealous Protestant of the platform or the press, who in his speech, or sermon, or pamphlet, on the

one hand asserts that the Roman Catholic Church has *always*—and the more exact Catholic, who, with his subtler distinctions and more precise knowledge of the case, as confidently asserts, on the other hand, that it has *never*—forbidden and does not now forbid the reading and circulation of the Scriptures. And this last assertion is true, but true with many most important qualifications.

The fourth rule says, if any one desires to read the Scriptures, he must apply to the Bishop or Inquisitor; that these must consult the Curate (who knows all the persons), or the Confessor (who knows all the secrets of the parish); that if they think the applicant worthy to be trusted with the privilege, permission may be given him; but it must be in writing, and that permission only extends to the reading of a Bible translated by Catholic authors. So that there is an absolute restriction on all, a possible prohibition to all, and a certain prohibition to most.

But then we are told Pope Gregory XIII., the great author of the reformation of the Calendar (about 1571–80), himself ordered a translation of the Scriptures to be made into Polish,—and that was after the Council of Trent. And this is true. But what were his motives in doing so? Confessedly to counteract the effects of the translation already in vogue by the Unitarians of Poland. Then, again, we are told that Dr. Alleyn, Archbishop of Cambray, and Cardinal, established a seminary at Douay, which was afterwards removed to Rheims, and he, too, caused a translation to be made (1582) into

English. And this is true. But he had it made from the Vulgate of Jerome (which was erected by the Council of Trent into a kind of original), and not from the originals; and he added notes to it, but he did this in order to counteract the influence of the translation already in circulation by the Calvinian Protestants of Geneva. And this is the version called, from the seminaries from which it issued, sometimes of Douay and sometimes of Rheims, and is the version now commonly in use among English and Irish Catholics.\*

And so down to our own times, though the Pope periodically denounces the British and Foreign Bible Society, he affects to do it, not directly for circulating the Scriptures, but for circulating a translation unauthorized by himself, and among people unauthorized by him to read it.

Again, though the fourth rule is what you have heard, and an addition was made to it, punishing booksellers who sold prohibited books to any persons who did not hold a licence to read them, yet it is said this rule is not now enforced. Look at England, look at France, look at Switzerland and Belgium and Holland, and now you may add—look at Italy. No! doubtless the rule and its penalties *are not* enforced, where they *cannot* be enforced, where the strong instincts and power of freedom, or the large mixture of the Protestant element in a

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\* And in the *Tablet*, or, I suppose, in any Roman Catholic paper circulating in England, you may read, as I happened to do not long since, such an advertisement as this:—"Edition of the New Testament, according to the translation approved of by the Irish Bishops in 1857. It forms a beautiful gift-book."

country, make it impossible that they should be enforced. But they would be enforced to-morrow if the Catholic Church had power to enforce them.

Our own Church of England, I regret to say, has to some extent shared in this distrust of the Scriptures, or rather of the people. Her Protestant element required from her a free Bible, but her Catholic element required from her to accompany it with precautions and protections. When in 1806 a Welsh clergyman went up to London, and by his representations got the British and Foreign Bible Society established, an alarm soon spread among the clergy, even of our own Reformed Church of England, at the idea of trusting the Bible by itself, and without note and comment.

I myself recollect the time when numbers of clergymen and Churchmen in this country refused to subscribe to the circulation of the Bible, unless each copy was accompanied by a copy of the Book of Common Prayer, obviously for fear that the reading of the Bible alone might lead the people to some conclusions on points of doctrine and belief different from those laid down in the Articles and the Creeds. And a similar jealousy and fear—I do not say the same, I do not say so intense or so servile, but a similar jealousy and fear of the circulation of any Version of the Scriptures but their own, has animated nearly the whole body of the Protestants of England. You reproach the Catholic with erecting the Vulgate into an original, and what have you been doing with your own Authorized Version by King James's translators but erect *it* into an original, and

regard with fear and suspicion any attempt at correcting it?

When a few scholars among the Unitarians, at the beginning of this century, took as their basis a new translation of the New Testament by Archbishop Newcome, and correcting, as they thought, parts of it, published it, not instead of the Common Version, not as a displacement of the Common Version, which they continued to use in their chapels, and in their schools, and in their families, but for their personal use and private study, as a help to the better understanding of the New Testament original, what was the cry—the disgraceful cry—of the Protestants of this country, and especially of the clergy, who ought to have known better? Why, that the Unitarians were putting forth a new Bible—a Bible of their own.

No doubt it is true, as the Roman Catholic Church says, as many of the clergy of the Church of England have said, and as all scholars must say, that the Scriptures, like all ancient literatures, like the Greek and Latin literatures, are often difficult of interpretation; and nothing can be more ignorant or untrue than to imagine that every one who can read his English Bible understands it, and that the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err therein. But for all that the Word of God is still in the Bible; the *religion* of the Bible is clear enough. There is pretty plain speaking in the Ten Commandments. The wisdom of most of the Proverbs, and the exquisite devotion of most of the Psalms, are appreciable by the commonest people. And the spirit



of the law of life which pervades the actions and the teachings of Jesus Christ and his Apostles is plainly of heaven, and will plainly lead us there. But the theology, or rather theologies of the Bible, are a study, leaving, indeed, a residuum open to every understanding, and leading us to the belief and knowledge of a great and good and wise and just Creator, who is our Father too ; but full of accompaniments and adjuncts, full of illustrations and statements, full of allusions and references, full of reasonings and discussions, requiring professional study and professional guidance, of the most free, but learned, careful, and conscientious description to prevent the unlearned reader falling into the grossest errors and the most unfounded conclusions.

But the way to understand them is not to shut them up, to forbid any one to throw any new or additional light upon them, except it be in accordance with what some of our own ministers in England or Scotland two or three centuries ago, or some dear old gentleman at Rome shall decide now to be their meaning. No ! my friends, all priesthoods are more or less alike, under whatever variety of name. All Creed-bound Churches alike (albeit in different degrees, no doubt) are *possessed with the spirit of distrust and fear*. They distrust the natural flow of the human affections ; they distrust the free exercise of the human reason ; they fear the effects of too much of what they call carnal or secular knowledge ; they are always sneering at the scientist ; they dread the results of leaving the human mind free,

and they trust only their own rules, their own conclusions, and their own prepossessions, which they dare to call the exclusive truth of God.

The Roman Catholic Church prescribes under penalty the reading of his breviary every day by the priest, and that reading will occupy him on an average an hour and a half each day. This, with all his daily services, all his pastoral duties, and the necessity of food and sleep and rest, will for the most part occupy the whole of the time of an ordinary priest. And thus the Church knowingly and purposely throws him upon his breviary for the whole, or nearly the whole, of his intellectual life, and he comes forth for the most part a man saturated with prayers and ceremonies, and invocations and legends of the pilgrimages, lives, and miracles of Saints, and the views of his Church, and ignorant of almost everything else.

And though the Church of England has an admirable daily service of Lessons and Psalms and beautiful prayers, she yet timidly and distrustfully accompanies this service with the daily utterance and proclamation of a creed or creeds, which shall prevent its members from gathering any lessons from these readings from the Bible, which shall differ importantly from her own foregone conclusions.

In fact I am not sure whether both Churches have not been disposed, in various degrees, to echo, with some sympathy, a pithy remark I have met with in Selden's "Table Talk":—"Scrutamini Scripturas," these two words have undone the world. Because Christ spake them to his

disciples, we must all, men, women and children, read and interpret the Scriptures” ; and Henry VIII. made a law (afterwards, however, repealed by Edward VI.) “that all men might read the Scriptures except servants, but no women, except ladies and gentlewomen who had leisure, and might ask somebody the meaning.” No doubt, the Roman Catholic Church was right in saying that the Bible in many parts could not be understood without special study and training, and that ordinary people, without competent guidance, would, as they do, fall into error even in many points of interpretation ; and, no doubt, it is true besides, that portions of the Hebrew, like portions of all other literatures, are unprofitable, and even unfit for general reading. But that Church was not right in constituting herself, as a consequence, its sole interpreter, and checking its general reading, and the free examination of its contents. The result has been that thus, unchecked by the Scriptures, she has, piece by piece, and logically deducing one thing from another, built up a system of faith, and polity, and practice which is an absolutely different thing from, and an utterly opposed thing to, the Church and doctrine and ethics of the Scriptures, which could not have grown up contemporaneously and in the same minds with the free study of the Scriptures, and which that free study, where it has been pursued, has almost universally destroyed.

It is quite true that all human faith and practice are not to be limited to the exact form which they may have taken, or in which they may have been prescribed, in the Scriptures, and that part of our religion, and portions

of our belief, are necessarily the result of development. But that is no reason why those Scriptures should be shut up in a box, with some self-constituted guardian by its side in exclusive possession of the key, and not left free to afford, among other means of knowledge and enlightenment, their contribution to, and exercise their influence on, the progress of thought, and truth, and religion, and show that there is yet a word of God in the Bible. So that this has been a sad error in practice of the Church of Rome, and the Bible has suffered a great wrong, and society has suffered a great wrong, at the hand of the Church which has so distrusted it.

But, alas! the catalogue of the sufferings of the Bible at our hands does not end with this. If it has suffered a wrong from the distrust of the Catholic, it has suffered a no less flagrant, if a less disastrous wrong, from the worship of the Protestant. Beginning to study this Bible, thus brought in authorized form before them, the popular reformers of the Continent and Scotland, with their sympathizers in England, were heartily and thoroughly convinced that the Papal system of doctrine and polity received no countenance whatever from it. They were also equally convinced that their own theology (a kind of modified Augustinianism, of which Calvinism is only the more recent shape) was a perfect representation of the teachings of the Bible. Possessed of these two confident convictions, they saw in the Bible the weapon wherewith to destroy their opponent's theology, and the armour wherewith to defend

their own. They therefore referred all their disciples to the Bible, preached the Bible, translated the Bible, printed the Bible, circulated the Bible, and urged the daily reading of the Bible ; they said it was the Word and Will of God, spoken and dictated by himself. The cry with them was, "the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible was the religion of Protestants." With various exaggerations and with various modifications, with a literal intensity, or with a qualified acquiescence, this *remains* the distinguishing belief of the bulk of English and Scotch Protestants to this day.

Some here may say, "All this is past ; you are fighting with a shadow." I wish with all my heart it were so. You would not see me here if it were. But this belief is still a substance. It is the prevailing and unquestioned faith of the great majority of the religious public in this country. It is taught from our pulpits, it is maintained in our colleges, it is insisted upon with the people. The man who questions it is still popularly regarded as an infidel.\* Some years ago† the Rev. Edward Garbett, when preaching before the University of Oxford as Boyle Lecturer and Select Preacher, said, "We must accept the whole of the inspired autographs [!] as inspired, or reject the whole as worthless."

Dr. Baylee, formerly the Principal of St. Aidan's College, at Birkenhead, who furnished their sole or main theological instruction to a very large portion of

\* The lecturer acknowledges his indebtedness to Colenso for the following quotations.—ED.

† Now *many* years ago, viz., Nov. 16th, 1862.—ED.

the clergy of the Church of England, says, "Every word in the Bible, every syllable, every letter, is just what it would be had God spoken it from heaven without human intervention. Every scientific statement is infallibly accurate, and all its history and narratives of every kind are without any inaccuracy. The words and phrases have a grammatical and philosophical accuracy, such as is possessed by no human composition."

I stand aghast before such statements! Is it possible that any man, who has both read the Bible, and partaken of the thought and culture of this century, can deliberately utter and write and print and publish such monstrous averments? And is it really our duty, and the duty of religious men generally, to stand by in silence, and witness the incubus of this hypothesis weighing down the mind of our country, and make no effort to throw it off? Is it good for humanity, is it good for religion, is it good for the holy Christian faith, that such utterly misleading and mischievous declarations should pass by unchallenged and unexposed?

Pray do not tell me I am quoting vulgar and startling exaggerations. These men are the recognized teachers of the English people, and this their teaching is degrading the theology and vitiating the conclusions of our people. And if you want more—"The Bible," says Mr. Burgon—and remember that in quoting this gentleman, I am quoting from the late Vicar of St. Mary's, at Oxford, who has since been made Dean of Chichester, which is a kind of endorsement of his respectability and reputation, and of his reliability, as a

representative of opinions still largely prevailing in the National Church,—“The Bible,” says Dean Burgon, “is none other than the voice of him that sitteth on the throne. Every chapter of it, every verse of it, every word of it, every syllable of it—where are we to stop? [where, indeed!]  
—every *letter* of it is the direct utterance of the Most High. Not some part more and some part less, but all of it alike, absolute, faultless, unerring, supreme”; and he says that “each solitary doubter [of such statements] is paying the bitter penalty of his *sin*.”

Now the injustice to the Bible, and the evil suffered by society from this unfounded theory, are two-fold, intellectual and moral.

Under the first head we must reckon the obstructions it has raised to the free course of truth and the progress of knowledge.

The Bible opens with a beautiful and, morally speaking, philosophical account of how all things we see were brought into existence and shaped into a self-developing order by the moving power of a great Primal Spirit and Will; that the process was a gradual process, and the series of formations successive; that an object was held in view and served in each step of the series, and that the approving eye of the great Mover looked upon each link in that chain of being, as each was formed, and pronounced it good.

Now here is something at once solemn and beautiful. It seems to me, at least, rather a better attempt at the solution of a great question, and rather a nobler cosmogony, than the resting the world on the back of an ele-

phant or a tortoise, or on the shoulders of a man. But the bibliolater and inspirationist, very properly declaring that the day here spoken of was one of twenty-four hours, the evening and the morning forming each day, and the seventh evening and morning the Sabbath, declared that we must, as this was told us by God, believe it; and thus they confined the mysterious principle and power of origin within the limits of a six-days-open workshop, with a Sunday holyday, interfering with all independent scientific research, and demanding such a credence of such statements as could only be received by overthrowing the intellectual sanity of man. And so, when you go on a little further and come to the story of Paradise and the Fall, interpret, by all means, kindly and gently, that touching, child-like narrative—a narrative not without its poetry and its truth, and with a pathetic minor running through its music—attempting to account, under the guise of a parable or a moral fable, for the entrance of sin and sorrow into what otherwise seemed to be this pure and happy world of ours; but, for honour's sake, do not let us any longer attempt to subjugate the plain manly sense of this country to the statement as a literal fact, and a serious belief that (in the language of the Rev. Allanson Picton),\* “God put two ignorant creatures into a garden, with a command, which he knew they would transgress, not to eat of the fruit of one of the trees, and gave into the hands of a poor innocent woman the eternal destinies of countless millions of descendants.”

\* Allanson Picton. Speech at Nottingham, Oct. 1874.



A vast injustice has been done to us by this theory, cramping our intellect, spoiling our accuracy, violating even our honesty, as well as wasting much valuable time and much fine power, generation after generation, in vainly endeavouring to reconcile with each other innumerable variations and contradictions of statements, which of course occur in this as in every other literature known to man, especially in what professes to be its historical department.

These discrepancies are not only natural but inevitable, and, I say, occur in every record of human transactions and human thought. But directly you come across the theory that these are all divinely inspired narrations, and that the Bible is, as dear Dr. Watts calls it, the "blessed volume God has writ," then you must regard every statement as not only consistent with truth and fact, but consistent with every other statement.

Now, to prove this, is not only a trifling, narrowing and enervating labour, but it is one impossible of success, and difficult to preserve quite clear of insincerity. Whatever ingenuity you exercise, you cannot make the statement, that God created man, male and female, in his own image, and bade them increase and multiply, in the first chapter of Genesis, with the statement in the second chapter, that he first made Adam from the dust of the earth, put him in Eden, gave him leave to eat of all the fruits save of one tree, brought all the animals to him to be named, then thought it was not good for him to be alone, then laid him in a sleep, took a rib out of his body, and made a woman of it. You

cannot reconcile the statement in the first chapter of Genesis, that birds and beasts were made *before* man, with the statement in the second, that they were made *after* him. It cannot be that David's first introduction to Saul was as a musician,\* and that afterwards he had another first introduction to him as the slayer of Goliath.† Still less can these two statements be both true, that, as recorded in the first book of Samuel, David slew Goliath, and in the second that Elhanan slew him.‡ And is it not a sorrowful—I was going to say a contemptible thing, but for the respect I have for the translators, and my commiseration for them in their subjection to this foolish theory, that to prevent the contradiction between the two statements being observed, our translators insert the words “brother of” before Goliath § in the second account? So that, having recorded already that Goliath was killed by David, they were obliged to suppose (because, in the language of this pious, but really impious, theory God cannot contradict himself) that it must have been his brother that was slain by Elhanan? Look at the simplicity and sincerity with which they themselves apprise their readers of the pious fraud; they print the words “brother of” in italics—to show that they did not find them in the original, but have supplied them themselves. They took the suggestion, no doubt, from the account in Chronicles,|| which itself is an attempt to reconcile the contradiction.

\* 1 Sam. xvi. 17, 22, 23. † 1 Sam. xvii. 55-58.

‡ 2 Sam. xxi. 19.

§ Omitted in the Revised Translation.—ED.

|| 1 Chron. xx. 5—“Lahmi brother of Goliath.”

Certain words were written over Jesus when he was crucified. St. Matthew says they were "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews"; St. Mark says they were simply "the King of the Jews"; St. Luke says they were "This is the King of the Jews"; and St. John says they were "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Now here are four versions of the inscription, and no one of them agrees with any other of them. Do *I* think this of importance? Not at all. There is the substantial agreement which alone, perhaps, we had any right to expect from a hurriedly written inscription, soon probably obliterated, and read and remembered as best might be in such a moment of horror by the alarmed and agitated disciples, or evangelists. But what are we to do with these discrepancies and the Dean of Chichester's assertion, that "every verse, every word, every syllable, every letter, of the Bible is the direct utterance of the Most High"? here making the Most High (is this piety, or impiety?) give four accounts of the words that were written, not one of which agrees with any one of the others.

It seems almost trifling to make selections where the instances are so numerous, and to have to select, for the sake of their plainness, brevity, and palpableness, instances in themselves utterly unimportant and insignificant. But it is necessary to adduce some, to show the crushing and intellectually degrading nature and action of this childish theory. Any one who wants more may find them, not only in the well-known works of Bishop Colenso—of which I have already availed

myself—but in almost every modern work of high character and scholarship dealing with the exegesis of any book of Scripture. How this mistaken and blinding theory has acted on the progress of all sound knowledge, may be shown by such confessions as these\* :—

Brydone—the writer of a book which I remember was much read in my boyhood—says that a scientific friend of his tells him “that he is exceedingly embarrassed by the discovery [of the antiquity of the eruptions of Mount Etna] in writing his history of that mountain, and that Moses hangs like a dead weight upon him, and blunts all his zeal for inquiry, for that really he has not the conscience to make his mountain so young as that prophet makes the world.” Sir Gardiner Wilkinson had to make this sad confession—disgraceful, not to him but to those who placed him under such restrictions† : “I have not placed Menes earlier for fear of interfering with the date of the Deluge of Noah.”

And no one here, I suppose, needs to be reminded of what I still believe to be a fact, notwithstanding the casuistry of denial that has been brought to bear upon it, that the unquestionable assertion of Galileo, that it was the motion of the earth, and not of the sun, which made our night and day, was rebuked and punished, as contrary to the voice of Holy Scripture, because God is said in Genesis to have placed the sun in the heavens to rule the day, and because an Old Testament soldier—in his earnest desire for the prolon-

\* Adduced by Bishop Colenso.

† See Colenso, Pent., vol. iv. p. 300.

gation of the day of his battle, that it might prove the day of his victory—is said to have cried out, “Sun, stand thou still,” and it did so. And many here are old enough to remember the struggle that Buckland, and Sedgwick, and Lyell had to make against the effect of this emasculating theory on the free progress of the science of geology.

The moral mischief, the injury to society, that has through centuries been done by this idolatry, and is now doing, is, if possible, greater than the intellectual.

The strict details of the Jewish law of Sabbath enforced upon Christians as part of the eternal law of God, enunciated every Sunday in every church in England, with this awful preface, “God spake these words, and said,” is one instance of that mischief. Should a poor man pick up sticks to light his fire with, in the wilderness, on the Sabbath, “the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones that he died, as the Lord commanded Moses”;\* for part of that Draconic law was, that any one who did any work, or, as it was termed, in any way “defiled the Sabbath,” was to be put to death; or any one that should compound any ointment like the holy ointment, or make any scent like the holy perfume, † should also be cut off.

And I need scarcely remind you of the actual laws of Sabbath and of sacrilege made by the Protestant Puritans in this country and in New England, founded

\* Num. xv. 35, 36.

† Exod. xxxi. 14; Exod. xxx. 33.

on these superstitious horrors, believed by them to be (not a temporary enactment for a temporary purpose, but) part of the everlasting and ever-to-be-enforced law of the Almighty ; nor, perhaps, of the remains of this gigantic error, which are still to be found amongst us, in, for example, the laws which, while permitting the opening of beer-houses and gin-shops, proclaim it an impiety to open gardens, and museums, and coffee-shops on the Sunday ; and in whole districts of the country still make the violation of the Sabbath, by an act of industry, or of innocent recreation, a more heinous and scandalous offence than many a form of week-day immorality.

“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.” Under this law of God, conveyed to us, according to the present Dean of Chichester and his enlightened co-thinkers, in an inspired and infallible document,\* poor women—sometimes a little cleverer and wiser than their neighbours, sometimes partly or wholly insane, and sometimes, no doubt, with a mixture of roguery, and the love of frightening and influencing, in their nature—have to a number I dare scarcely name, but in various Christian countries, amounting to tens, and possibly hundreds, of thousands, been burnt, or pressed, or otherwise done to death.

This law was not repealed in England till 150 years ago. Witches were burnt in James I.'s reign. At the beginning of only the last century, a Mrs. Hickes and her daughter, aged nine, were hanged for selling their souls to the devil, and raising a storm by pulling off their

\* Exod. xxii. 18.

stockings and making a lather of soap. And in 1722 there was taken up to be burnt as a witch, one of whom Sir Walter Scott says, "She was an insane old woman, who had so little idea of her situation as to rejoice at the sight of the fire that was destined to consume her."

It strikes me as highly immoral in itself, and as having frequently led in the history of religious warfare to highly immoral and brutal results, to inculcate as a part of our religious belief that such a law as one I am about to quote was ever really and directly given by the beneficent Creator of man:—"Kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known a man. But all the women children that have not known a man, keep alive for yourselves."\*

"Hearken unto the voice of the words of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts to Saul: Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."† And poor Saul had his fate as a ruler sealed, because his heart failed him in carrying out this brutal order to the letter. Why, here, in your own literal inspiration theory, you find the justification and the command of the Bulgarian atrocities; and our religious instructors tell us that the partial evasion of this command was heavily punished by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Book of Psalms is acknowledged by most of us to be full of tender, beautiful, and comforting devotion, but it contains some Psalms of an inferior tone and

\* Num. xxxi. 17, 18.

† 1 Sam. xv. 3.

temper, and among these, those in which David is supposed to have denounced his enemies. It is in vain to say, in justification, that he believed they were *God's* enemies, because this implies our power to take into our own hands the knowledge, the condemnations, and the punishments of the Almighty. At any rate, what good or Christianizing influence, do you think, it can have on the hearts of the disciples of him who told us to pray that God might forgive us our trespasses as we forgave those that trespassed against us, and among whose last words were, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," to assemble in church and be ordered, on the 22nd evening of every month of every year, to offer this prayer to God—a prayer, according to this wretched theory, dictated by himself—"Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let the extortioner consume all that he hath, and let there be no man to pity him or his fatherless children. Let the wickedness of his father and mother be always before the Lord, that he may root out the memorial of them from off the earth, and let his prayer be turned into sin"?\* When I hear a congregation of old men and children, young men and maidens, fathers, mothers, *widows*, join in that prayer of David's as inspired by God, and joyously singing out "Happy is he that taketh thy children, and throweth them against the stones," † headed and led by the priest of God, the tears rise to my eyes. I mark the 22nd day of the month as a day

\* Ps. cix., Prayer-book version, shortened.

† Ps. cxxxvii. 9, Prayer-book version.



on which I never will again be at the afternoon service of the Church, and I ask myself, "Is this the devotion of Christians or of fiends?"

But this is not all. This idolatry of the Bible teaches us to carry out this merciless hatred to eternity, on the strength of two or three misinterpreted metaphors and epithets in the New Testament; it teaches us that God has sentenced a large portion of our unhappy race to hopeless, endless, irremediable torture in hell for ever. Now, I believe this to be one of the most immoral and wicked things that can be said or thought; I believe it to be a foul calumny on the Scriptures, and a taking in vain of the blessed Name of God; and I believe that it has inflicted untold misery and anguish on tens of millions of tender women and susceptible children, and weak but conscientious men. Catholic and Protestant writers and preachers vie with each other in drawing degrading and brutalizing pictures of the agonies a merciful God is thus blasphemously asserted to inflict upon the helpless creatures he has created without their will, and therefore must have created with the full knowledge of, and a direct view to, this their fate; and I say that this scandalous teaching (unknown in its savageness to any other, even heathen, religion) springs from, and rests upon, the monstrous theory that every word of the Hebrew and Christian literatures—liable as they are to all kinds of ignorant misinterpretation upon our part—is the direct utterance of Almighty God himself, and compels the receiver of this theory to worship a Devil, instead of a dear and Heavenly Father.

For this worship of the Bible, as though it were a Delphic oracle, every isolated word and sentence from whose lips was to be regarded as the uttered wisdom of God, I know but of one expression in the Bible itself from which can be extracted the slightest even apparent countenance. In one of his private letters addressed to his young friend Timothy, St. Paul says, according to our Common Version, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Tim. iii. 16.) But when we read an author, we must know what he means, or there is no use reading him; and if we misunderstand what he means, it would be a great deal better that we never read him at all. Did St. Paul say what in our Common Version it is said that he said? Let us see. He wrote, you know, in Greek, not in English; and what he said in Greek was this—*πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος*: every God-breathed, or God-breathing (for this adjective is used both actively and passively), "every God-breathed, or God-breathing, writing is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." \*

Does any believer in God doubt this? *I* don't. *I* believe it with all my heart. The saints of the Old Testament seemed to have believed it more than we do, for they traced this God-inspiration in the very intelligence and works of man. Elihu said, "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth

\* So rendered in the Revised Translation, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, &c."

them understanding ;”\* and in the book of Exodus we are told that God said, “ I have filled him [Bezaleel] with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in all knowledge, and in [what do you think ?] all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.”† And this for a little moving chapel-tent in the wilderness. But *we*, of our own superior knowledge and piety, would think it, I suppose, improper to say the same thing of the builder of York Minster or Durham Cathedral, or the author of the “Messiah,” or the painter of the Last Supper, or the author of “Paradise Lost.”

But, in spite of all our minifying and paltryfying limitations, I for my part still believe, with these saints of old, that every work of the hand of man, and every writing of the heart of man, which breathes the spirit of God, and is animated by the holy presence of his truth, and beauty, and righteousness, and benignity, *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

And so, of writing at least, said and thought St. Paul. And our honest and scholarly old and first translator, Wycliffe, accordingly says, “Al Scripture [which means in English ‘Writing’] onspirid of God, is profitable to teche, to repreve, to chastise, to lerne in right-wisnesse”: and so said Tyndale, and so said Cranmer, and so said the Roman Catholic Version of Rheims; but

\* Job xxxii. 8.

† Exod. xxxi. 3.

when you come to the Genevan or Calvinistic Version, scholarship and, as often happens to be the case, truth also depart; the little word "is" is inserted, "the whole" is substituted for "all" or "every"; and you find the monstrous and irrational doctrine of our modern Bibliolaters asserted—(and our Common Version follows suit),—"The whole Scripture is given by inspiration of God"; and of course, by the ignorant reader, that is understood to mean that every verse of the Old Testament, and, what is more, every verse of the New (though the books of the New Testament were not even collected, some of them not even written, at the time Paul sent this letter to Timothy) were dictated by the Almighty Spirit of this universe, and were not only good and wise, and profitable in the main, but letter by letter perfect, omniscient, and infallible.

But, in truth, the common theory of plenary inspiration is impossible of realization, and would be useless if it could be realized; for five impossible conditions are required to realize it. First, the words must be taken down without error, as it were, from God's own lips; second, they must have been correctly copied from MS. to MS. through all successive centuries; third, they must be translated into every language under the sun in exactly corresponding terms; fourth, there must be no error in the printing; and, fifth, in every age, in every country, in every language, the same meaning must be conveyed by the words to every reader or hearer.

If *one* of these conditions fail, if you have any errors

in copying, in printing, in translating, or in understanding, the theory will not serve its own purpose of supplying an infallible Word of God to every living creature, nor can you have in the Scriptures, offered to you as a *whole*, a secure transcript of the mind of God. In other words, this theory is untrue, impossible, and useless, has led to grievous errors and sins, is a mischievous dream of priests and divines, and has done, and still does, an unspeakable wrong in a moral sense to the most lofty and beautiful, the most deeply religious and spiritual literature that the world has ever seen—a literature to which, when studied in wisdom and love, we may directly or indirectly trace the greater part of the purity, the dignity, the sweetness, the comfort, and the hope of human existence.

How this error acts still on our private and social life may be shown by innumerable instances, and among people often of worth, and of an average intelligence ; for it is curious to remark—and rather necessary to remark, when it is so often contended that to discuss such questions now is socially superfluous—in what a brotherly parallelism still proceed, in the same people, secular and general intelligence with theological unintelligence. A few months since a child of little more than two years of age died, having been ill and wasting for nine months previously. The father was charged with, and convicted of, manslaughter. It must have been a case of great neglect, because one judge on the bench pronounced the sentence, and it was confirmed on appeal by five more. But was it a case of

cruelty? No ; it was a case of superstition. The father, acting, I have no doubt, from profound conviction at once of duty and piety, abstained from calling in medical advice, but summoned to his aid one who appears to have been an elder of his little church, who was an engine-driver, and he prayed over the child, and anointed him with oil in the name of the Lord. And this because St. James in his Epistle says to his correspondents (that is, according to Drs. Baylee and Burgon, God commands to all times and people), "Is any sick among you, let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."\* You notice this instance of (I doubt not) moral worth, piety, and secular intelligence combined with the theological unintelligence nurtured by our divines, in one rank in life.

The question of burial (I do not mean now the ecclesiastical, but the physical and sanitary question of burial) is at present exciting a very useful amount of attention and discussion in this country, and no doubt will be decided on its own merits, in some manner beneficial to our usages, in connection with this sad but solemn necessity of our common humanity. But what hope is there of any satisfactory settlement of such or similar questions, if a few words snatched, or supposed to be snatched, from an old Hebrew volume, are to be thrust upon us as settling and foreclosing it by God's express command and will? And yet I read not long ago, in the *Times* newspaper, a letter, the writer of

\* James, v. 14.

which warmly reproves the wickedness of the Kensal Green Cemetery Company for not complying with his personal wishes (and mind, his wishes may in themselves have been sensible ones) as to the particular mode in which a body should be buried ; and he says that his own proposed mode was in complete accordance with the *divine* injunction, and he charges them with fatally impeding and thwarting the *divine* Will, which has commanded us to give "earth to earth";\* the absurdity of such a charge on such premises being enhanced by the fact that these words are after all not a quotation from the Bible at all, but from the beautiful Church of England Burial Service. Now the writer of this letter dates from the Athenæum Club in London, and signs himself by a name which suggests at least scholarly and educated association, "John Calcott Horsley."

It would be curious, though painful, to draw up or to read the volume that might be compiled of the instances of unreasoning folly, mistaken obedience and conscientious crime, which are to be traced to this source. But I am happy and grateful to say that this mischievous error is gradually disappearing before the common sense of the people, and the continued study and investigation of scholars.

In the year 1864 a declaration was drawn up at Oxford, at the suggestion of Dr. Pusey and a small party of sympathizers, in support of the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the reality of eternal punishment. It was sent to all the clergy of

\* Feb. 16, 1875.

England and Ireland, with this solemn adjuration to each, "Sign it, for the love of God." It was signed, accordingly, by eleven thousand of the clergy, a large and indeed, considering how great a proportion of the religious teaching-power of our country these represent, a frightful number to sign such a document.

Still, I am thankful to say, an equal number remained who did *not* sign it. This, probably, meant something, for out of forty professors at Oxford only nine signed. I dare say almost none would sign it now, and out of twenty-nine at Cambridge not *one*. And as to the eleven thousand clergymen that did sign, the late Bishop of St. David's, the eminent Dr. Thirlwall, said of them that he considered them in the light of a row of figures, *preceded by a decimal point*.

The [late] Archbishop of Canterbury, then Bishop of London said he regarded that petition as virtually declaring that not only in faith and doctrine, but in matters entirely unconnected with these—matters of physical science, for instance—every single word of Holy Scripture was to be considered infallible; and he added, "that such a belief would argue a bad state of feeling in the Church"; but I fear there existed at that time, and that there still survive, such a belief and such a state of feeling.

What Dr. Rowland Williams tells us Dean Milman wrote to him is true, viz., that what the world wants is a keener perception of the poetical character of parts, especially the earlier parts, of the Bible. And on the authorities of Lampeter College, in South Wales, accept-



ing a presentation copy of Bishop Colenso's works, but putting them on shelves that were out of the reach of the students, Dr. Rowland Williams (who had been Professor of Divinity in the College) wrote that they acted like the Vicar of Wakefield, who gave his daughters a guinea each, on the condition that they should never change it. A select but increasing number of the clergy, and a rapidly increasing number of the more educated and thoughtful of the orthodox Dissenting ministers, are giving up, or have given up, this theory, so degrading to the intelligence of our times; and it may now be said that the Privy Council has decided that the inspiration and infallibility of the Bible, as a whole, however it may still be the *teaching*, is not the *doctrine*, of the Church of England, while an innumerable host of intelligent and excellent laymen regard the doctrine with such entire disbelief (I had almost said with such utter contempt) as to wonder that any sensible man should take the trouble of seriously discussing it.

But a more grievous wrong than any I have yet mentioned, as done to the Bible, is the fastening upon it—by Catholics and Protestants alike—of doctrines it never taught. To elaborate some of the most absurd and impossible theories of God, of man, of life, and of eternity that were ever invented, and then declare that the Bible, which is as innocent of them as the babe unborn, teaches them, is after all, it seems to me, the worst and most mischievous result of

his idolatry we have ever undergone, and to the exposure of those doctrines in detail, as having no support from the Bible, and to the vindication of that glorious literature from this utterly unfounded charge, is, at present, the labour of a great part of my life, and its joy and privilege too.

On two remaining wrongs done to the Bible I must touch very briefly. It has suffered much, and we, as readers and interpreters of it, have suffered much, by separating it from the germane and cognate literature of the Apocrypha. It is worth while to examine the grounds on which the present exclusive canon rests, and the result of our examination will be this, that the word canon is used in the old Church writers and authorities, not only for a *rule* but for a *list*. Just as there were *canons* or lists of bishops, clergy, and the faithful deceased, so in like manner there were lists of the Sacred Books. Those admitted into it were canonical, those not, were uncanonical. But these lists varied. Books admitted into one canon were rejected from another, and books rejected from a third were admitted into a fourth. Josephus had his canon, or list, of the Books he recognized in the Old Testament, and Jerome had his, differing from that of Josephus. Some of the books which we now call apocryphal or uncanonical—Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Tobit, Judith, and the two Maccabees—were declared canonical as early as the Council of Carthage (in 397), and as late as the Council of Trent (in the sixteenth century). But the Church of

England threw the above and several others out of the canon and had a list of its own. Origen, A.D. 200, divided the Sacred Books into three classes—genuine, spurious, and mixed; Eusebius, A.D. 300, into four—1. Those that are unquestioned; 2. Those that are questioned; 3. Those generally regarded as doubtful; 4. Those whose pretensions were utterly unfounded. But neither the lists nor the usage of either of them warrants the sharp distinction to which we are accustomed between what we consider the canonical and what we consider the apocryphal books of the Old Testament; and I am convinced that this distinction, though not without some grounds in the nature and character of the books, is yet in itself arbitrary; that it has been an injury to the Bible, and to the better understanding of it, to separate from it this cognate and interpretative literature. And though, no doubt, our Reformers were actuated by what to them seemed a praiseworthy motive, namely, to disencumber the other Sacred Books of those which contained more palpable fables, or doctrines not entirely in accord with their own doctrines, and thus to preserve, as they hoped, at once the sacred and unerring and the Protestant character of the Bible, yet there has been no doubt produced by this process a perfectly illegitimate distinction. We have isolated the Books of the Bible from other members of their own family. How really artificial and unfounded this distinction in its extremest form is felt to be is shown by the fact that in a large proportion of the Bibles published by authority among us the

Apocrypha are included, and are even appointed to be read as lessons at the week-day services of the Church, "for our example and instruction."\* The more I read the best of these so-called Apocryphal Books, the more I see not only their beauty and their excellence, but their interpretative bearing on the true meaning of the received books, and the more I regret the existence of this arbitrary and confusing distinction. Yes! and not only so, but now that we are gradually overcoming that disgraceful and ignorant prejudice that we have been nurturing for so many centuries against the very nation through and from whom we received all this great literature, and are beginning to take an interest in such works as the Talmud (as indeed our great divines always did—Lightfoot, for instance, whose "*Horæ Talmudicæ*" I remember quite as a revelation to me in my youth), we see how much that immense, subtle, ingenious and deeply interesting literature, commonly called Rabbinical, itself helps most importantly to the understanding and interpretation of our Scriptures, springing as it does from the same soil, the same people, the same national specialties, and even, not very remotely, from the same times.

Our popular commentators have long, in a kind of innocent way, been drawing illustrations of Scripture from what they call the manners and customs of the East, as they exist in our own day; but they have apparently eschewed another great help to laws of interpretation, which is to be derived from the study of the

\* Sixth Article.

idioms, forms of speech, and modes of address still current in the native lands of the Bible, and of the same family and character as those prevalent in the Scriptures.

But as our intercourse with these nations increases, and we become familiar by actual travel or intercourse, or by means of books of travels, with the actual living expression of their thought, there will come a corresponding increase in our popular knowledge and perception of the sense in which similar language in the Scriptures can alone be truly interpreted, and we shall no longer be left to the "Arabian Nights Entertainments" (itself become at last to us almost as weird and far-off a book as the Bible itself) for our main help practically to realize the thoughts, manners, and modes of expression met with in a portion of the Scriptures; though I remember a grave old scholar and divine of the middle of this century saying, that no book had so enabled him to enter into the spirit of the actual daily life of the Scriptures as the tales of the Thousand and one nights.

The last wrong done to the Bible, which I must briefly notice now, and which I have considered at greater length in another Lecture, is the wrong done by what used to be called the Infidel, but are now called the Deistical, the Rationalist, or the Secularist objectors, who have made the popular idol the butt of their ridicule or invective.

I need not, I think, cause you or myself the pain of giving many special instances of this kind of injustice

done to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. Some of you may, perhaps, be able, unaided by me, to call to mind the too frequent ribaldry and abuse of a generation ago. This no doubt exists still among vulgar and uneducated people, and some of you may have heard and been pained by it. But the reaction and resentment which I am now lamenting, is inflicted by thoughtful, and even serious and devout-minded men, sometimes even by saint-like, brave, and very gifted men. Professor Francis William Newman, for instance, allows himself to speak of the Gospels as "one long calumny of the Jews," which I take to be one short calumny on the Gospels. And my friend, the Rev. Charles Voysey, can find no juster or fairer description of the Apocalypse than to call it "that abominable Book at the end of the Bible"; but it seems to me, looking at that splendid allegory—the subject to this day of eager research and ever-varying interpretation—it would be truer to transfer the word "abominable" from the Book to the criticism. And when I read in an acute, and, no doubt, highly respectable legal gentleman's publications, that "the Bible is the most immoral book in the world," I wonder to what extent his studies have gone in Greek, in Latin, and in French, and I suppose I might add in some branches of Oriental literature.

I have always a solution, perfectly satisfactory to my own mind, of all this (to me) excessive injustice to the general spirit, character, and intent of these Scriptures, and perverse misunderstanding of the conditions under which all literatures must be studied, if they are to be

fairly studied, in this fact, that these men were all brought up under the theological teachings and theories of the Protestant worshippers of the Bible—people who maintained that it was the Word of God from end to end, and when they came to study it for themselves, viewed in this light, they were cruelly undeceived, and finding what they would have *expected* to find in any other national literature—records of human error, and weakness and crime, misunderstandings of the Will and the Words of God, ignorance and prejudice on a number of subjects which their own knowledge even was amply competent to correct, and extravagant orientalisms of thought and speech—insisted upon as literal facts, all stamped, as it were, with the Divine approval, and vindicated as part of the Divine Truth, they were bewildered, horror-stricken, and at length incensed beyond themselves at what they considered either a gigantic fraud or a gigantic blasphemy. Their judgment was actually taken away from them, and they got to speak almost in a spirit of revenge, in the unjust and indiscriminating tone which I have indicated.

Is there no judgment to be formed of the real worth and character of the Bible but one of these two? Must we really either worship it or mock it? Believe it all, or none of it? Is there no such thing as a discriminating estimate of it? I think there is.

Granting everything that has to be granted, allowing all the deductions that have to be allowed, confessing the weak points as well as asserting the strong, and fully admitting the lower tones and the inferior

admixtures, which, as in all other literatures, and in most to a larger extent, are to be met with in this, I yet maintain, as my own individual conviction, that this Bible is throughout stamped with the spirit of the exhortation, "Awake to righteousness and sin not," and is to the Christian still, and rightly, an object of discriminating reverence. I am myself convinced that there never has been a whole national literature whose characteristic was to be so steeped and saturated in, so filled and animated by, great religious ideas, and pure moral purpose, as that we are now speaking of. From end to end there is a pervading and unequalled awe and fear of a Divine Power of Justice and Righteousness. From end to end, the very presence and daily action of this Power are brought home to us with intense reality. I do not remember one passage in which impurity is designedly made inviting or alluring, or the passions teased and excited into morbid and destructive action. On the contrary, lust and oppression and injustice are over and over again, in endless passages of impassioned eloquence, or grave remonstrance, reprobated and condemned.

At the very time that contemporaneous Bibles were trifling with the *people*, and amusing *themselves*, in despair of anything better, with telling them that the world rested on the shoulders of a man, or the back of a tortoise, or was born of an egg, this Bible was, with the simplest seriousness, declaring that it was wisely made, and gradually made, made good and for good, and by the Good, and that it remained to this day supported by his Almighty Spirit. At the very time that contem-



poraneous literatures were preaching and spreading the worship of men and women and children, of stars and animals, and fire and statues, this great Bible with its earliest breath was declaring that one good God made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that in them is, and with its latest that that God was a Spirit, and they who worshipped him must worship him in spirit and in truth. At the very time that other faiths were opening their temples to the vices and the passions, and consecrating them to their service — sacrificing their fellow-creatures to appease the anger of their gods, turning prostitution into a religion, and drunkenness into a sacred rite,—the Bible was lifting up its grave and earnest voice in rebuke of such enormities, and preaching—sometimes sternly, and sometimes tenderly, but always with an intense earnestness,—righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. The counsels to young men in the Proverbs, the appealing tones of penitence and devotion and trust that go down into the hearts of million after million, and generation after generation, of our sinning, suffering, and dying race, in the Psalms, the uplifting vindications of truth and honour, and the crushing denunciations of crime, in the Prophets, the noble courage of Apostles, the sweet heavenly wisdom and love of Christ, the constancy in right, the comfort in grief, the help in temptation, the infinite solace of the home in heaven, studding these pages like stars, and filling them with a light and strength from which each age draws afresh and untiringly, and which nothing is

found to supersede or to replace—brethren, I, for my part, will not renounce all this; I will not renounce, still less revile, the great benediction of that Bible, whatever mistakes and exaggerations men may have made in their claims for it, or whatever flaws they may find in its pages or its binding.

On the contrary, I echo, with the full response of my heart, and the full assent of my conviction, the subduing description of the Bible in its English Version (often attributed to John Henry Newman, but prefixed to the life of St. Francis d'Assisi, by Father Faber)—“It lives in the ear, like the sound of church bells, or a music that cannot be forgotten. It is a part of the national mind, and the anchor of the national seriousness. The potent traditions of childhood are stereotyped in its verses, and the memory of the dead passes into it. The power of all the griefs and trials of a man is hidden beneath its words. It is the representative of his best moments, and all that has been about him of soft and gentle, and pure and penitent and good, speaks to him forever from his English Bible.”

LECTURE IV.

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IN VINDICATION

OF THE

PERSONAL JESUS OF THE GOSPELS

FROM

CERTAIN MODERN OBJECTIONS.



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HITHERTO the religion of Great Britain has gathered round a Person—been taught, illustrated, and realized by a Person. Even when we desired to know the Way, in which we were to walk—the Truth, that was to make us free—the Life, that was to be a stream of joyous progress, and to be perpetuated indefinitely, we turned to a Person—a Person who was to mould all this abstract into concrete, and all these vaguenesses into palpable realities. We have been recently told, however, that all this is a mistake, that—according to one very highly-gifted and even saintly man—this Person “acted on selfish ambition, and dealt in fierce threat and low motive”—that his aim was “to crush us into submissive imbecility,” and his “guilt, the usurping of Lordship over the taught, and aggrandizing himself.” Another author—long known as a bold and conscientious contributor

to free theological thought—quietly speaks of the time having arrived for the abdication and, as it were, the dissolution of the religion founded by that Person—and still another writer spoke of it not very long ago as having “made its red mark in history,” and still “living to *threaten* mankind.”

To all this (and much more of the same kind which I could quote from what we are in the habit of deeming respectable quarters) is added a disposition to detect numerous signs, in the records we have of himself, of defective moral and mental power, and of a flagrant *want* of those very dispositions, and of that very conduct in life, in reference to which we have been in the custom of looking up to him as presenting us with our highest ideal.

This kind of estimate spreads from numerous books and pamphlets to the platforms of public religious instruction on Sundays; and as a new phenomenon in the religious history of our times (for such it appears to me to be), it deserves, and I think requires, some serious attention. The old tone was different even among our freest and, as they were designated, our most sceptical writers in this and in other countries. Voltaire spoke of Jesus with respect, Rousseau spoke of him with enthusiasm, and Hazlitt, recording the knot of freethinkers talking of those whom they would have liked to see, says how, if Shakespeare, or some other great man, appeared among them, they should all rise up to meet him—but that if that Personage appeared among them they should “all advance to kiss the hem of his garment.”

Theodore Parker spoke of pure Christianity as making Jesus our friend, *not* our master, a teacher who *blesses*, *not* a tyrant who commands us, a brother who *pleads* with *us*, not an attorney who pleads with *God*, and gloried in the avowal that "Jesus taught a beautiful religion, and lived a divine life." Jefferson spoke of "the enthusiasm of a warm and pure heart" in Jesus himself, and of "the mild, beneficent, and simple" doctrines of his religion. And Mr. William Rathbone Greg—with an uplifting generosity for which in this suffocating atmosphere of a narrow depreciation one feels absolutely grateful—said, "In reading the sayings of Jesus, we feel that we are holding converse with the wisest, purest, noblest being that ever clothed thought in the poor language of humanity; and in studying his life we feel that we are following the footsteps of the highest ideal yet presented to us upon earth"; and he added, "Blessed be God that so much manliness has been lived out, and stands there yet, a lasting monument to mark how high the tides of Divine life have risen in the world of man."

What are some of the grounds, then, on which this changed and lower estimate of our own immediate times is made to rest? What *are* these defects of teaching, and temper, and life which abound, we are told, in the Jesus of the Gospels, and which are said to render his life less ideal, and his teachings less reliable? I can only mention *some*, though those I select are among the most frequently and persistently insisted on, as far as a large reading of this branch of our contemporaneous

literature, and some acquaintance with a part of the pulpit teaching of our time, enable me to judge.

In the first place, then (not perhaps in the order of importance, but as it happens to come into my mind), Christ omitted, we are told, to inculcate, among other virtues, the virtue of friendship. There is not a single precept commanding it, a single eulogy in praise of it, whereas other ethical writers had given it its due place in the moral code and the moral life of man, and the so-called heathen Cicero wrote an express treatise, *De Amicitia*.

Well, certainly Christ wrote no treatises and published no codes ; but he lived a life—and, from the mixed and slender records we have of it, I should have said friendship was one of the mental states he certainly very markedly manifested. Surely, for instance, such objectors can never have read, or must have entirely forgotten, the exquisite episodes of the village of Bethany, and the brotherly affection towards Lazarus and his sisters. Surely they can never have read, or must have entirely forgotten, the scene at the Last Supper—the leaning of the young friend whom Jesus loved on his bosom. They must have forgotten the very meaning distinction which Jesus brought out between the persons about him who had once been his pupils or disciples, but were now elevated into the number of his friends ; and what about that wonderfully tender and forgiving message to Peter, if the dear Lord had not *friendship* in his life and in his heart ?

That he omitted to inculcate the virtue of patriotism (though he taught us not only to love our countrymen



and neighbours, but sought to turn the whole world into a home, and to make of its inhabitants not only fellow-countrymen and fellow-creatures, but brothers); and certainly, as far as regards his personal ministry among the Jews, it might be thought that this omission (if it were an omission) had a meaning in it, among perhaps the most determined of the nationalities of the earth from that day to this, and that long sermons on patriotism, as it is now understood among us, in the streets of Jerusalem, would have been a not very judiciously selected surpluse. And, besides, what pedantry and formalism there is in such objections when you call to mind such a scene as that recorded by Luke, when Jesus wept over the city, pronouncing the memorable lament which, if not patriotic at least, is nothing—"If thou hadst known, even thou, the things which would have given thee peace," and picturing to his anguished heart the days when, as he says, "thine enemies will dig their trenches round thee, and compass thee about with armies, and lay thee even with the ground, and leave not one stone upon another, and slay thy children" (Cf. Luke xix. 41-44).

That he taught the doctrines of Communism, and more than hinted that all rich men would go to hell. But surely, if we have arrived at the position, that the Old Testament did not undertake to teach natural philosophy, we cannot be very far off the similarly true position, that the New Testament does not undertake to teach political economy. And surely, too, we cannot so confuse ages and states of society as to

wonder at some warm and earnest words as to mindfulness of the poor and the neglected by the rich and the self-indulgent, as to the difference between a kingdom of spiritual and a kingdom of material wealth, as to the duty (in an age and hemisphere of grinding Eastern Satrapies and plundering Roman Procuratorships) of the rich rather giving of all their abundance to the poor, than taking all he had from the poor, even all his living.

Such burning words of rebuke and stern counsels of self-surrender are not wholly inapplicable in any age or country. But it is mere blindness to assert that they were meant to apply equally to that greed of wealth that pillaged provinces, that burnt villages, that refused crumbs to the sick and the starving, that bought and sold the purity of woman, that inflicted every cruelty that rapine and rapacity could suggest on the poor and weak, and wrapped itself up in uselessness, sloth, and animal self-indulgence, and that wealth which,—perhaps, in the same, but certainly in other ages and countries, yes! and under the very guidance and impulse of Christ himself (whose teachings on the subject are dishonoured and misrepresented)—is the child of industry, self-denial, and thought, and the parent (to others) of independence, abundance, and happiness, and the dispenser too, perhaps, of moral and mental culture, of mercy, of religion, and so the blesser of its time. And when I hear men speaking and writing in this really senseless manner of Christ thus inculcating idleness and mendicancy, something about a Prodigal Son, improvident virgins, slothful servants, and ten talents, steals across my memory, and

makes me see in a moment how unfounded and unjust such strictures are.

Then, too, it appears that in those days Christ was sometimes angry. I do not doubt it. I am sure he would have been sometimes angry now : I do not mean against the writers and speakers that at times make us angry, for they only speak against himself, and he did not mind that at all—and, besides, they are not hypocrites. But if you seek a justification of Christ and a reason why he sometimes “did well to be angry,” seek it in the occasions on which alone, for all we know, he was so—not singling out as the object of his rare, but real, indignation, some poor, suffering, weeping woman, who had allowed her crown of glory to fall into the defiling dust, and yet was perhaps more sinned against than sinning, but directing it against cruel self-indulgers, against lucre-loving traffickers in holy things, against proud pretenders to the virtues that were not theirs, or the impenitent concealers of the vices that were.

It also appears that Christ taught us it was our duty to hate father and mother as a preliminary to following him, that he was disobedient to his own parents, unfilial and harsh to his mother, and once told a young man not to stay to bury his father.

It is difficult to understand how educated men, scholars, readers, men accustomed to the study of language, with its varieties of meaning and differences of force, can urge such puerile proofs of their positions. A young man wishes in his enthusiasm to devote himself to the spread of the Gospel, but he desires in the mean-

time either to stay at home and tend the declining years of his father and close his eyes, or else, if his father be already dead, to make a gorgeous funeral—perhaps a thirty days' mourning, and Christ naturally apprises him that he has mistaken his calling, and that his duties and talents lie in a different direction.

When a boy of twelve, on his first visit to Jerusalem, he stays behind his parents and causes them some alarm. We do not know much of what he did or what he was as a boy ; but we feel sure that, whatever he was, he was earnest, true, natural ; and we are told that he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. But here his apology to his parents was only the rather curt one, "Wist ye not that I was about my Father's business?" and this shows how irreverent and unfeeling he must have been.

Not long ago I was reading in an Apocryphal Gospel of the infancy, and met with this version of this very incident, and though found in an Apocryphal Gospel, it is not at all an impossible or improbable version of it. "Nonne scitis decere me ut in domo mei Patris verser?" (Did you not know that it became me to be in the house of my Father?\*) the *temple*, to wit.—But in any case one would have thought that natures entirely unæsthetic, and entirely unimaginitive, would have caught some glimpse of a condition of soul beyond their own beat, if they had only permitted themselves to gaze on the rapt,

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\* This is understood to be the meaning of Luke ii. 49, also, by many modern scholars, including the Revisers. See Revised Version.—Ed.

inspired, home-forgetting, self-forgetting, world-forgetting boy in Holman Hunt's great picture, and might have found some correction of their misrepresentation had they gone on to gaze at the later picture in the Gospel, and remembered the words "And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them."

But it appears as a farther count in this ingenious and most original indictment that, even when he grew up to youth and manhood, the same unfilial habit of mind unhappily beset him, and that on two occasions he is reported to have said something disrespectful to his mother. Now I look into the Gospels and I see that our Lord was once at a marriage feast, that his mother was there too, and in the course of the entertainment—at another person's house, remember—came to him and said, "They have no wine"; and it follows in our translation that he replied, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" The charge is, that Christ called his mother "woman," and indicated that he had at that moment no time or disposition to attend to her. Now, to an ordinary English reader, these words would doubtless look just as rude as they sound.

But some of these objectors are scholars. They have been brought up from their childhood in the knowledge of Greek, and they know perfectly well that *γύναι*—the word here translated "woman"—is the word that also stands, when in the proper connection, for "lady," or, in our old-fashioned parlance, "madam." They know that, in translating a Greek tragedian, for instance, and meeting with this word *γύναι*, addressed by a son to his mother,

or a dependent to his superior, if one of their own pupils had translated it "woman," they would have corrected him. And when they come to the simple words *τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί* I do not say that they should translate them otherwise than they do, because I believe the common translation is in itself quite justifiable ; but will they absolutely forbid, as utterly unallowable, that I should translate the words "What is this to me and thee?" *i.e.*, not as asking what business have we together in common, but what is this to either of us?

And have these critics got into such a stilted way of reading the Scriptures, do they carry about with them still so helplessly the absurd theology in which some of them were brought up, that they are haunted still with the idea that they are reading about a God, and the Mother of a God, and have lost all power of understanding even the commonest feelings of human nature, and the commonest incidents in human life? Does the wonderful nature, taste, and truth, the intense reality of such a scene as this utterly escape them, so that they cannot give it a lodgment in their conceptions? Here is Christ, grave, earnest, anxious, on one of the first public occasions he had attended, since he began to feel himself what he was, and to know the great work he had to do. And here is this dear mother, very proud of him, thinking already perhaps a great deal more of his importance than he did himself, a little fussy, perhaps, in consequence, and she comes up to him, bent on graver and higher thoughts, with some small remark about some oversight or defective provision in

the entertainment, and what more natural than the reply, as we should have it now, "Dear Madam, what have you or I to do with this?"

But on another occasion it seems, too, that he behaved very unkindly to his mother and his brothers. He was addressing, no doubt in full absorption of mind, a multitude who were hanging on his words, and pressing close about his person, when he was interrupted by some one officiously telling him that his mother and brethren were there and wanted to speak to him; and he looking round on those eager listening faces, and those earnest souls, cries out, "Who *are* my mother and my brethren? Ye are; for whosoever is as eager to learn and to do the will of God as ye are, the same is my brother, and my sister, and my mother." (Matt. xii. 46, *sqq.*; Mark iii. 31, *sqq.*; Luke viii. 19, *sqq.*). Can these writers and speakers really not understand the perfect naturalness—nay, when interpreted in an unpedantic, and in any degree sympathizing spirit—the truth and beauty of scenes and incidents like these? Have they never heard of brothers who could not understand a brother? who pressed him, sometimes perhaps interruptingly and provokingly, to come home, to take rest and food, saying he must be beside himself, and not in the least believing in him? Have they never seen mothers in their own homes? Have they never seen them standing or falling imploringly and with tears before their own sons, urging them to avoid danger, not to risk their precious health, still more their precious lives, even in what they thought a duty in comparison with which

to them life and death were alike unimportant? And can they not understand how that dear mother in the Gospels should with her tender heart interfere and remonstrate, almost tryingly, with the stern purpose of her son's noble but too unyielding soul? And can they not hear that son's voice at length saying, "These people are my mother, and my sisters, and my brothers"; and can they not *see* his hand waving his mother away, as though to say, "Mother, go home, I *cannot* come"?

I am perfectly aware how trivial all these objections are in themselves, how trivial even is the answer one gives to them, and how uncertain the whole ground is on which we tread when we make or when we rebut such charges. Considering time, distance, authorship, language of utterance, language of record, no informed man ought to think for an instant of voluntarily treating these waves of a grand and holy tradition as the printed and authentic words of some Hansard of the past. But these are actually some of the means used at this day, and some of the most popular and telling, because the most intelligible, to help in a general desire to lessen the estimate of the teachings, the influence, and the character of Christ.

And I know perfectly well, too, of the graver grounds of far deeper and more important differences which are quite legitimate as criticisms on his real teachings, or the teachings attributed to him. But one can but treat adequately one branch of a subject at a time, and I have purposely limited our present consideration to the



personal Jesus of the Gospels, and certain moral objections to him, and to his continued influence.

The real grounds on which gratitude to, and the recognition of a certain spiritual authority in, Christ are to be vindicated, are far higher than these, and far more spacious and far more solid. We cannot, without entirely missing the scope of the subject, limit it to details, or permit these objectors to hold such matters perpetually before our eyes. The whole subject stands on a higher level.

When, indeed, I consider the monstrous beliefs to which many of these men in their youth have been challenged and commanded to assent, I cannot wonder at the extreme into which re-action has driven them. But it must be remembered that though one extreme may *explain another*, it does not therefore justify it. And while I sympathize with resistance to the long-enduring and, what is still more astonishing, the long-endured tyranny of the monstrous claims to Godhead and Creatorship, and vindictive Judgeship for Christ, and of his supposed teachings of an unreal and substituted righteousness, but of a real and unsubstituted hell, I cannot assent to the supposition that there is no alternative between all this mythology and an utter negation of a palpable reality. For we now find it very earnestly maintained that not only are such exaggerated and unfounded claims as I have mentioned to be resisted, but that it has become important to the progress of humanity, and indispensable to our spiritual independence and growth, that we should resist the

tendency to regard Christ as possessed of any spiritual perfection or authority whatever. It is said that it is moral death and annihilation to ourselves to make such an idol of Jesus, to bow before him with such exclusive reverence for his personal qualities, with such full reliance on his teachings, and such trusting obedience to his commands.

Now I think we have to acknowledge that there *is* a danger in this direction, and that it is by no means undesirable that we should be warned against it. The theological idea of substitution, of having somebody to be good instead of us, or punished instead of us; the theological idea of Mediatorship, that we cannot pray to God, or go to God, or be anything *with* God, of ourselves, and *by* ourselves, but must have a kind of days-man, or umpire between us, are no doubt deeply injurious not only to our spiritual independence, but to our personal moral entity.

It is perfectly true, and it is a very weighty truth, and a very necessary one for us to know, as one of the writers I have just quoted himself tells, that "God does not allow us to owe our souls to any one man." True, I say, and let us take care that we are in no such bondage to any man. If such a soul-suppressing, liberty-destroying claim as this is made by any one for Jesus Christ we should be grateful to be put on our guard against it, and we should be earnest in our resistance of it, not only for the sake of ourselves, on whom it is attempted to enforce such a claim, but on behalf of Jesus Christ himself, for whom the claim is made.

So far, however, from desiring to enslave the human race, or to be the head of a great ecclesiastical corporation, the sole aim of Jesus was to build up individual souls, in light, and love, and liberty, to help them into communion with the Divinest, the wisest, and the purest, to make them feel their own powers, and their own responsibilities, as the very children of a Creator who was also their Father. Mankind necessarily have heroes. It is a condition of their progress to have them, for the progress of men is through men, and the hero of to-day, even if he passes away, is only succeeded by the hero of to-morrow. It has been well said, that "only single superior spirits will be able to lead or guide" (Strauss), and that "at the summit of all great world-historical transactions there stand individuals under whose continued sway the substantial actual retains its truth and influence" (Hegel).

All great religions point to a great man as their founder. And men scarcely feel the highest truths and the holiest monitions safe till they are embodied, and preserved and perpetuated, and made visible in an actual life and man, and henceforth that life and man become achieved points in the progressive history of our race, an invaluable, because a most human and helpful part in our concrete religion. And nothing will ever stop the action of that law of human love and reverence indicated in the words, "He thought only of God, and not of himself. Therefore men forever think of him." And so Jesus has necessarily grown more grand and awful to our souls as the ages move on, and his vast influence over all the

higher powers and higher civilizations is more felt. There is a profound want in our nature for the impersonation of principles, for realized aspirations. Indeed it is part of our humanity to require a human centre on which to fasten "our admiration, imitation and affection, and from which to draw our most living inspirations of truth and piety and purity" ("Church of the Future," Chunder Mozoomdar.)

Quite recently, however, it appears to have been discovered that this natural and abiding want of our humanity has led even Unitarians into "a superstitious regard for Jesus—superstitious, however, only because they have an ideal Jesus present in their minds, and not the real historical one." An ideal Jesus! and what other Jesus can we have? "The real historical Jesus!" What is the real historical Jesus? A Jesus of one year? a Jesus of three years? a Jesus of thirty years? or a Jesus of 1800 years? a Jesus of John? a Jesus of Matthew? a Jesus of Peter? a Jesus of Paul? or a Jesus of all these, and also a Jesus of the many biographies and reflections of him which have appeared since in centuries of saints? There was, no doubt, an actual, visible, audible, tangible Jesus! but who would maintain that that Jesus, as he appeared to separate persons among his contemporaries was, and still is now to us, the real Jesus? The ideal Jesus is the only real one! And we must take in the whole sweep of his spiritual existence, and the whole series of the transmigrations, so to speak, of his soul into the souls of others, and into the life of the ages, through all this interval, to reach any adequate

conception of what he was and is. And I agree that in giving honour to Jesus, and forming our estimate of his character, we must consider not so much what he said, or is said to have said, as what he has effected.

We cannot resist, if we would, the momentum of a growing Christian consciousness. Jesus Christ is *not* the same now that he was in those early days of Galilee. He is something different, greater, more proved. We cannot return to the ancient simplicities, even of unmingled reverence. The reverence and appreciation of Christ are necessarily cumulative. You cannot help these growing as the ages advance; for the work has grown, and the power has been forever developing. The longer the Vine, of which the Father is the Husbandman, has been planted in the ground of the human heart and spread out its branches, and sent forth its shoots to supply a world, the wider spread the great principles of faith and hope and love—which it was the work of the great Christian benefaction to spread among our race—the deeper must become the roots of our Holy Faith, and the higher must culminate the reverence for its founder.

“We of the present age,” Lessing has been quoted as saying, “have a great advantage over the eye-witnesses. They only had the *ground* before them, upon which, confident of its certainty, they dared to raise a great edifice. *We* have before us the great building itself, fully completed. Now that the house has stood so long I am more thoroughly persuaded that the ground is good, than they could be who only saw the foundation laid.”

You may go to the cottage in which Shakespeare was born, and you may look with all your eyes at the Avon, to see if there is anything there to account for him, and if you are foolish enough to imitate some of our modern critics on Christianity you may rake up stories, equally inapplicable and beside the mark, of his holding gentlemen's horses at the doors of the theatres, and poaching in deer parks ; but how, even if true, could such trifling nonsense as this in any way affect the present Imperial sway of the poet, or the almost superhuman grasp and dignity of his genius? This tendency, therefore, to render faint, and faded, and unreal, and unworthy of reverence, the personality of Jesus, to disperse the concretion of his reality, into the vagueness of generalizations and abstractions, I regard as not only false to fact, false to human nature, false to the laws of human progress under the ordained providence of God, but as mischievous to the practical influence of religion, and to the most helpful machinery of human goodness.

At the same time I have to acknowledge that we Christians have ourselves to thank for a great deal of this ignoble and ungenerous re-action. There *are* such things as an excessive laudation and a too perpetual intrusion. I can quite sympathize with and understand the feeling that finds the continual, and, as it were, forced introduction of the name of Jesus into our conversation, our prayers, our sermons, actually offensive. I am sure it would have been offensive to himself. We seem actually afraid lest he should be forgotten. We seem as if we dare not trust a single prayer with God,

unless Christ were summoned to carry it into his presence. We seem as if we dared not enforce a single righteous principle, or give expression to a single pure emotion of the heart, without, as it were, sheltering it under the sanction and protection of Jesus Christ. And yet the Lord's Prayer—in which the name of Christ never occurs, and which is a prayer of pure Theism—is, I suppose, as Christian in its spirit and character as if we uttered the name of Jesus at the end of each clause. No! we have degraded Christ by making him the head of a great sect, with his sectatores and assentatores—instead of leaving him in his grand reality as a son of God, and brother of man, knowing no countries or nations, or religions, but only one wide humanity. This to me, constitutes his grandeur, his abiding claim to my homage and my gratitude, that he is only committed to world-wide principles, and to the universal religion which rests, not only on eternal principles, but on principles which apply to our whole humanity.

The small ungenerous spirit to which I have alluded, the little gossiping tone scarcely raised above the character of scandal, out of place at all times, and in reference to all characters, is especially out of place in an age which seeks to do justice to all reputations lifting up into places of honour the Mohammeds of the world, and the founders of all great religions. So that this change from the old tone really seems to me to spring in part, at least, from irritation or from a weariness at hearing Aristides called just. "Admiration is in fact a sort of impost from which many minds are but too

willing to relieve themselves. The eye grows weary of looking up to the same object of wonder, and begins to exchange at last the delight of observing its elevation for the less generous one of detecting its real or supposed imperfections." (Moore's "Life of Byron.")

Small incidents in the life, I say, a few words from the mouth of Jesus, even in his childhood, are snatched up with a painful eagerness of fault-finding, and the same writers who would declare in many, or in any other, cases against any bondage to the letter, in such instances as these cling to the precise words of the saying or the record with a determined tenacity of depreciation. Why, in the first place, Christ never wrote a word: or, if he wrote, he wrote, not on parchments, but on the souls of men. He just spoke his great heart out, and placed an absolute,—all the more absolute because unconscious,—trust in our humanity to preserve them and echo them. It is childish to talk of the records of Christ's ministry being contained or exhausted in a little volume, collected in the early centuries—though that little volume has commanded more of the awe and reverence, and gratitude, and interest, and study, of mankind, and among a greater number, than any other book in the world, and one might almost say, directly or indirectly, than all the other books in the world put together. The records and the fruits of Christ's ministry extend over eighteen centuries, and the early Gospels must be regarded, not as any exhaustive record of the ministry of Christ, so much as illustrations of a part of his personal ministry in Palestine.



I have been able in one short address only thus to refer to a few salient points on this subject, but I hope I may have helped some here, in some degree, by this review, to my own convictions, that this depreciatory re-action against the completeness of the soul, and the permanent usefulness of the teaching of Jesus, is an unfounded, and, as I think, a mischievous one. That the true duty of all men is to try to recover the simple original teachings, relieve them of corruptions, improve their application, and enrich and enlarge them by their own fruits and consequences, the growth of the ages since they were delivered. That what brave and true men in this country should apply themselves to is the purification and restoration of Christianity, not its dissolution and destruction, and that the religion gathered and concentrated in the personal life and character and influence of Christ is too great a treasure and a blessing to our race to be turned into a vague and impersonal ethic, even though derived from himself. I, for one, will not consent to see Jesus Christ dethroned from his well-earned leadership, and deprived of his proved authority, without remonstrance. I, for one, do not want to see his empty chair in the home of my heart. I, for one, do not want to repeat the *words*, or the *fact*—"There is no room for him in this inn." There *used* to be a grateful gallantry of defence, which rose up to protect the fair fame and the just honour of the great benefactors of our race.

I do not care for that supposed ideal perfection of saintly character, in which these men declare that Christ

was deficient, with its unhuman humanity, its statuesque repose and coldness. And I declare it does not matter to me, even if true, when—(passing over many stronger derogatory descriptions than any I have quoted)—I hear a venerable and veteran statesman, to whom this country and the cause of civil and religious liberty owe so much, saying with characteristic coolness and patronizing regret, “He did not show the philosophic equanimity of Socrates, the patriotic serenity of Regulus, or the proud defiance of Algernon Sidney”—because he was himself. No! he only showed the high and tender humanity of man, with a *heart*, as well as a brain, with sensitiveness, as well as courage.

Let these critics take their lay figure to themselves, when they have made it. I do not want it. I find in Jesus Christ a real living, loving, noble, holy, pulsing and breathing man, my brother, my pure guide, my faithful friend, the earthly image of my Father. I will not part with him. He is a reality, and strong personality to me. I have lived with him, and loved him as my daily companion since I first learnt about him, and I feel that if I will let him he will be light, and hope, and life, and guidance, and consolation, and sanctification to me to the end. And I render thanks to Almighty God—the giver of every good and perfect gift—that he has permitted the radiance of that benign and gracious soul to brighten—and the fragrance of that wise and holy spirit to perfume the shores of our humanity.

LECTURE V.

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IN VINDICATION

OF THE

BENEFICENT INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

FROM

CERTAIN MODERN OBJECTIONS.



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It is an old remark that each age thinks itself a peculiar one, and doubtless each age has its special characteristics. But one characteristic observable in many ages, particularly ages of active thought, is great self-consciousness, an intenser sense of the present than knowledge and memory of the past, and a proneness to think that the special tendencies and inquiries of the present are not only in form, but probably also in spirit, original to it, and unknown to the ages that preceded. Thus with vision confined to so narrow a field, and so limited a period, people are sometimes struck with the novelty of things that are by no means new, startled by things that are by no means startling, and grieved by doubts, speculations, and assertions, at which had the previous generations been as much distressed as the

existing one, the world would long since have died of a broken heart.

Our own age in the Christian era is at present exhibiting great surprise and some anger, a good deal of distress, and not a little annoyance, at the freedom of the criticisms passed upon the Scriptures and the depreciatory estimates which have become common on the perfection of our Lord's teachings, and even the perfection of his character. I sympathize with much of the annoyance and distress, but I see no cause for the surprise. There has always been, as there is now, unless prevented by some miserable restrictions on the expression of thought, a great and a very free variety of opinion on these points. I do not now speak of theological and ecclesiastical varieties, great as they are, or of the various notes on the scale of faith, from that which proclaims Christ a perfect man to that which proclaims him to be the Almighty God, Creator of this universe. But I speak of estimates not included in this scale, of estimates below even what would be called the lowest in this scale. I shall speak to-day of depreciatory estimates of the worth, truth, and permanent usefulness of his teaching, as I have spoken before of depreciatory estimates of the dignity, manliness, unsurpassable sweetness and holiness of his character. I spoke of efforts to disperse into thin air the condensation and concentration of his moral force, and to tone down to ordinary hues and proportions the power and the grandeur of his personality. I spoke of such judgments as these passed not by the outer, or as it were infidel, world, but

in the very midst of the Christian training and consciousness, and by men of the purest character, of the noblest aims, and unquestionably of the richest religious nature. I quoted one of these writers (a man of an actually saintly life and aspiration, and of extraordinary learning and faculty) as declaring that Jesus "acted on selfish ambition," and "sought to usurp lordship over the taught, and aggrandize himself." This the same writer calls "a bottomless gulf of demerit, which swallows up all personal merit, and makes silence concerning him our kindest course"! leaving us no choice between being, as he says, "morally annihilated in his presence, or regarding him as having fallen into something worse than ignominy." (Francis Newman's "Discourse against Hero-making in Religion," p. 24.) And so of the Scriptures, another of these writers—all, remember, religious men and able men (I quote no others),—speaks of that "abominable book at the end of the Bible," to wit, the Revelation; one speaks of the four Gospels as "one long slander on the Jews" (Newman's "Thoughts on a Free and Comprehensive Christianity," p. 11); while another calls the Bible "one of the most immoral books ever written" (Powell Meredith's "Amphilogia," pp. 37-8).

Now, I say, though we may be grieved at all this, and think it in one sense, at least, as narrow, as mistaken, as prejudiced as what it seeks to displace, yet we ought not to be startled or surprised at it. Depreciation and misrepresentation of Christ, and total misconception of the real character of the Scriptures, are, unfortunately, nothing new. They have been constant

features of the Christian history from the earliest times.

I pass over the coarse ignorance of the last generation, when the word "Impostor" was freely applied to one whom, indeed, it was only too true the world knew not, and ascend to very early times. What do you think of denying that he was a man at all? and asserting that he was only a shadow, a phantom? And yet that he was without birth, without body, without figure, and only by supposition a visible man, is declared by Irenæus (i. xxiv. 2) to have been the opinion of Saturninus in the second century of our Lord. And another writer, in the same century, Irenæus declares (i. xxiv. 4), maintained that Christ was an incorporeal power, and could not, and did not, suffer crucifixion,—Simon of Cyrene assuming his appearance, and being crucified in his place.

Now, it is in vain to say these men were heretics. Of course they were heretics in the eyes of the dominant party in the Church, because they did not agree with it. But this is a mere artificial ecclesiastical distinction. It does not prevent them from being men with the rights of men, thinkers with the rights of thought; and calling them heretics does not prevent or alter the fact that they were men of learning and piety, and of unsullied reputation.

But ascend to an earlier time still, and you will find that this depreciatory tone does not end with implications of unreality like these. "If thou do these things, show thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe



in him." (John vii. 4, 5.) Thou hast a devil, said his very contemporaries to him, and castest out devils by Beelzebub. (John vii. 20. Matth. xii. 24.) And while some of his greatest admirers accorded to him the moderate eulogy of "he is a good man," others retorted "Nay, but he deceiveth the people." Do not say, "But the men who said these things were bad men." I do not know that they were. We have not their own account of things. But here we encounter this kind of doubt from the earliest times, passing on from doubt to sarcasm: "Hail, King of the Jews!" "He saved others, let him save himself," and consummating itself in that conclusive act—which shows how true it is that "rage and fear are one disease"—the crucifixion. And, subsequently, to that awful wrong were found some members of that singular community at Corinth (remember, still continuing actual members of the Church), who declared that there was no resurrection of the dead; and others, who connected what we should call profaning acts with the sacred communion of remembrance. And so recognized was the possible height to which a virulent depreciation of our Lord could be carried, that St. Paul simply and quietly observes, that no man speaking by the spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed, says that he was "Anathema." (1 Cor. xii. 3.) Now, all these latter derogations, worse, I repeat, than anything we meet with now, we are in the habit of hearing or reading in the hours of our most sacred meditation—in our homes, and in our churches; and we only cease to be shocked by them, if we ever do cease (I doubt whether I ever do), because of their familiarity.

It is evident, then, from this very short and summary review that it would be, I do not say theological prudery (I sympathize too much, and share too much in the feeling of dislike and disapprobation myself so to designate it), but that it would be, and is, a great un-wisdom and mistake for any informed person to inveigh against the existence and expression of these more modern forms of doubt as an unheard-of iniquity, or to rank the men who publish them (some of such men being brave and saintly beyond ordinary men) as among the wicked and the faithless.

I think myself that there is in these men, and in some of the views they have propounded, a good deal of mere individuality (perhaps eccentric individuality), a good deal of mistaken judgment, and of utterly untenable criticism, together with some want of imagination and of the power of sympathy with many crises in spiritual history and many real forms of character and of mind. And perhaps they are less to be excused than the earlier censors or dreamers, because they have eighteen hundred years to judge from, because they speak at the end of a long interval more favourable to calm judgment than contemporary ages, and because the house is built, whose foundations were only then being laid. The truth is we stand between two monstrous exaggerations, the one declaring Christ to be the Creator of this immeasurable universe and very God, the other declaring of him what we have already heard and need not repeat ; and surely, in this matter, we have some function in the world of thought, surely it is time to hold some balance, which

shall lead to more sane judgments. What have *we* to say about these things? what have we to say in reply to these objections?

In the first place, to understand the character of these more recent derogatory and depreciatory estimates of our Lord and of his religion, we must take into account the character of the persons who form them, and the state of mind in which these objections have their source. They are many of them excellent people; they speak and write with a brave conscientiousness, with a labouring desire for the truth, with the deepest possible reverence for God and love for man. Indeed, it is in this very reverence that many of these modern questionings and denials find their root and origin. Those who urge them are deeply persuaded that certain beliefs that prevail are not just to God, are not good for man. And they are right. I sympathize very largely with their position. They are iconoclasts, I know. But it is time we had iconoclasts. We cannot allow the religion of our age and country to be crowded out by idols. We cannot stand by and consent to see the pure and simple faith of Jesus Christ turned into a travesty. And if these men come into the temple of religion, and in their zeal to remove the mis-copyings and to restore the erasures of the original hand-writing on the wall; if in their earnest and almost sobbing desire to restore a father to his children, and a brother to his brethren, freedom to the enslaved, and calmness to the terrified, they approach the great picture in the vault, to wash away, though with their own tears, the sordid pollutions that conceal and disfigure so many

a dear lineament, and with eager, but almost frightened hands, to tear off the thick crusts of dark colouring that overlay the sweetness of the faces, and crush out all their delicacies of expression ; if, I say, in this their rapid and impetuous toil, we see lacerated some fair limb, or marred some fair proportion, we must not forget, but must bear in mind, that the very exaggerations of these men are founded on reverence and love, reverence for some deeper truth which they fear being lost and hidden out of sight, by what they consider a superficial intervention, love for some far-off loftier good, which they fear mankind will not press forward to, if stopped in their career by unnecessary, unrefreshing, and unstrengthening, if not weakening, halting-places.

We must not forget, too, that the reaction in their own natures must have been something terrific. And, indeed, I think we should not be wrong in attributing much of what startles and pains us, much of what we think violent exaggeration, to this precise cause. Brought up under, and for much of their lives solely contemplating, a form of Christianity which it is scarcely possible for a human being now who exercises thought with any degree of freedom or of knowledge to submit to without mental agony and shame, and which it is a disgrace to our country still determinedly to proclaim as the religion of Jesus Christ and the Gospels ; thus whipped, as it were, and scourged with the rods, nettled and stung with the pismires of the accepted orthodoxy, and seeing still the marks, and feeling still the pain, of the manacles they had themselves once worn, perhaps, and which their

Church still wears, and, what was worse, which some of them had voluntarily worn so long, and forgetting, or not knowing of others, who had been born free or had bought their freedom with a large price; full of honest fury at the misrepresentations of God and man, of truth and faith, under which they and their Church had suffered, or suffered still, in the house of bondage to the letter of the Scripture, and the traditions of a half-instructed past,—they talk in the resentful way they do of Christ and his religion and the Scriptures; but surely it is time for us to try to hold up some balance, to make some little effort at discrimination between the exaggerated demands of the old affirmation and the nearly equally exaggerated and angry re-action of the new negation.

And having in a former lecture plainly exhibited the nature and tendency of some forms of modern thought and criticism in reference to the character and teachings of Jesus, which I myself think utterly mistaken and unjust, exceedingly foreign to the truth, and calculated, if unexposed, to do mischief to the cause of pure religion and sadly to mislead, I wish on this occasion to direct your attention to some similarly unjustly derogatory remarks on the action on the world and its peoples of the Christian religion and its teachings and influence. For perhaps, after all, no charge is at once so serious and so absurd as the monstrous one against Jesus Christ, that he is the author of a religion that has been the direct, if not chief instrument, of war, and cruelty and oppression among the nations of the earth. One would

have thought that men of any philosophic breadth of mind would have learnt to distinguish between the causes of things a little better, and would not have confounded abiding features of human character, and ever-recurring passions, with the pretexts on which they were exercised, and the covert of motives or of ostensible causes under which men in all ages have sought to conceal or to sanctify their own wickedness and ambition.

And yet, says one of these modern writers to whom I have been referring, "Christianity has been known on every side to the heathen as a cruel oppressor, and an ambitious usurper, and twelve hundred years of Christian wickedness has made of it now a strictly dividing force" (F. W. Newman, "Thoughts on a Free and Comprehensive Christianity"). Says another, "The time has arrived in this country for its dissolution." Says another, "It is a system which has made its red mark in history, and still lives to threaten mankind." Now, no doubt, such writers reach their conclusions principally from contemplating, not the religion itself or its essence, or the intention of its Founder, but simply the outward accompanying features which have marked its historic existence and progress. But is this a philosophical way of looking at the subject? Is it a just or a fair or a candid way of looking at it? Does not such a judgment rest on two great omissions, if not errors? Does it not, in the first place, take the most corrupt of all actual forms of the religion, and identify these with the religion

itself? and is this in itself fair? Does it not, in the next place, confound pretext with reality, the pretence of the motives which wicked or ambitious men assign for their actions, with the motives which really actuate them, and which, in fact, occasion their conduct?

It may be true, nay, it *is* true, that the sublimest and purest principles, when passing into other and inferior hearts and lives, become incrustated and imbedded in the inferior surroundings, and take their character, as thus manifested, too much from the passions or superstitions with which they have become allied. But are we to sacrifice or spurn the original truth, because of this involuntary and degrading association? Are we to make a religion responsible for the very vices and weaknesses it resists and aims to cure? And because it has been taken up by worldly men, as a cover for their ambitious projects, or by wicked men as a means of beguiling others into the snares of their wickedness, or by superstitious men, in the inability of their natures to reach its own wisdom and purity; are we to charge itself with all these results? Are we to allow any wretch on the face of the earth to speak for it, and tell us what it is, and are we not to allow it to speak for itself, and itself tell us what it is? Instead of strengthening it, in the still unequal struggle, are we ungenerously to vilify it, trample it under our feet, because it has not as yet succeeded, though for ever trying, in raising base natures to its own ideal? Failure, or comparative failure, you may, whether justly or unjustly, charge it with, but to charge it with being the *cause* and origin of the evils

itself deploras and denounces and struggles to remedy, instead of advancing to its help and rescue, and purification and defence, is surely neither just nor generous, nor humane, nor religious.

“Which of the vices,” asks the late Hugh James Rose, “that deform humanity, and often almost turn earth into hell, is not expressly and positively forbidden by the Gōspel?” “which of the graces and virtues that would turn earth into heaven, is not recommended and enforced by every solemn appeal to the better part of man, by everything that can awaken his higher hopes and call forth his nobler emotions?”

These objectors, with all their severity of judgment and purity of life and wisdom and exactingness, speak as if they were born with all this in their own bosoms, and owed nothing to the moral atmosphere which they have been breathing all their lives. And if they do not say this, they perhaps say that they owe it all to their parents; and whom do their parents owe it to? *I* do not give the answer. These parents give it themselves, and say, they owe it to the privilege of having been brought up as Christians. Now it is very easy to cease to be grateful; but it is not very easy to cease to be indebted! And whether we see it and acknowledge it or not, we cannot ignore the past, nor can we forswear and abjure the actual influences of our lives.

“Philosophy,” Mr. Lecky has truly remarked, “was amply fitted to dignify and ennoble, but altogether impotent to regenerate mankind.” “The inculcation of



religious or moral truths was no part of the object" of pagan worship, nor did the priest or flamen ever dream of any such function as teaching. Christianity, on the contrary, made moral teaching a main function of its clergy. Its aim was to place morality under a religious sanction, to incorporate it with religion.

"The current feeling," we have been reminded, "of the contemporaries of Cato and Cicero, Tacitus and Pliny, received no shock from the most hideous cruelties hourly practised on slaves and captives of war, nor did there then exist in Europe a single hospital for the sick, or asylum for the destitute, the blind, or the insane. Organized cruelty was in full force, but organized charity was yet unknown." But when I myself look at Christianity, as I find it in the New Testament, and observe the laws that the religion of Jesus Christ has established in every country where it has had sway; relating to the treatment of the sick and the indigent, mercifully providing for them; relating to women and children, prohibiting exposure, infanticide, and neglect, and furnishing on all sides refuges from brutality and uplifting institutions of good; relating to servants, making the ancient cruelties and barbarities impossible; and forbidding the grosser and more cruel religious rites, such as human sacrifices; when I find that Aristotle and Plato were both in favour of destroying sickly infants; that it was enjoined by Lycurgus, and that Plutarch approves of all his laws; that Livy expressly approves the murder of all captives, even infants at the breast, as perfectly right and just; and when I

contrast with all these things the spirit and injunctions of Christ and his apostles, the edicts of the first Christian Emperor, Constantine, who was the first also to abolish by Imperial edict the gladiatorial shows—I see how heartily Christianity has been for more than 1,800 years contending with the lower passions and vices of human nature, almost uninterfered with by the previously existing Pagan religions, and how it has succeeded in “actually banishing some from the face of the earth, has greatly mitigated and softened others, is gradually undermining all the rest, and has already given so different a colour to the whole system of human affairs, has introduced so large a portion of benevolence and mutual good-will into the minds and manners of men and into all the various relations of social, civil, and domestic life, as plainly to show what a pure, fresh, vigorous, and distinct moral force it has been in the world, and how worthy still of our reverence and obedience” (Porteous), and I cannot doubt that its principles, when once adopted and followed out, would, as far as human nature renders it possible, introduce “a state so pure, so peaceable, so joyful, so free from selfishness, and all that can agitate and grieve, that the poet’s brightest dreams would be dull and cold compared with it.”

Much as I may admire, then, and respect the earnestness and independence of mind and of inquiry of the class of writers I have referred to, I am not going to be misled by them, nor induced to believe that the introduction of Christianity has been, or could possibly be,

a curse to any country. I may regret, and do greatly regret, that the form in which it has been presented in these countries has often been so unworthy of itself—rendered so by the mythological corruptions which have been imported into its own pure simplicity, and which excite the contempt rather than the respect of the thinkers in the more civilized of these so-called heathen lands. But is this the fault of the religion of Jesus? It is our own. Why do we sit so quietly at home, without purifying at its sources, in what may be called the Mother Country, the religion we are sending out to heathen lands? It might appear that we at home who know better had no other duty before us than to indulge our theological tastes, and to leave the faith of our country to spread itself in its most corrupt and unenlightened forms! But we are responsible for all this, and have to think of others as well as ourselves, and how best we can have justice done to the pure religion of Jesus, and make it understood and valued at home, that it may be understood and valued abroad. And yet, notwithstanding every drawback of this kind, such is the essential and inseparable moral power of this religion, that its humanity, and purity, and spirituality shine through, and shine over, the misrepresentations of its theologic theories; and the pure homes, and the well-ordered family life, and the kind heart, and the practical helpfulness, and the secular knowledge and wisdom of the missionary—reflecting all the holier and purer elements of Christianity—cause it to be a blessing to the countries where it is taken.

I may regret, and do greatly regret, that the unbecoming lives of many of its professors bring the deepest stain upon it, and greatly diminish its beneficent action. It may be true that the Dutch and English have been hated in many a country they have colonized, and have brought with them vices they should have left behind them. But it is absurd to charge on their Christianity what (if the ordinary principles of human nature and the superseded influence of the inhabitants do not account for it sufficiently) is plainly attributable, not to their Christianity, but to their non-Christianity !

“The inhabitants of Dahomey” (says Mr. Skertchley, who spent some eight months among them, and saw what he describes) “believe that the spirits of those sacrificed carry messages to, and swell the ghostly retinues of, their departed kings, who, in their spiritual state, are supposed to be the tutelary deities of their country, and who would be offended if neglected. It will therefore be understood how difficult a task it is to abolish these human sacrifices, connected as they are with the superstitious religion of the country”; and he describes in a quotation, too horrible to repeat, not only how the poor victims (sometimes only captives of war) are destroyed, but how slowly and clumsily life is torn out of them. What ! and would it be a curse to that country to pour the breath of Jesus Christ upon it, even in the concrete form of our inferior exemplified Christianity? “There is nothing,” says the late Sir Henry Lawrence,—“there is nothing like a heathen country for drawing Christians together. Differences about bishops

look very small under the shadow of an idol with twelve heads."

The same trustworthy and Christian-hearted man contrasts the Sikh country, at least the part he traversed, under the native rulers, as a wild and desolate waste, characterized by its coarse grass and the absence of inhabitants, to the same district after a short time of the *accursed Christian sway*,—with its cultivation, irrigation, registered proprietorship, restored population, good roads and railway traffic. It has been, I believe, truly said by a writer in the *Saturday Review*, "If all the Princes of India were at the present moment theoretically and practically independent, the country would never be free from war." (*Saturday Review*, Oct. 11, 1873.) "This is what happened," Sir Henry Lawrence states, "within this century. The Queen of Goorkha, seeing herself disfigured by the remains of small-pox, from which she was recovering, poisoned herself. The King had the Benares doctors who had been attending her soundly flogged, and the nose and right ear of each cut off in his presence. He went up to the gods of Nepaul, abused them, accused them of robbing him of 12,000 goats and 2,000 gallons of milk (his offerings to them, doubtless for his Queen), ordered all the artillery out against them, and brought them all down, gods and goddesses, from their sacred pedestals, with six hours' cannonading, vowing that no god should ever again be elevated in his dominions until his departed Queen was restored to him." On November 5th, 1845, Sir Henry Lawrence writes:—"I have just returned

from a Suttee. The woman was cool and collected. The corpse was that of a Goorkha commandant. It was laid on a small platform, raised on six or eight stakes driven into an island eight or nine feet square in the bed of the Bagmuttery. The platform had a double bottom, and between the two was laid wood, resin, and glue. The woman was in a small rattee, close to the river. In about five minutes she came out, mounted on the back of a man, who carried her to a pile, and round it four or five times, she taking rice and spices from a platter, and throwing them to the people around. She then, after washing her hands in the river, and kissing her dead husband's feet, ascended the pile, took off her tiara, her bracelets, and her silk dresses, and gave them to the persons around her. Then, with her hair loose over her shoulders, she lay down close beside the corpse. A coloured sheet was drawn over them both, the living and the dead, strong bamboos fastened across them, the torch was applied to the under platform, the strong flame broke out, the crowd shouted and the tomtoms beat more loudly. The old hags around me grinned with delight; ours were the only sad countenances, all else was utter unconcern" (Life, vol. ii. p. 36, abbreviated).

The Suttee was abolished, schools were established (Sir Henry Lawrence founded one), and that Christian woman, Mary Carpenter, has devoted the overflowing riches of her brave heart to the raising up of woman. And so our Christianity has been a curse to India, and to savage countries! Have we our senses?

And now I release your attention. Has this review helped any of you anyway to my own conviction—that this depreciatory re-action against the perfection of the character, and the permanent usefulness of the teaching of Jesus, is an unfounded, wild, exaggerated, and mischievous mistake?—that the true duty of all men is to try to recover the simple original teachings, relieve them of corruption, and improve their application?—that what brave and true men in this country should apply themselves to, is the purification and restoration of Christianity, not its dissolution and destruction, and that the religion gathered and concentrated in the personal life and character and influence of Jesus Christ is too great a treasure and blessing to our race to be turned into a vague and impersonal ethic, even though derived from himself?





*Memorials of the Rev. Charles Wicksteed, B.A.*

EDITED BY HIS SON, PHILIP HENRY.

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**PRICE SIX SHILLINGS.**

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Published by WILLIAMS & NORGATE, Henrietta Street, London.

TO BE HAD ALSO AT

ESSEX HALL, ESSEX STREET, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.













