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THE INTERPRETATION  
OF SCRIPTURE









BENJAMIN JOWETT

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THE  
INTERPRETATION OF  
SCRIPTURE

AND OTHER ESSAYS

By

BENJAMIN JOWETT

*Formerly Master of Balliol College, Oxford*



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## NOTE

*The first Essay contained in the present book is reprinted from the fifth edition (1861) of 'Essays and Reviews;' the other Essays consist of the late author's 'Dissertations' included in his elaborate edition of 'The Epistles of St Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians, and Romans', reprinted from the second edition (1859). Sir Leslie Stephen's paper on 'Jowett's Life' is reprinted from 'The National Review' (May 1897) by kind permission of Mr Stephen.*

# Jowett's Life

By SIR LESLIE STEPHEN

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THIS life of Jowett by two of his most enthusiastic and sympathetic disciples satisfies many demands of the art of biography. Jowett himself loved Boswell's model work as it deserves to be loved, and would have made it the standard of excellence. The unique combination of circumstances which enabled Boswell to turn out a masterpiece has not, and probably never will, be repeated. Jowett, in spite of some resemblances, noted by his biographers, was not a Johnson; and the biographers—the remark is, perhaps, equivocal—are clearly not Boswells. Boswell had the tact for selecting only such trifles as were characteristic; and I fear that they do not fully share that quality. Still, with the help of Jowett's letters and written meditations, they have brought us face to face with the man; and should enable us to form a distinct portrait of a very interesting figure. One result may be emphatically recognized at the outset. Nobody can lay down these volumes without feeling that Jowett deserved the affection of his friends. He had his weaknesses like Johnson; but we feel in his case, as in Johnson's, that the core of the man's nature was sweet, sound, and masculine. This is part of the explanation of a problem which, I must confess, has often appeared to me as to others, to be rather enigmatic. What was the secret and the real nature of Jowett's remarkable influence? I had not the advantage of coming within his personal sphere, nor even of belonging to his beloved University. I had, however, the good fortune of knowing at an early period some of the group, among whom, as we are told, 'there sprang up what outsiders termed a sort of Jowett worship'. That group, it is added, did not form a 'mutual admiration society'. One reason is obvious: the bond of union was personal. The worship of Newman or of Carlyle meant, as a rule, sympathy with certain dogmas or the acceptance of a particular set of shibboleths, which at once marked a man as representing a distinctive tendency in theology or politics. This could certainly not be said of Jowett's worshippers. Jowett did not himself accept any articulate philosophical doctrine. The ad-

miration, therefore, was mainly for the man himself ; and might be common to people who, starting from a general liberalism—to use the vaguest possible word—had reached very different conclusions ; and might be followers of Comte, or of Hegel, or even careless Gallios, capable of very sharp criticisms both of their master and of each other. The outsider, meanwhile, was a little in the dark as to the precise nature of a tie which united the central member to disciples who dispersed along so many diverging radii.

The problem was the more difficult to a member of the sister University. An interesting essay might, I fancy, be written upon the nature and origin of the difference between the Oxford and the Cambridge spirit. Whatever the cause, one distinction is marked. Oxford has long been fertile in prophets ; in men who cast a spell over a certain number of disciples, and not only propagate ideas, but exercise a personal sway. At Cambridge no such leader, so far as I can remember, presented himself in my time ; and, moreover, Cambridge men were generally inclined to regard their apparent barrenness with a certain complacency. Spiritual guides are troublesome personages. A prophet, perhaps we thought, is apt to be a bit of a humbug, and at any rate a cause of humbug in others. We had some very vigorous and excellent tutors, but they were rather anxious to disavow than to assert any such personal influence as is independent of downright logical argument. Perhaps this was partly due to the mathematical turn of Cambridge studies. At the time when Oxford was dimly troubled by the first rumours about German theology, Cambridge reformers were chiefly concerned to introduce a knowledge of the new methods of mathematical analysis, to which Englishmen had been blinded by a superstitious reverence for Newton. That was an excellent aim ; but, of course, you cannot appeal to men's 'souls' in the name of the differential calculus. Even when Cambridge men took to the study of classical literature, they stuck to good, tangible matters of grammatical construction without bothering themselves about purely literary or philosophical interests. They did not deny the existence of the soul ; but knew that it should be kept in its proper place. It may be an estimable entity ; but it also generates 'fads' and futile enthusiasms and gushing sentimentalisms. It should not be unduly stimulated in early years, but kept in due subordination to the calm understanding occupied with positive matters of fact. The opposite view is indicated by a remark of Jowett's upon Dr Arnold. Arnold had his weak points intellectually, says Jowett, 'but in that one respect of inspiring others with ideals, there has been no one like him in modern times'. Arnold, beyond all doubt, was an admirable



person; and few cases of 'influence', as understood by Oxford men, are more remarkable. Considering the shortness of his life and the limits of his position, the impression which he made upon his contemporaries is not short of surprising. To the average reader of to-day it is probably interpreted for the most part by *Tom Brown's Schooldays*. That is a charming book, even when one's schooldays are 'over'; but it then suggests certain misgivings. The Rugby men had their weaknesses. "What a good man Walrond is!" said Professor Sellar to Matthew Arnold. "Ah!" replied Arnold, "we were all so good at Rugby." "Yes," retorted Sellar, "but he kept it up." They all, as it seems to an outsider, 'kept it up'. The very tone of voice of a true Rugbeian implied, modestly but firmly, that he was endowed with a 'moral consciousness'. He had a quasi-official right to share the lofty view which he had imbibed at the feet of the master. He always seemed to be radiating virtuous influences. A conscience is, no doubt, a very useful possession in early years. But when a man has kept one till middle life, he ought to have established a certain *modus vivendi* with it; it should be absorbed and become part of himself—not a separate faculty delivering oracular utterances. The amiable weakness of the Rugby school was a certain hypertrophy of the conscience. It had become unpleasantly obtrusive and self-assertive. In other words, they were decidedly apt to be moral prigs.

Jowett's influence was not exactly of this kind, but before asking what it was, I must say something of one problem which is forced upon us by this book. Jowett was a man of wide philosophical culture. He was prominent in Oxford society during some remarkable intellectual changes. He lived there for some fifty-seven years. As an undergraduate he was a looker-on at the singular and slightly absurd phenomenon called the Oxford Movement, and keenly interested in the contest finally brought to a head by his friend W. G. Ward. Soon afterwards he was a leading tutor, at a time when the most vigorous youths at Oxford were inclining rather in the direction of J. S. Mill, and some of them becoming disciples of Comte. His edition of St Paul's *Epistles* made him an arch heretic in the eyes of the High Church party, and his simultaneous appointment to the Greek professorship gave the chance, of which its members were foolish enough to avail themselves, of putting him in the position of a martyr of free thought. His share in the *Essays and Reviews* (1860) made him a representative man in a wider sphere. Though we have now got to the stage of affecting astonishment at the sensation produced by the avowal of admitted truths in that work, nobody who remembers the time can doubt that it marked the

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appearance of a very important development of religious and philosophical thought. The controversy raised by *Essays and Reviews* even distracted men for a time from the far more important issues raised by the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Jowett, then a little over forty, was no doubt old enough to have some settled convictions, but young enough to be fully awake to the significance of the definite invasion of the old system of thought by the new doctrines of evolution and historical method. When, in 1870, he became Master of Balliol he was succeeded in the tutorship by his attached friend, T. H. Green, who introduced the Hegelianism which has since become so conspicuous in English philosophy, and had already been studied by Jowett. What may be the true meaning and tendency of these varying phases of opinion is a question to be answered by the rising generation. This, at least, is evident—Jowett was a man of mark and intellectual authority at a time when vital questions were being eagerly agitated and the most various conclusions reached. What had he to say to them? Will the future historian of English thought be able to show that any of the important contributions to speculation bear the impress of Jowett's intellect? The movement of the different currents of thought is too wide and complicated to be explained by any individual influence; but we might look to such a man as the best representative of some definite tendency, or at least as having been a valuable expounder of some important aspect.

Is any phase of speculation marked by Jowett's personal stamp? That is the question which one naturally asks about a man who is a well-known writer upon philosophy, and one can hardly deny that the answer must be unequivocally in the negative. Jowett's biographers hold that he might have said something very important if he had found time. He had himself a lasting ambition to be a teacher. He had a habit of drawing out plans for future work. At the age of seventy he laid down a scheme for eight years of work; one year upon Plato, two upon Moral Philosophy, two upon a Life of Christ, one upon Sermons, and two upon a History of Early Greek Philosophy. We admire the sanguine spirit of the man; we feel his allusions to be pathetic; we envy the power of believing that at the fag-end of life, tasks can still be achieved which, taken separately, might well require years of devotion at the period of highest vitality. To most of us elders any similar fancies are as impossible as fancies of a sledge-journey to the North Pole. We may most sincerely regret that we cannot cherish them. We might do more than we shall ever actually do if we could only continue to aim at a mark beyond our range; and it must be placed to Jowett's

credit that the impulse to work remained so vigorous when all capacity for achievement was so soon to leave him. But, alas, one cannot help asking whether Jowett at his best, and freed from the calls upon his energy, which took up so large a part of his time, could really have done anything great in these directions? What could a Life of Christ have been in his hands? 'Can I write like Renan?' he asks himself; and the answer is too clear. Could he have emulated the industry, close scholarship, and minute criticism of a German professor? That is, perhaps still more out of the question, and one cannot feel that his failure has lost us anything more than an elegant essay balancing inconsistent theories. Jowett's biographers think that he could have written something of great value upon Moral Philosophy. Happily a man may be an admirable moralist in practice, though very vague in his theory of morals. Jowett might have been an excellent 'moralist' in the old Johnsonian sense—a forcible propounder of practical maxims for life and conduct—but however good the spirit of his discursion into ethics, they certainly do not even suggest any new solution to the old difficulties. <sup>11.</sup> ¶

In speaking of Jowett's general position in these matters, Dr Abbott remarks that he had written passages in his edition of St Paul's *Epistles*, 'such as no other man of his age has put on paper'. Later distractions, however, made him 'wander into other paths'. He spent years upon his translations of Plato and Thucydides. He was overwhelmed (it is not wonderful) by the greatness of his self-imposed tasks; and the 'harsh reception of his theological work' disheartened him and made him fear that his writing might do as much harm as good. 'His sensitive nature received a wound from which it never quite recovered'. These remarks are characteristic, and illustrate painfully the difficulty of seeing oneself as others see us. It may not be strange that Jowett could not understand the impression which he was making; but to anyone else the probable reception was obvious. I confess that I cannot see in the essays upon St Paul what Dr Abbott sees in them. A cordial admirer, I fully admit, is more likely to be right than one who looks from outside and in a spirit of antagonism. I cannot, indeed, believe by any effort that the passages quite deserve this lofty eulogy, but I gladly admit that Dr Abbott probably sees real merit to which I am blinded by prejudice or want of sympathy. I read the book, however, when it first appeared; I have turned to it since to verify my impressions; and I confess that I am afraid that they are such as would inevitably occur to any man of plain understanding. One instance will be ample. Jowett writes an essay upon the theory of the Atonement. He holds

that the theory as ordinarily stated is repulsive. No unsophisticated mind will accept the doctrine that a just God pardons sinners in consideration of the suffering of a perfectly innocent man. In other words, the dogma accepted by the Salvation Army, or even by Butler, revolts the conscience. He tries, therefore, to re-state it in a variety of ways, and admits that the doctrine, turn and twist it as you will, remains morally objectionable. He suggests by way of escape that the erroneous version is produced by turning rhetoric into logic and mistaking a metaphor, one among many, for a kind of rigid legal formula. That may be true; and we will also suppose that St Paul meant no more than a metaphor. But a 'metaphor', unless it be a mere phrase, ought surely to indicate some truth that can be indicated, if not accurately formulated. It is pathetic, and it was once very puzzling, to see how Jowett plays hide-and-seek with this ultimate difficulty. One point is clear to him: the death of Christ was 'the greatest moral act ever done in this world'. It was greater, let us say, than the death of Socrates or of any Christian martyr. If so, it was the most stimulating of examples. But to say that it was merely this is obviously to deprive it of all the old theological significance. It is to say nothing which might not be consistently admitted by Renan, or even by Voltaire, or by the most thorough-going Agnostic. Jowett can only reply by referring to a 'mystery', though he admits that 'there may seem to be a kind of feebleness in falling back on mystery, when the traditional language of ages is so clear and explicit'. It amounts to saying, he admits, that we not only know nothing, but apparently never can know anything of the 'objective act' of reconciliation between God and man. Meanwhile the true difficulty is to see why there should be any mystery at all. The whole mystery is created by straining metaphors and 'turning rhetoric into logic'. Why not drop it?

The difficulty, of course, is not peculiar to Jowett. I mention it to illustrate the difficulty of the intelligent youth who in those days tried to adopt Jowett as a guide. Such a one felt, if I may adapt one of Johnson's phrases, as though his master had pushed him over a cliff and advised him to fall softly, or perhaps assured him that he was not falling at all. Before this time Jowett had been flirting with Hegelianism, and, without becoming a thorough-going disciple, was apparently attracted by the opportunities afforded by that system of saying and unsaying a thing at the same time. He puts aside all logical difficulties on the ground that somehow or other contradictory assertions may both be true. 'The notion that no idea can be composed out of two contradictory conceptions seems to arise out of the

analogy of the sensible world'. A thing cannot be both white and black (rather white and not white) at the same time. But there is, it appears, no absurdity in supposing that the 'mental analysis even of a matter of fact should involve us in contradictions'. He imagines the 'old puzzles of the Eleatics' to be still insoluble, and infers apparently that we may assume without further trouble both that the will is free and that it is not free. To some philosophers, I am aware, this has a meaning; but to common sense it presents itself simply as a very convenient plan for taking both sides of any important question. In later years, indeed, Jowett, while still having a certain leaning towards Hegel, became suspicious of metaphysics generally. Some knowledge of metaphysics, he says, 'is necessary to enable the mind to get rid of them'. Metaphysics ought, as he was always saying, to be subordinate to 'common sense', whereas Coleridge had said that common sense should be based on metaphysics.

The effect was that he decided to treat all problems in what he calls (in reference to free-will) the 'only rational way', that is 'historically'. You are, that means, to accept beliefs as facts without troubling about their reasons. The result of this method is curiously given in some notes of 1886, which, as Dr Abbott tells us, were his 'last reflections'. This, says Jowett, is the age of facts which are 'too strong for ideas', and of criticism which is 'too strong for dogma'. The Christian religion may change till miracles become absurd; the 'hope of immortality' mean 'only the present consciousness of goodness and of God', the 'personality of God, like the immortality of man, pass into an idea'; 'every moral act' be acknowledged to have a 'physical antecedent', and 'doctrines become unmeaning words'. Yet, he says, the essence of religion 'may still be self-sacrifice' and so forth—'a doctrine common to Plato and to the Gospel'. This (which is, of course, a rough private note) surely amounts, as the Germans say, to emptying out the baby with the bath. Christianity will be evacuated of every element which is not common to Plato. Indeed, we may go further. Jowett proceeds to speak of partly accepting Mr Herbert Spencer's Agnosticism; and though he always spoke with dislike of Comte and of Darwin, it is hard to see what positive objection he could make to either.

I confess, therefore, that I am simply puzzled when I find Jowett proposing a belief in 'the best form of Christianity', and his biographers fully accepting the statements. A Christianity without the supernatural, without doctrines, without immortality, and without a 'personal God' seems to be merely an alias for morality. Neither can I share Prof. Campbell's objection to a phrase of Carlyle. Carlyle, as we are reminded, had proposed

an 'exodus from Houndsditch', and yet 'the moment someone within the camp spoke words of truth and soberness' (that is, in the *Essays and Reviews* article), broke out with the phrase 'the sentinel who deserts should be shot'. J. S. Mill, on the other hand, as we are reminded, approved of clergymen who remained within the Church so long as they could accept its formulæ 'with common honesty'. I agree with both Mill and Carlyle. The prosecutors held sincerely that the essayist was preaching doctrines utterly inconsistent with Christianity. They not only held this sincerely, but I cannot doubt that they were right in their belief. Accept Jowett's version and the Christian services will become an elaborate mystification. 'Prayer', he says '(for fine weather and so forth), as at present conducted, is an absurdity', or 'an ambiguity of the worst kind'. How then could he join in prayers, which involve absurdity and ambiguity at every clause? How at least could he complain that men believing in the absurdities should try to turn him out? To them he appeared as a 'deserter', or rather a traitor within the camp, and rightly so if judged by the inevitable consequences of his actions. Mill, no doubt, was also right in saying that Jowett was justified in remaining so long as he could do so in 'common honesty'. He did not himself intend the consequences of his actions. His friend Stanley, who, as Carlyle used to say, was always boring holes in the bottom of the Church of England, was yet firmly convinced that he was helping the ship to float. I do not doubt the absolute sincerity of his and Jowett's conviction. But their fellow-passengers, who thought with equal sincerity that they were sending the ship to the bottom, inevitably desired to throw them overboard. Their good intention was no proof of the soundness of their calculation. Undoubtedly they meant well. 'Destroy the Church of England!' said Charles Buller, according to one of the best stories in this book. 'You must be mad! It is the only thing between us and real religion!' Free the Church, that is from the fetters of Parliament and lay jurisdiction, and you will hand it over to the fanatics. There is doubtless much truth in the epigram, and if for 'real religion' we read 'fanaticism' Jowett might have accepted the saying. He wished to keep the element of natural belief—of 'soberness and truth'—within the Church; and while he could do so, consistently with 'common honesty', he was personally justified. But there is another danger. When men of his ability defend the use of superstitious observances as 'metaphorical' or popular versions of truths, they may be playing into the hands of the superstitious. They sanction a device which can be turned against them. Other people will combine superstition and



reason to the profit of superstition. Divines have lately discovered how to accept the critical results which shocked readers of *Essays and Reviews* and yet to accept the whole theory of priestly magic. The compromise may result in the enslavement of reason instead of the neutralizing of superstition. I know not what may be the result to the Church of England, but the enterprise attempted in the best possible faith by Jowett and his friends, seems to be injurious to the higher interests of intellectual honesty. It was a hopeless endeavour to hide irreconcilable contrasts and pretend that they did not exist.

Jowett sincerely held 'Christianity' to be in some shape the great force on the side of the moral elevation of mankind. When removing what seems to others the very essence of the creed, he really supposed himself to be only removing 'incrustations'. That he could hold that position sincerely implies, as I fancy, an intellectual weakness admitted by his biographers. He catches aspects of opinions and expresses them pithily, but he never can concentrate his mind or bring his doctrines to a focus. His writing becomes discontinuous, he wanders round and round problems without distinctly answering them or bringing the whole to an issue. He plays with philosophical principles without ever exactly saying Yes or No. And, therefore, he would seem to be less qualified for exercising an influence than more vigorous, if more one-sided, men. What are you to make of a guide who, so far from saying which is the right path, objects to decidedly committing himself to any one? His pupil Green could at least declare that Hegel would take us out of the labyrinth; but Jowett could only think that perhaps Hegel might lead to some interesting points of view—not really better than others. Maurice's disciples, again, complained, we are told, that Jowett would persist in silence about their leader. 'I shall never join', he said in answer, 'with that modern Neoplatonism—it is so easy to substitute one mysticism for another'. The same view perhaps made him dislike Carlyle and Froude as romantics, if not charlatans. Newman and the later ritualists represent for him the natural enemies of common sense. But then where would common sense lead? Voltaire, we may say, was an incarnation of common sense, and of Voltaire Jowett asserted, 'somewhat perversely', that he had done more good than all the fathers of the Church put together. The 'perversity' is obvious, for Voltaire's desire to crush the '*infame*' was clearly not to Jowett's taste. The school which perhaps represented most clearly the development of the eighteenth century philosophy was that of J. S. Mill, but of the Utilitarians Jowett always spoke with marked dislike. Young men, as a rule, like a leader who

has some distinct aim, good or bad, and if Jowett were to be judged by that test one would say that no one of his time was less qualified to be a leader. To a distinct view of the importance of some solution he seems to have joined the profound conviction that no conceivable solution would hold water. 'He stood', says one of his pupils, in a rather different sense, 'at the parting of many ways', and he wrote 'No thoroughfare' upon them all.

Jowett's influence, then, was hardly that of a consistent or confident guide in speculation. It was not less real and perhaps something much better, though to define it precisely would require a personal knowledge which I do not possess. There is abundant proof in these volumes of his great power of attaching men of all varieties. All his friendships, we are told, were life-long. In spite of oddities and little asperities, he never apparently had a personal quarrel. Like Dr Johnson, he loved women and children, and felt as strongly as the doctor the importance of 'keeping his friendships in repair'. From the earliest Oxford days he formed close alliances; as the old friends dropped off, he drew new recruits from his pupils; and he kept up intimacies with many who had passed to wider scenes of action. A man who is 'nicknameable' must be a good fellow, and the phrase 'Old Growler', with its vague suggestion of a surly but trusty watch-dog, fits a man who could attach in spite of external crustiness. There is only one aspect, however, upon which it may be permissible for an outsider to dwell. Jowett, it strikes one forcibly as one reads, was the last and one of the finest products of the old school of 'dons'. He came to the front before the old system had been thrown into distraction by University Commissions, and though he was an important leader during the subsequent changes, he was never in perfect sympathy with reformers who would radically alter the system. I have often wished that some skilful hand would draw a portrait of the old college don before he is finally numbered with the dodoes. I present the suggestion to anyone in want of a setting for a novel of 'sixty years since'. A college don was for the most part a young clergyman anxious to succeed to a living and marry a wife. For him, a fellowship was a mere step on the path to comfort. But some men, by external fate or idiosyncrasy, were doomed to permanent celibacy. Then they took one of two paths—either they acquired a taste in port-wine and became soured or mildly (sometimes more than mildly) sybaritical; or else they accepted the college in place of a family, and felt for it a devotion such as an old monk may have had for his convent. It was their world; their whole 'environment'; the object of a local patriotism as intense as could ever animate

patriots in a wider sphere. A touching anecdote tells how Whewell, the typical Cambridge don, begged when dying to be raised in his bed that he might have one more glance at the great court of Trinity. That was the last flash of an enthusiastic love for the scene so intimately associated with boyish aspirations and manly energies. Jowett's love of Balliol was equally intense, and is the most characteristic part of his career. Balliol had absorbed him. 'The college', he said, 'is the great good and comfort of my life'. 'Make the college beautiful', was one of his last sayings. Some men have joined equal devotion to a college to a really low ideal of its true functions, but Jowett's ideal was worthy of a man of keen intellectual interest in the great problems of his day. His college deserved devotion; it had an almost unique position; and, as outsiders must grant, had 'produced' a longer list of eminent men than almost any rival than can be mentioned. The phrase 'produced', too, had more than its usual propriety. It is generally equivalent to 'not extinguished', but it is undeniable that Jowett somehow acted as a positive and lasting stimulant upon his pupils.

This dominant passion seems to explain and to reconcile us to Jowett's obvious foibles. To the old dons of the narrower variety the college became an ultimate end; if it taught young men it deserved gratitude for undertaking a troublesome and strictly superfluous duty; and any attempt to tamper with its constitution in order to make it a better school was regarded as a sacrilege. Jowett was free from this superstition in its extremest form. He felt as strongly as any reformer that colleges could only justify their independence by thorough educational efficiency; but he was equally clear that in point of fact their efficiency could only be preserved by maintaining their independence. The characteristic college system was admirable in his eyes. An undergraduate is not to be a mere student, after the German fashion, but the member of a little corporate body, imbibing a spirit of loyalty, and subject to the discipline and the judicious direction of the college-tutors. This was the valuable and even vital part of the English University system, which in Jowett's hands, more than in anyone's, was a reality. He never, we are told, got over the shyness caused by his temperament; he was capable of persistent silence and of decisive snubbing; he could tell a youth who addressed him to hold his tongue rather than talk such nonsense; and one can very well believe that he was not universally popular. Everybody is not grateful for having his knuckles rapped at the right moment, though the rap may represent a sense of duty overpowering reluctance to speak. At any rate, the tendency to administer

a good tonic, bitter or not, became part of his nature. He was, as Professor Campbell puts it, an 'irrepressible Mentor'. He had experience enough to know what is the general fate of good advice, especially when the recipient has no longer the malleability of youth. But he advised at all hazards, in season and out of season. When he sees a friend in danger of relaxing his zeal, even under the pressure of sorrow, he cannot help applying the goad. He may help his friend at least to 'pull himself together'; and no doubt there are times when it does a man good to have a thorough shake. The advice, too, seems always to have been prompted by genuine goodwill which generally disarmed resentment. One feels, however, that there is a certain humorous side to the propensity. When a man sees his old schoolmaster, he generally looks back upon the old emotion of awful reverence as a quaint memory which has no living force left in it. But in Jowett's mind the relation seems to have presented itself as though it were as permanent and indissoluble as marriage. Once his pupil, you were not the less his pupil, though you might have become a judge, or a bishop, or a Cabinet Minister. You were absorbed in State affairs instead of the study of Plato; but you would still be the better for a friendly crack of the old whip. Jowett was charged with having thought too much of genius in early years and of success in later. He measured a man by what he achieved and not by his capability of achieving; and was accused of being a little too fond of the 'great'. This, again, coincides with the natural view of the college-tutor. He loves his pupils, it is true, but he always loves them as members of the college. He wishes to raise a harvest of first-class men, and believes a first-class to be an infallible indication of merit, and must be more than human if he does not exaggerate its importance. He wishes to see the college-boards ornamented with long lists of men distinguished in their later career; to turn out men whose portraits may be hung in the college-hall; and naturally thinks of it as a personal injury, or, which is the same thing, as an injury to the college, if some man of genius fails to obtain tangible honours. It is not that the genius is necessarily inferior—and Jowett could recognize, when it was fairly put before him, the inadequacy of success as a test of merit—but that the genius has not fulfilled the true final end of man—the glorification of his college. A man might fail at the Bar or in Parliament, and yet be successful in the eyes of "all-judging Jove"; but even Jove could not think much of a man who failed to promote the interests of Balliol. Unless he could do something for the college he was of no use in the world. Jowett's interest in his pupils was most admirable; he spared neither time

nor trouble as a tutor ; he did more for his men as a master than all the Cambridge heads of houses put together ; he was the most generous and open-handed of men, whenever the opportunity offered ; if his shyness made it hard for him to be on easy terms with some of his pupils, he could at least be an 'irrepressible' and inexorable Mentor. It was the intense interest of a captain in his crew ; and the friendships, doubtless most genuine, were not simply personal. Jowett, one fancies, could not separate himself even in thought from Balliol ; membership of the college was not an accident superadded to him or his friends, but an essential part of their personal identity, and therefore it was impossible to abstract from their effect on the college. Perhaps, one may guess, this went for a good deal in his own appreciation, if it existed, of 'the great'. Jowett, as Professor Campbell remarks, became so practical from the time of his coming to rule the college that some people thought that he was losing his interest in theology. He threw most of his energy into the task of improving the college, materially as well as morally. He spent his own money upon new buildings and new cricket-ground, and so forth, and appealed to all his old friends to support him. He had, that is, to acquire the great art of stimulating the flow of subscriptions, and seems to have become, if the word may be allowed, a most accomplished 'tout'. Naturally, for this purpose, as well as for advancing the interests of his pupils, the support of the great and rich was of the highest importance. They were the predestined milch-cows who had to be skilfully manipulated. It is impossible to learn that art thoroughly without regarding your victims with a certain complacency. In order that their power and their purses are to be turned to the right account, one must cultivate their sympathies, and, without undue subservience, of which there seems to be no ground for accusing Jowett, one must adopt the mental attitude from which the value of wealth and influence receives fair recognition. They must be courted, not from snobbishness or personal motives, but from a hearty appreciation of their utility as possible supporters of the good cause. Another peculiarity of the don has some meaning too. The old college don often professed to look down upon the outside world ; but was conscious at heart that the world is a little inclined to retort by calling him a rusty pedant. He was never better pleased than when he could fairly show that he too was a man of true literary and social culture—able to judge the last poem or novel, as well as to lecture upon Plato and Æschylus. Jowett's cordial spirit of hospitality was fostered and stimulated by this sentiment. He drew all manner of distinguished people to Balliol Lodge in later years ; he would show

them—as he could well show them in the time of H. S. Smith—that Balliol too was a centre of enlightenment; and he could prove to Oxford in general that a college might be attractive to the foremost statesmen and men of letters. He could do so, of course, because his hospitality was thoroughly spontaneous, and his friendship with eminent writers, such as Tennyson, Browning, and George Eliot, rested upon genuine appreciation. But a certain additional flavour was given by the collection in the shadow of the old college buildings of people at home in circles wider than the academical.

Jowett was Balliol and Balliol was Jowett. His foibles—they do not seem to have been very serious—were consequences of this tacit identification. To make the college as great a factor as possible in the higher ranks of English society, to extend and strengthen its influence in every direction, was to fulfil the main purpose of his life. And that—as might be illustrated by the history of larger societies which have tried to influence the outside world—involves a certain amount of mutual accommodation. ‘To do much good’, says Jowett, in 1883, ‘you must be a very honest and able man, thinking of nothing else day and night; and you must also be a considerable piece of rogue, having many reticences and concealments’. ‘A good sort of roguery’, he adds, ‘is never to say a word against anybody, however much they may deserve it’. That is a version of some very orthodox phrases about the wisdom of the servant and being all things to all men. Jowett in this sense may be called a bit of a ‘rogue’; only remembering that his roguery meant no more than a little difficulty in distinguishing between the interests of Balliol and the interests of the universe. In one direction it brought him into collision with a more advanced wing of reformers. Pattison imagined that the primary end of a university was to diffuse intellectual light, and inferred the propriety of devoting college revenues to the ‘endowment of research’. There, as we find, Jowett had his reserves. He drew the line distinctly at the point at which the interests of the university might conflict with the interests of the colleges. To divert money from ‘prize fellowships’ to professorships was to sacrifice a stimulus to students and a certain bond of connection between the colleges and the outside world in order to enable a few men to devote themselves to ‘minute philosophy’ and elaborate pursuit of useless knowledge. He looked with suspicion upon certain tendencies of modern Oxford. The present teaching, he says (about 1878), is ‘utterly bad for students’, but ‘flattering to the teacher’. The old-fashioned college-tutor, if he did his duty, gave ‘catechetical’ lectures; that is, he dealt with students individually, stimulated

their minds and investigated their progress. The new professor gives smart lectures, lets the pupils pick up what crumbs they can, but aims at winning praise for his eloquence and does not care whether his hearers are really able to follow him or at most catch the art of stringing smart phrases into a leading article. He is, in short, thinking about himself instead of his college, and has lost the old corporate spirit which was so fully imbibed by Jowett. Jowett's conservatism may have been well or ill judged. I am only concerned to say that it was at least characteristic. The old college system which he had worked so efficiently, must, he held, in no case be lowered in efficiency. He looked rather coldly, for example, upon the movement for women's education, because he thought it likely to interfere at various points with the old order, and evidently thought that Pattison's ideas were calculated to hamper the colleges without better result than endowing facile orators and useless investigation of trifles. It would diminish the educational power of the colleges in order to help the accumulation of useless knowledge dear in the eyes of Dryasdust.

The question as to the true theory of universities is a wide one, and I will not venture even to hint at any opinion about it. What is plain is that Jowett substantially adhered to the older doctrine. Even if 'research' were really stimulated by substituting professors for college tutors its value was doubtful. 'Is learning of any use?' he asks, and he replies that it is worse than useless except as a stimulant to thought and imagination. He thought that Green's lectures did harm by diverting lads from 'poetry and literature' to wandering in the barren fields of metaphysics. Young men, the implication seems to be, should not aim at conquering any province of knowledge—the conquest must be superficial or won at the price of one-sided and narrow development. A premature specialist is a mental cripple—a prodigy made by bandaging the vital organs. And what is true of metaphysics and 'learning' is equally true of theology. If Jowett's influence upon the outside world was, as I have suggested, not altogether good, it might well be excellent in the college so understood. A man with a definite creed is tempted to instil it into his pupils. He will give them a ready-made set of dogmas and try to frighten them out of obnoxious lines of enquiry. Jowett at least could not make the college into a caucus for the support of a sect. As Pater reports, part of his charm was owing to 'a certain mystery about his own philosophic and other opinions'. He was throwing out suggestions, not imposing opinions; going about like a Socrates cross-examining and dislodging old prejudices with a happy impartiality, no,

dogmatizing or enlisting recruits for any definite party. The college was to be a gymnasium to strengthen the mental fibre, not a place of drilling according to any regulation. What was a defect in a philosopher might be an excellence in a teacher. Of the disciples of Newman, half were permanently enslaved without ever looking at the doctrine from the outside, and the other half, who ultimately rebelled, suffered permanently from the dislocating effect of the revulsion. Jowett's pupils had at least not to lament that their minds had been put into a strait-waistcoat injurious even if ultimately thrown aside.

In this sense we may understand Jowett's 'influence' as identical with the influence of the college which he did so much to mould. You might not learn anything very definite, but you were subject to a vigorous course of prodding and rousing, which is perhaps the best of training for early years. Jowett is judged from a wrong point of view when we try to regard him as a leader of thought; but his influence was excellent as an irritant, which at least would not allow a man to lay himself in intellectual slumbers. You might be propelled in any direction, but at least you would not stand still. How much has been done by Balliol is not for me to say; but Jowett's real influence is to be found by considering him as an intrinsic element of Balliol. And this may suggest a final remark. The last ten years of life, as Jowett frequently remarked, are the best: best, because you are freest from care, freest from illusion and fullest of experience. They must no doubt be fullest of experience; they may be freest from care, if you are head of a college, and have no domestic ties; but unluckily the illusions which have vanished generally include the illusion that anything which you did at your best had any real value, or that anything which you can do hereafter will be even as good. One of the advantages of Jowett's identification of himself with his college was perhaps that he was never freed from this illusion. He won the advantage at a heavy price—the price of not knowing the greatest happiness. But a man who is swallowed up in a corporate body, which will outlast himself, acquires a kind of decorative immortality. His own life is only an element in the more permanent life. His work could be carried on by his successors, as the buildings which he helped to erect would remain for future generations. A man in that position might naturally, but as his authority and his experience grew with age, he was stamping himself more effectively upon the organism of which he was a member, and in that sense, hope, in spite of Dryden, to receive from 'the last dregs of life' 'what the first sprightly runnings could not give'. That is an enviable frame of mind.



# On the Interpretation of Scripture

§ 1. It is a strange, though familiar, fact that great differences of opinion exist respecting the Interpretation of Scripture. All Christians receive the Old and New Testament as sacred writings, but they are not agreed about the meaning which they attribute to them. The book itself remains as at the first ; the commentators seem rather to reflect the changing atmosphere of the world or of the Church. Different individuals or bodies of Christians have a different point of view, to which their interpretation is narrowed or made to conform. It is assumed, as natural and necessary, that the same words will present one idea to the mind of the Protestant, another to the Roman Catholic ; one meaning to the German, another to the English interpreter. The Ultramontane or Anglican divine is not supposed to be impartial in his treatment of passages which afford an apparent foundation for the doctrine of purgatory or the primacy of St Peter on the one hand, or the three orders of clergy and the divine origin of episcopacy on the other. It is a received view with many, that the meaning of the Bible is to be defined by that of the Prayer-book ; while there are others who interpret ' the Bible and the Bible only ' with a silent reference to the traditions of the Reformation. Philosophical differences are in the background, into which the differences about Scripture also resolve themselves. They seem to run up at last into a difference of opinion respecting Revelation itself—whether given beside the human faculties or through them, whether an interruption of the laws of nature or their perfection and fulfilment.

This effort to pull the authority of Scripture in different directions is not peculiar to our own day ; the same phenomenon appears in the past history of the Church. At the Reformation, in the Nicene or Pelagian times, the New Testament was the ground over which men fought ; it might also be compared to the armoury which furnished them with weapons. Opposite

aspects of the truth which it contains were appropriated by different sides. 'Justified by faith without works' and 'justified by faith as well as works' are equally Scriptural expressions; the one has become the formula of Protestants, the other of Roman Catholics. The fifth and ninth chapters of the *Romans*, single verses such as 1 *Corinthians*, iii, 15, *John*, iii, 3, still bear traces of many a life-long strife in the pages of commentators. The difference of interpretation which prevails among ourselves is partly traditional, that is to say, inherited from the controversies of former ages. The use made of Scripture by Fathers of the Church, as well as by Luther and Calvin, affects our idea of its meaning at the present hour.

Another cause of the multitude of interpretations is the growth or progress of the human mind itself. Modes of interpreting vary as time goes on; they partake of the general state of literature or knowledge. It has not been easily or at once that mankind have learnt to realize the character of sacred writings—they seem almost necessarily to veil themselves from human eyes as circumstances change; it is the old age of the world only that has at length understood its childhood. (Or rather perhaps is beginning to understand it, and learning to make allowance for its own deficiency of knowledge; for the infancy of the human race, as of the individual, affords but few indications of the workings of the mind within.) More often than we suppose, the great sayings and doings upon the earth, 'thoughts that breathe and words that burn', are lost in a sort of chaos to the apprehension of those that come after. Much of past history is dimly seen and receives only a conventional interpretation, even when the memorials of it remain. There is a time at which the freshness of early literature is lost; mankind have turned rhetoricians, and no longer write or feel in the spirit which created it. In this unimaginative period in which sacred or ancient writings are partially unintelligible, many methods have been taken at different times to adapt the ideas of the past to the wants of the present. One age has wandered into the flowery paths of allegory,

In pious meditation fancy fed.

Another has straitened the liberty of the Gospel by a rigid application of logic, the former being a method which was at first more naturally applied to the Old Testament, the latter to the New. Both methods of interpretation, the mystical and logical, as they may be termed, have been practised on the *Vedas* and the *Koran*, as well as on the Jewish and Christian Scriptures,

the true glory and note of divinity in these latter being not that they have hidden mysterious or double meanings, but a simple and universal one, which is beyond them and will survive them. Since the revival of literature, interpreters have not unfrequently fallen into error of another kind from a pedantic and misplaced use of classical learning; the minute examination of words often withdrawing the mind from more important matters. A tendency may be observed within the last century to clothe systems of philosophy in the phraseology of Scripture. But 'new wine cannot thus be put into old bottles'. Though roughly distinguishable by different ages, these modes or tendencies also exist together; the remains of all of them may be remarked in some of the popular commentaries of our own day.

More common than any of these methods, and not peculiar to any age, is that which may be called by way of distinction the rhetorical one. The tendency to exaggerate or amplify the meaning of simple words for the sake of edification may indeed have a practical use in sermons, the object of which is to awaken not so much the intellect as the heart and conscience. Spiritual food, like natural, may require to be of a certain bulk to nourish the human mind. But this 'tendency to edification' has had an unfortunate influence on the interpretation of Scripture. For the preacher almost necessarily oversteps the limits of actual knowledge, his feelings overflow with the subject; even if he have the power, he has seldom the time for accurate thought or inquiry. And in the course of years spent in writing, perhaps, without study, he is apt to persuade himself, if not others, of the truth of his own repetitions. The trivial consideration of making a discourse of sufficient length is often a reason why he overlays the words of Christ and His Apostles with commonplaces. The meaning of the text is not always the object which he has in view, but some moral or religious lesson which he has found it necessary to append to it; some cause which he is pleading, some error of the day which he has to combat. And while in some passages he hardly dares to trust himself with the full force of Scripture (*Matt.*, v, 34; ix, 13; xix, 21; *Acts*, v, 29), in others he extracts more from words than they really imply (*Matt.*, xxii, 21; xxviii, 20; *Rom.*, xiii, 1; &c.), being more eager to guard against the abuse of some precept than to enforce it, attenuating or adapting the utterance of prophecy to the requirements or to the measure of modern times. Any one who has ever written sermons is aware how hard it is to apply Scripture to the wants of his hearers and at the same time to preserve its meaning.

The phenomenon which has been described in the preceding pages is so familiar, and yet so extraordinary, that it requires an effort of thought to appreciate its true nature. We do not at once see the absurdity of the same words having many senses, or free our minds from the illusion that the Apostle or Evangelist must have written with a reference to the creeds or controversies or circumstances of other times. Let it be considered, then, that this extreme variety of interpretation is found to exist in the case of no other book, but of the Scriptures only. Other writings are preserved to us in dead languages—Greek, Latin, Oriental, some of them in fragments, all of them originally in manuscript. It is true that difficulties arise in the explanation of these writings, especially in the most ancient, from our imperfect acquaintance with the meaning of words, or the defectiveness of copies, or the want of some historical or geographical information which is required to present an event or character in its true bearing. In comparison with the wealth and light of modern literature, our knowledge of Greek classical authors, for example, may be called imperfect and shadowy. Some of them have another sort of difficulty arising from subtlety or abruptness in the use of language ; in lyric poetry especially, and some of the earlier prose, the greatness of the thought struggles with the stammering lips. It may be observed that all these difficulties occur also in Scripture ; they are found equally in sacred and profane literature. But the meaning of classical authors is known with comparative certainty ; and the interpretation of them seems to rest on a scientific basis. It is not, therefore, to philological or historical difficulties that the greater part of the uncertainty in the interpretation of Scripture is to be attributed. No ignorance of Hebrew or Greek is sufficient to account for it. Even the *Vedas* and the *Zendavesta*, though beset by obscurities of language probably greater than are found in any portion of the Bible, are interpreted, at least by European scholars, according to fixed rules, and beginning to be clearly understood.

To bring the parallel home, let us imagine the remains of some well-known Greek author, as Plato or Sophocles, receiving the same treatment at the hands of the world which the Scriptures have experienced. The text of such an author, when first printed by Aldus or Stephens, would be gathered from the imperfect or miswritten copies which fell in the way of the editors ; after a while older and better manuscripts come to light, and the power of using and estimating the value of manuscripts is greatly improved. We may suppose, further, that the readings of these older copies do not always conform to some received canons of

criticism. Up to the year 1550, or 1624, alterations, often proceeding on no principle, have been introduced into the text; but now a stand is made—an edition which appeared at the latter of the two dates just mentioned is invested with authority; this authorized text is a *pièce de résistance* against innovation. Many reasons are given why it is better to have bad readings to which the world is accustomed than good ones which are novel and strange—why the later manuscripts of Plato or Sophocles are often to be preferred to earlier ones—why it is useless to remove imperfections where perfect accuracy is not to be attained. A fear of disturbing the critical canons which have come down from former ages is, however, suspected to be one reason for the opposition. And custom and prejudice, and the nicety of the subject, and all the arguments which are intelligible to the many against the truth, which is intelligible only to the few, are thrown into the scale to preserve the works of Plato or Sophocles as nearly as possible in the received text.

Leaving the text, we proceed to interpret and translate. The meaning of Greek words is known with tolerable certainty; and the grammar of the Greek language has been minutely analyzed both in ancient and modern times. Yet the interpretation of Sophocles is tentative and uncertain; it seems to vary from age to age: to some the great tragedian has appeared to embody in his choruses certain theological or moral ideas of his own age or country; there are others who find there an allegory of the Christian religion or of the history of modern Europe. Several schools of critics have commented on his works; to the Englishman he has presented one meaning, to the Frenchman another, to the German a third; the interpretations have also differed with the philosophical systems which the interpreters espoused. To one the same words have appeared to bear a moral, to another a symbolical meaning; a third is determined wholly by the authority of old commentators; while there is a disposition to condemn the scholar who seeks to interpret Sophocles from himself only, and with reference to the ideas and beliefs of the age in which he lived. And the error of such an one is attributed not only to some intellectual but even to a moral obliquity which prevents his seeing the true meaning.

It would be tedious to follow into details the absurdity which has been supposed. By such methods it would be truly said that Sophocles or Plato may be made to mean anything. It would seem as if some *Novum Organum* were needed to lay down rules of interpretation for ancient literature. Still one other supposition has to be introduced which will appear, perhaps, more

extravagant than any which have preceded. Conceive then that these modes of interpreting Sophocles had existed for ages ; that great institutions and interests had become interwoven with them, and in some degree even the honour of nations and churches—is it too much to say that in such a case they would be changed with difficulty, and that they would continue to be maintained long after critics and philosophers had seen that they were indefensible ?

No one who has a Christian feeling would place classical on a level with sacred literature ; and there are other particulars in which the preceding comparison fails, as, for example, the style and subject. But, however different the subject, although the interpretation of Scripture requires 'a vision and faculty divine', or at least a moral and religious interest which is not needed in the study of a Greek poet or philosopher, yet in what may be termed the externals of interpretation, that is to say, the meaning of words, the connexion of sentences, the settlement of the text, the evidence of facts, the same rules apply to the Old and New Testaments as to other books. And the figure is no exaggeration of the erring fancy of men in the use of Scripture, or of the tenacity with which they cling to the interpretations of other times, or of the arguments by which they maintain them. All the resources of knowledge may be turned into a means not of discovering the true rendering, but of upholding a received one. Grammar appears to start from an independent point of view, yet inquiries into the use of the article or the preposition have been observed to wind round into a defence of some doctrine. Rhetoric often magnifies its own want of taste into the design of inspiration. Logic (that other mode of rhetoric) is apt to lend itself to the illusion, by stating erroneous explanations with a clearness which is mistaken for truth. 'Metaphysical aid' carries away the common understanding into a region where it must blindly follow. Learning obscures as well as illustrates ; it heaps up chaff when there is no more wheat. These are some of the ways in which the sense of Scripture has become confused, by the help of tradition, in the course of ages, under a load of commentators.

The book itself remains as at the first unchanged amid the changing interpretations of it. The office of the interpreter is not to add another, but to recover the original one ; the meaning, that is, of the words as they struck on the ears or flashed before the eyes of those who first heard and read them. He has to transfer himself to another age ; to imagine that he is a disciple of Christ or Paul ; to disengage himself from all that follows.

The history of Christendom is nothing to him ; but only the scene at Galilee or Jerusalem, the handful of believers who gathered themselves together at Ephesus, or Corinth, or Rome. His eye is fixed on the form of one like the Son of man, or of the Prophet who was girded with a garment of camel's hair, or of the Apostle who had a thorn in the flesh. The greatness of the Roman Empire is nothing to him ; it is an inner not an outer world that he is striving to restore. All the after-thoughts of theology are nothing to him ; they are not the true lights which light him in difficult places. His concern is with a book in which, as in other ancient writings, are some things of which we are ignorant ; which defect of our knowledge cannot however be supplied by the conjectures of fathers or divines. The simple words of that book he tries to preserve absolutely pure from the refinements or distinctions of later times. He acknowledges that they are fragmentary, and would suspect himself, if out of fragments he were able to create a well-rounded system or a continuous history. The greater part of his learning is a knowledge of the text itself ; he has no delight in the voluminous literature which has overgrown it. He has no theory of interpretation ; a few rules guarding against common errors are enough for him. His object is to read Scripture like any other book, with a real interest and not merely a conventional one. He wants to be able to open his eyes and see or imagine things as they truly are.

Nothing would be more likely to restore a natural feeling on this subject than a history of the Interpretation of Scripture. It would take us back to the beginning ; it would present in one view the causes which have darkened the meaning of words in the course of ages ; it would clear away the remains of dogmas, systems, controversies, which are encrusted upon them. It would show us the 'erring fancy' of interpreters assuming sometimes to have the Spirit of God Himself, yet unable to pass beyond the limits of their own age, and with a judgment often biassed by party. Great names there have been among them, names of men who may be reckoned also among the benefactors of the human race, yet comparatively few who have understood the thoughts of other times, or who have bent their minds to 'interrogate' the meaning of words. Such a work would enable us to separate the elements of doctrine and tradition with which the meaning of Scripture is encumbered in our own day. It would mark the different epochs of interpretation from the time when the living word was in process of becoming a book to Origen and Tertullian, from Origen to Jerome and

Augustine, from Jerome and Augustine to Abelard and Aquinas ; again making a new beginning with the revival of literature, from Erasmus, the father of Biblical criticism in more recent times, with Calvin and Beza for his immediate successors, through Grotius and Hammond, down to De Wette and Meier, our own contemporaries. We should see how the mystical interpretation of Scripture originated in the Alexandrian age ; how it blended with the logical and rhetorical ; how both received weight and currency from their use in support of the claims and teachings of the Church. We should notice how the ' new learning ' of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries gradually awakened the critical faculty in the study of the sacred writings ; how Biblical criticism has slowly but surely followed in the track of philological and historical (not without a remoter influence exercised upon it also by natural science) ; how, too, the form of the scholastic literature, and even of notes on the classics, insensibly communicated itself to commentaries on Scripture. We should see how the word inspiration, from being used in a general way to express what may be called the prophetic spirit of Scripture, has passed, within the last two centuries, into a sort of technical term ; how, in other instances, the practice or feeling of earlier ages has been hollowed out into the theory or system of later ones. We should observe how the popular explanations of prophecy as in heathen (*Thucydides*, ii, 54), so also in Christian times, had adapted themselves to the circumstances of mankind. We might remark that in our own country, and in the present generation especially, the interpretation of Scripture had assumed an apologetic character, as though making an effort to defend itself against some supposed inroad of science and criticism ; while among German commentators there is, for the first time in the history of the world, an approach to agreement and certainty. For example, the diversity among German writers on prophecy is far less than among English ones. That is a new phenomenon which has to be acknowledged. More than any other subject of human knowledge, Biblical criticism has hung to the past ; it has been hitherto found truer to the traditions of the Church than to the words of Christ. It has made, however, two great steps onward—at the time of the Reformation and in our day. The diffusion of a critical spirit in history and literature is affecting the criticism of the Bible in our own day in a manner not unlike the burst of intellectual life in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries. Educated persons are beginning to ask, not what Scripture may be made to mean, but what it does. And it is no exaggeration to say that the who in the present



state of knowledge will confine himself to the plain meaning of words and the study of their context may know more of the original spirit and intention of the authors of the New Testament than all the controversial writers of former ages put together.

Such a history would be of great value to philosophy as well as to theology. It would be the history of the human mind in one of its most remarkable manifestations. For ages which are not original show their character in the interpretation of ancient writings. Creating nothing, and incapable of that effort of imagination which is required in a true criticism of the past, they read and explain the thoughts of former times by the conventional modes of their own. Such a history would form a kind of preface or prolegomena to the study of Scripture. Like the history of science, it would save many a useless toil; it would indicate the uncertainties on which it is not worth while to speculate further; the bypaths or labyrinths in which men lose themselves; the mines that are already worked out. He who reflects on the multitude of explanations which already exist of the 'number of the beast', 'the two witnesses', 'the little horn', 'the man of sin', who observes the manner in which these explanations have varied with the political movements of our own time, will be unwilling to devote himself to a method of inquiry in which there is so little appearance of certainty or progress. These interpretations would destroy one another if they were all placed side by side in a tabular analysis. It is an instructive fact, which may be mentioned in passing, that Joseph Mede, the greatest authority on this subject, twice fixed the end of the world in the last century and once during his own lifetime. In like manner, he who notices the circumstance that the explanations of the first chapter of *Genesis* have slowly changed, and, as it were, retreated before the advance of geology, will be unwilling to add another to the spurious reconcilements of science and revelation. Or to take an example of another kind, the Protestant divine who perceives that the types and figures of the Old Testament are employed by Roman Catholics in support of the tenets of their Church, will be careful not to use weapons which it is impossible to guide, and which may with equal force be turned against himself. Those who have handled them on the Protestant side have before now fallen victims to them, not observing as they fell that it was by their own hand.

Much of the uncertainty which prevails in the interpretation of Scripture arises out of party efforts to wrest its meaning to different sides. There are, however, deeper reasons which have

hindered the natural meaning of the text from immediately and universally prevailing. One of these is the unsettled state of many questions which have an important but indirect bearing on this subject. Some of these questions veil themselves in ambiguous terms ; and no one likes to draw them out of their hiding-place into the light of day. In natural science it is felt to be useless to build on assumptions ; in history we look with suspicion on *a priori* ideas of what ought to have been ; in mathematics, when a step is wrong, we pull the house down until we reach the point at which the error is discovered. But in theology it is otherwise ; there the tendency has been to conceal the unsoundness of the foundation under the fairness and loftiness of the superstructure. It has been thought safer to allow arguments to stand which, although fallacious, have been on the right side, than to point out their defect. And thus many principles have imperceptibly grown up which have overridden facts. No one would interpret Scripture as many do, but for certain previous suppositions with which we come to the perusal of it. 'There can be no error in the Word of God', therefore the discrepancies in the books of *Kings* and *Chronicles* are only apparent, or may be attributed to differences in the copies : 'It is a thousand times more likely that the interpreter should err than the inspired writer'. For a like reason the failure of a prophecy is never admitted, in spite of Scripture and of history (*Jer.*, xxxvi, 30 ; *Isaiah*, xxiii ; *Amos*, vii, 10-17) ; the mention of a name later than the supposed age of the prophet is not allowed, as in other writings, to be taken in evidence of the date (*Isaiah*, xlv, 1). The accuracy of the Old Testament is measured not by the standard of primeval history, but of a modern critical one, which, contrary to all probability, is supposed to be attained ; this arbitrary standard once assumed, it becomes a point of honour or of faith to defend every name, date, place, which occurs. Or to take another class of questions, it is said that 'the various theories of the origin of the three first *Gospels* are all equally unknown to the Holy Catholic Church', or as another writer of a different school expresses himself, 'they tend to sap the inspiration of the New Testament'. Again, the language in which our Saviour speaks of his own union with the Father is interpreted by the language of the creeds. Those who remonstrate against double senses, allegorical interpretations, forced reconcilements, find themselves met by a sort of presupposition that 'God speaks not as man speaks'. The limitation of the human faculties is confusedly appealed to as a reason for abstaining from investigations which are quite within their

limits. The suspicion of Deism, or perhaps of Atheism, awaits inquiry. By such fears a good man refuses to be influenced; a philosophical mind is apt to cast them aside with too much bitterness. It is better to close the book than to read it under conditions of thought which are imposed from without. Whether those conditions of thought are the traditions of the Church, or the opinions of the religious world—Catholic or Protestant—makes no difference. They are inconsistent with the freedom of the truth and the moral character of the Gospel. It becomes necessary, therefore, to examine briefly some of these prior questions which lie in the way of a reasonable criticism.

§ 2. Among these previous questions, that which first presents itself is the one already alluded to—the question of inspiration. Almost all Christians agree in the word, which use and tradition have consecrated to express the reverence which they truly feel for the Old and New Testaments. But here the agreement of opinion ends; the meaning of inspiration has been variously explained, or more often passed over in silence from a fear of stirring the difficulties that would arise about it. It is one of those theological terms which may be regarded as ‘great peacemakers’, but which are also sources of distrust and misunderstanding. For while we are ready to shake hands with any one who uses the same language as ourselves, a doubt is apt to insinuate itself whether he takes language in the same senses—whether a particular term conveys all the associations to another which it does to ourselves—whether it is not possible that one who disagrees about the word may not be more nearly agreed about the thing. The advice has, indeed, been given to the theologian that he ‘should take care of words and leave things to themselves’; the authority, however, who gives the advice is not good—it is placed by Goethe in the mouth of Mephistopheles. Pascal seriously charges the Jesuits with acting on a similar maxim—excommunicating those who meant the same thing and said another, holding communion with those who said the same thing and meant another. But this is not the way to heal the wounds of the Church of Christ; we cannot thus ‘skin and film’ the weak places of theology. Errors about words, and the attribution to words themselves of an excessive importance, lie at the root of theological as of other confusions. In theology they are more dangerous than in other sciences, because they cannot so readily be brought to the test of facts.

The word inspiration has received more numerous gradations and distinctions of meaning than perhaps any other in the whole

of theology. There is an inspiration of superintendence and an inspiration of suggestion ; an inspiration which would have been consistent with the Apostle or Evangelist falling into error, and an inspiration which would have prevented him from erring ; verbal organic inspiration by which the inspired person is the passive utterer of a Divine Word, and an inspiration which acts through the character of the sacred writer ; there is an inspiration which absolutely communicates the fact to be revealed or statement to be made, and an inspiration which does not supersede the ordinary knowledge of human events ; there is an inspiration which demands infallibility in matters of doctrine, but allows for mistakes in fact. Lastly, there is a view of inspiration which recognizes only its supernatural and prophetic character, and a view of inspiration which regards the Apostles and Evangelists as equally inspired in their writings and in their lives, and in both receiving the guidance of the Spirit of truth in a manner not different in kind but only in degree from ordinary Christians. Many of these explanations lose sight of the original meaning and derivation of the word ; some of them are framed with the view of meeting difficulties ; all perhaps err in attempting to define what, though real, is incapable of being defined in an exact manner. Nor for any of the higher or supernatural views of inspiration is there any foundation in the *Gospels* or *Epistles*. There is no appearance in their writings that the Evangelists or Apostles had any inward gift, or were subject to any power external to them different from that of preaching or teaching which they daily exercised ; nor do they anywhere lead us to suppose that they were free from error or infirmity. St Paul writes like a Christian teacher, exhibiting all the emotions and vicissitudes of human feeling, speaking, indeed, with authority, but hesitating in difficult cases and more than once correcting himself, corrected, too, by the course of events in his expectation of the coming of Christ. The Evangelist ' who saw it, bare record, and his record is true : and he knoweth that he saith true ' (*John*, xix, 35). Another Evangelist does not profess to be an original narrator, but only ' to set forth in order a declaration of what eye-witnesses had delivered ', like many others whose writings have not been preserved to us (*Luke*, i, 1, 2). And the result is in accordance with the simple profession and style in which they describe themselves ; there is no appearance, that is to say, of insincerity or want of faith ; but neither is there perfect accuracy or agreement. One supposes the original dwelling-place of our Lord's parents to have been Bethlehem (*Matt.*, ii, 1, 22), another Nazareth (*Luke*, ii, 4) ;

they trace his genealogy in different ways ; one mentions the thieves blaspheming, another has preserved to after ages the record of the penitent thief ; they appear to differ about the day and hour of the Crucifixion ; the narrative of the woman who anointed our Lord's feet with ointment is told in all four, each narrative having more or less considerable variations. These are a few instances of the differences which arose in the traditions of the earliest ages respecting the history of our Lord. But he who wishes to investigate the character of the sacred writings should not be afraid to make a catalogue of them all with the view of estimating their cumulative weight. (For it is obvious that the answer which would be admitted in the case of a single discrepancy, will not be the true answer when there are many.) He should further consider that the narratives in which these discrepancies occur are short and partly identical—a cycle of tradition beyond which the knowledge of the early fathers never travels, though if all the things that Jesus said and did had been written down, 'the world itself could not have contained the books that would have been written' (*John*, xx, 30 ; xxi, 25). For the proportion which these narratives bear to the whole subject, as well as their relation to one another, is an important element in the estimation of differences. In the same way, he who would understand the nature of prophecy in the Old Testament, should have the courage to examine how far its details were minutely fulfilled. The absence of such a fulfilment may further lead him to discover that he took the letter for the spirit in expecting it.

The subject will clear of itself if we bear in mind two considerations : First, that the nature of inspiration can only be known from the examination of Scripture. There is no other source to which we can turn for information ; and we have no right to assume some imaginary doctrine of inspiration like the infallibility of the Roman Catholic Church. To the question 'What is inspiration ?' the first answer therefore is 'That idea of Scripture which we gather from the knowledge of it'. It is no mere *a priori* notion, but one to which the book is itself a witness. It is a fact which we infer from the study of Scripture—not of one portion only, but of the whole. Obviously then it embraces writings of very different kinds—the *Book of Esther*, for example, or the *Song of Solomon*, as well as the *Gospel of St John*. It is reconcilable with the mixed good and evil of the characters of the Old Testament, which nevertheless does not exclude them from the favour of God, with the attribution to the Divine Being of actions at variance with that higher revelation,

which he has given of Himself in the Gospel ; it is not inconsistent with imperfect or opposite aspects of the truth as in the *Book of Job* or *Ecclesiastes*, with variations of fact in the *Gospels* or the books of *Kings* and *Chronicles*, with inaccuracies of language in the *Epistles of St Paul*. For these are all found in Scripture ; neither is there any reason why they should not be, except a general impression that Scripture ought to have been written in a way different from what it has. A principle of progressive revelation admits them all ; and this is already contained in the words of our Saviour, ' Moses because of the hardness of your hearts ' ; or even in the Old Testament, ' Henceforth there shall be no more this proverb in the house of Israel '. For what is progressive is necessarily imperfect in its earlier stages, and even erring to those who come after, whether it be the maxims of a half-civilized world which are compared with those of a civilized one, or the Law with the Gospel. Scripture itself points the way to answer the moral objections to Scripture. Lesser difficulties remain, but only such as would be found commonly in writings of the same age or country. There is no more reason why imperfect narratives should be excluded from Scripture than imperfect grammar ; no more ground for expecting that the New Testament would be logical or Aristotelian in form, than that it would be written in Attic Greek.

The other consideration is one which has been neglected by writers on this subject. It is this—that any true doctrine of inspiration must conform to all well-ascertained facts of history or of science. The same fact cannot be true and untrue, any more than the same words can have two opposite meanings. The same fact cannot be true in religion when seen by the light of faith, and untrue in science when looked at through a medium of evidence or experiment. It is ridiculous to suppose that the sun goes round the earth in the same sense in which the earth goes round the sun ; or that the world appears to have existed ; but has not existed during the vast epochs of which geology speaks to us. But if so, there is no need of elaborate reconciliements of revelation and science ; they reconcile themselves the moment any scientific truth is distinctly ascertained. As the idea of nature enlarges, the idea of revelation also enlarges ; it was a temporary misunderstanding which severed them. And as the knowledge of nature which is possessed by the few is communicated in its leading features at least to the many, they will receive with it a higher conception of the ways of God to man. It may hereafter appear as natural to the majority of

mankind to see the providence of God in the order of the world, as it once was to appeal to interruptions of it.

It is true that there is a class of scientific facts with which popular opinions on theology often conflict and which do not seem to conform in all respects to the severer conditions of inductive science: such especially are the facts relating to the formation of the earth and the beginnings of the human race. But it is not worth while to fight on this debatable ground a losing battle in the hope that a generation will pass away before we sound a last retreat. Almost all intelligent persons are agreed that the earth has existed for myriads of ages; the best informed are of opinion that the history of nations extends back some thousand years before the Mosaic chronology; recent discoveries in geology may perhaps open a further vista of existence for the human species, while it is possible, and may one day be known, that mankind spread not from one but from many centres over the globe; or as others say, that the supply of links which are at present wanting in the chain of animal life may lead to new conclusions respecting the origin of man. Now let it be granted that these facts, being with the past, cannot be shown in the same palpable and evident manner as the facts of chemistry or physiology; and that the proof of some of them, especially of those last mentioned, is wanting; still it is a false policy to set up inspiration or revelation in opposition to them, a principle which can have no influence on them and should be rather kept out of their way. The sciences of geology and comparative philology are steadily gaining ground: many of the guesses of twenty years ago have become certainties, and the guesses of to-day may hereafter become so. Shall we peril religion on the possibility of their untruth? on such a cast to stake the life of man implies not only a recklessness of facts, but a misunderstanding of the nature of the Gospel. If it is fortunate for science, it is perhaps more fortunate for Christian truth, that the admission of Galileo's discovery has for ever settled the principle of the relations between them.

A similar train of thought may be extended to the results of historical inquiries. These results cannot be barred by the dates or narratives of Scripture; neither should they be made to wind round into agreement with them. Again, the idea of inspiration must expand and take them in. Their importance in a religious point of view is not that they impugn or confirm the Jewish history, but that they show more clearly the purposes of God towards the whole human race. The recent chronological discoveries from Egyptian monuments do not tend to

overthrow revelation, nor the Ninevite inscriptions to support it. The use of them on either side may indeed arouse a popular interest in them ; it is apt to turn a scientific inquiry into a semi-religious controversy. And to religion either use is almost equally injurious, because seeming to rest truths important to human life on the mere accident of an archæological discovery. Is it to be thought that Christianity gains anything from the deciphering of the names of some Assyrian and Babylonian kings, contemporaries chiefly with the later Jewish history ? As little as it ought to lose from the appearance of a contradictory narrative of the Exodus in the chamber of an Egyptian temple of the year B.C. 1500. This latter supposition may not be very probable. But it is worth while to ask ourselves the question, whether we can be right in maintaining any view of religion which can be affected by such a probability.

It will be a further assistance in the consideration of this subject, to observe that the interpretation of Scripture has nothing to do with any opinion respecting its origin. The meaning of Scripture is one thing ; the inspiration of Scripture is another. It is conceivable that those who hold the most different views about the one, may be able to agree about the other. Rigid upholders of the verbal inspiration of Scripture, and those who deny inspiration altogether, may nevertheless meet on the common ground of the meaning of words. If the term inspiration were to fall into disuse, no fact of nature, or history, or language, no event in the life of man, or dealings of God with him, would be in any degree altered. The word itself is but of yesterday, not found in the earlier confessions of the reformed faith ; the difficulties that have arisen about it are only two or three centuries old. Therefore the question of inspiration, though in one sense important, is to the interpreter as though it were not important ; he is in no way called upon to determine a matter with which he has nothing to do, and which was not determined by fathers of the Church. And he had better go on his way and leave the more precise definition of the word to the progress of knowledge and the results of the study of Scripture, instead of entangling himself with a theory about it.

It is one evil of conditions or previous suppositions in the study of Scripture, that the assumption of them has led to an apologetic temper in the interpreters of Scripture. The tone of apology is always a tone of weakness and does injury to a good cause. It is the reverse of ' Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free '. It is hampered with the necessity of making a defence, and also with previous defences of the



same side ; it accepts, with an excess of reserve and caution, the truth itself, when it comes from an opposite quarter. Commentators are often more occupied with the proof of miracles than with the declaration of life and immortality ; with the fulfilment of the details of prophecy than with its life and power ; with the reconciling of the discrepancies in the narrative of the infancy, pointed out by Schleiermacher, than with the importance of the great event of the appearance of the Saviour : ' *To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth* '. The same tendency is observable also in reference to the *Acts of the Apostles* and the *Epistles*, which are not only brought into harmony with each other, but interpreted with a reference to the traditions of existing communions. The natural meaning of particular expressions, as for example : ' Why are they then baptized for the dead ? ' ( *1 Cor.*, xv, 29 )—or the words ' because of the angels ' ( *1 Cor.*, xi, 10 ) ; or ' this generation shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled ' ( *Matt.*, xxiv, 34 ) ; or ' upon this rock will I build my Church ' ( *Matt.*, xvi, 18 ), is set aside in favour of others, which, however improbable, are more in accordance with preconceived opinions, or seem to be more worthy of the Sacred writers. The language, and also the text, are treated on the same defensive and conservative principles. The received translations of *Philippians*, ii, 6 ( ' Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ' ), or of *Romans*, iii, 25 ( ' Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood ' ), or *Romans*, xv, 6 ( ' God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ' ), though erroneous, are not given up without a struggle ; the *1 Timothy*, iii, 16, and *1 John*, v, 7 ( the three witnesses ), though the first ( ' God manifest in the flesh ' . ΘΣ for ΟΣ ) is not found in the best manuscripts, and the second in no Greek manuscript worth speaking of, have not yet disappeared from the editions of the Greek Testament commonly in use in England, and still less from the English translation. An English commentator who, with Lachman and Tischendorf, supported also by the authority of Erasmus, ventures to alter the punctuation of the doxology in *Romans*, ix, 5 ( ' Who is over all God blessed for ever ' ) hardly escapes the charge of heresy. That in most of these cases the words referred to have a direct bearing on important controversies is a reason not for retaining, but for correcting them.

The temper of accommodation shows itself especially in two ways : first, in the attempt to adapt the truths of Scripture to the doctrines of the creeds ; secondly, in the adaptation of

the precepts and maxims of Scripture to the language or practice of our own age. Now the creeds are acknowledged to be a part of Christianity; they stand in a close relation to the words of Christ and His Apostles; nor can it be said that any heterodox formula makes a nearer approach to a simple and scriptural rule of faith. Neither is anything gained by contrasting them with Scripture, in which the germs of the expressions used in them are sufficiently apparent. Yet it does not follow that they should be pressed into the service of the interpreter. The growth of ideas in the interval which separated the first century from the fourth or sixth makes it impossible to apply the language of the one to the explanation of the other. Between Scripture and the Nicene or Athanasian Creed, a world of the understanding comes in—that world of abstractions and second notions; and mankind are no longer at the same point as when the whole of Christianity was contained in the words, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou mayest be saved', when the Gospel centred in the attachment to a living or recently departed friend and Lord. The language of the New Testament is the first utterance and consciousness of the mind of Christ; or the immediate vision of the Word of life (1 *John*, i, 1) as it presented itself before the eyes of His first followers, or as the sense of His truth and power grew upon them (*Rom.*, i, 3, 4); the other is the result of three or four centuries of reflection and controversy. And although this last had a truth suited to its age, and its technical expressions have sunk deep into the heart of the human race, it is not the less unfitted to be the medium by the help of which Scripture is to be explained. If the occurrence of the phraseology of the Nicene age in a verse of the *Epistles* would detect the spuriousness of the verse in which it was found, how can the Nicene or Athanasian Creed be a suitable instrument for the interpretation of Scripture? That advantage which the New Testament has over the teaching of the Church, as representing what may be termed the childhood of the Gospel, would be lost if its language were required to conform to that of the Creeds.

To attribute to St Paul or the Twelve the abstract notion of Christian truth, which afterwards sprang up in the Catholic Church, is the same sort of anachronism as to attribute to them a system of philosophy. It is the same error as to attribute to Homer the ideas of Thales or Heraclitus, or to Thales the more developed principles of Aristotle and Plato. Many persons who have no difficulty in tracing the growth of institutions, yet seem to fail in recognizing the more subtle progress of an idea. It is hard to imagine the absence of conceptions with which we are

familiar ; to go back to the germ of what we know only in maturity ; to give up what has grown to us, and become a part of our minds. In the present case, however, the development is not difficult to prove. The statements of Scripture are unaccountable if we deny it ; the silence of Scripture is equally unaccountable. Absorbed as St Paul was in the person of Christ with an intensity of faith and love of which in modern days and at this distance of time we can scarcely form a conception—high as he raised the dignity of his Lord above all things in heaven and earth—looking to Him as the Creator of all things, and the head of quick and dead, he does not speak of Him as ‘equal to the Father’, or ‘of one substance with the Father’. Much of the language of the *Epistles* (passages for example such as *Romans*, i, 2 ; *Philippians*, ii, 6) would lose their meaning if distributed in alternate clauses between our Lord’s humanity and divinity. Still greater difficulties would be introduced into the *Gospels* by the attempt to identify them with the Creeds. We should have to suppose that He was and was not tempted ; that when He prayed to His Father He prayed also to Himself ; that He knew and did not know ‘of that hour’ of which He as well as the angels were ignorant. How could He have said ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me’ ? or, ‘Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me’ ? How could He have doubted whether ‘when the Son cometh he shall find faith upon the earth’ ? These simple and touching words have to be taken out of their natural meaning and connexion to be made the theme of apologetic discourses if we insist on reconciling them with the distinctions of later ages.

Neither, as has been already remarked, would the substitution of any other precise or definite rule of faith, as for example the Unitarian, be more favourable to the interpretation of Scripture. How could the Evangelist St John have said ‘the Word was God’, or ‘God was the Word’ (according to either mode of translating), or how would our Lord Himself have said ‘I and the Father are one’, if either had meant that Christ was a mere man, ‘a prophet or as one of the prophets’ ? No one who takes words in their natural sense can suppose that ‘in the beginning’ (*John*, i, 1) means, ‘at the commencement of the ministry of Christ’, or that ‘the Word was with God’ only relates ‘to the withdrawal of Christ to commune with God’, or that ‘the Word is said to be God’, in the ironical sense of *John*, x, 35. But while venturing to turn one eye on these (perhaps obsolete) perversions of the meanings of words in old opponents, we must not forget also to keep the other open to our own. The object

of the preceding remark is not to enter into controversy with them, or to balance the statements of one side with those of the other, but only to point out the error of introducing into the interpretation of Scripture the notions of a later age which is common alike to us and them.

The other kind of accommodation which was alluded to above arises out of the difference between the social and ecclesiastical state of the world, as it exists in actual fact, and the ideal which the Gospel presents to us. An ideal is, by its very nature, far removed from actual life. It is enshrined not in the material things of the external world, but in the heart and conscience. Mankind are dissatisfied at this separation; they fancy that they can make the inward kingdom an outward one also. But this is not possible. The frame of civilization, that is to say, institutions and laws, the usages of business, the customs of society, these are for the most part mechanical, capable only in a certain degree of a higher and spiritual life. Christian motives have never existed in such strength, as to make it safe or possible to entrust them with the preservation of social order. Other interests are therefore provided and other principles, often independent of the teaching of the Gospel, or even apparently at variance with it. 'If a man smite thee on the right cheek turn to him the other also' is not a regulation of police but an ideal rule of conduct, not to be explained away, but rarely if ever to be literally acted upon in a civilized country; or rather to be acted upon always in spirit, yet not without a reference to the interests of the community. If a missionary were to endanger the public peace and come like the Apostles saying 'I ought to obey God rather than man', it is obvious that the most Christian of magistrates could not allow him (say in India or New Zealand) to shield himself under the authority of these words. For in religion as in philosophy there are two opposite poles; of truth and action, of doctrine and practice, of idea and fact. The image of God in Christ is over against the necessities of human nature and the state of man on earth. Our Lord Himself recognizes this distinction, when He says 'Of whom do the kings of the earth gather tribute?', and 'then are the children free' (*Matt.*, xvii, 26). And again, 'Notwithstanding lest we should offend them', &c. Here are contrasted what may be termed the two poles of idea and fact.

All men appeal to Scripture, and desire to draw the authority of Scripture to their side; its voice may be heard in the turmoil of political strife; a merely verbal similarity, the echo of a word, has weight in the determination of a controversy. Such appeals

are not to be met always by counter-appeals ; they rather lead to the consideration of deeper questions as to the manner in which Scripture is to be applied. In what relation does it stand to actual life ? Is it a law, or only a spirit ? for nations, or for individuals ? to be enforced generally, or in details also ? Are its maxims to be modified by experience, or acted upon in defiance of experience ? Are the accidental circumstances of the first believers to become a rule for us ? Is everything, in short, done or said by our Saviour and His Apostles, to be regarded as a precept or example which is to be followed on all occasions and to last for all time ? That can hardly be, consistently with the changes of human things. It would be a rigid skeleton of Christianity (not the image of Christ), to which society and politics, as well as the lives of individuals, would be conformed. It would be the oldness of the letter, on which the world would be stretched ; not 'the law of the spirit of life' which St Paul teaches. The attempt to force politics and law into the framework of religion is apt to drive us up into a corner, in which the great principles of truth and justice have no longer room to make themselves felt. It is better, as well as safer, to take the liberty with which Christ has made us free. For our Lord Himself has left behind Him words, which contain a principle large enough to admit all the forms of society or of life ; 'My kingdom is not of this world' (*John*, xviii, 36). It does not come into collision with politics or knowledge ; it has nothing to do with the Roman government or the Jewish priesthood, or with corresponding institutions in the present day ; it is a counsel of perfection, and has its dwelling-place in the heart of man. That is the real solution of questions of Church and State ; all else is relative to the history or circumstances of particular nations. That is the answer to a doubt which is also raised respecting the obligation of the letter of the Gospel on individual Christians. But this inwardness of the words of Christ is what few are able to receive ; it is easier to apply them superficially to things without, than to be a partaker of them from within. And false and miserable applications of them are often made, and the kingdom of God becomes the tool of the kingdoms of the world.

The neglect of this necessary contrast between the ideal and the actual has had a twofold effect on the Interpretation of Scripture. It has led to an unfair appropriation of some portions of Scripture and an undue neglect of others. The letter is in many cases really or apparently in harmony with existing practices, or opinions, or institutions. In other cases it is far removed from them ; it often seems as if the world would come to an

end before the words of Scripture could be realized. The two-fold effect just now mentioned, corresponds to these two classes. Some texts of Scripture have been eagerly appealed to and made (in one sense) too much of ; they have been taken by force into the service of received opinions and beliefs ; texts of the other class have been either unnoticed or explained away. Consider, for example, the extraordinary and unreasonable importance attached to single words, sometimes of doubtful meaning, in reference to any of the following subjects : (1) Divorce ; (2) Marriage with a Wife's Sister ; (3) Inspiration ; (4) the Personality of the Holy Spirit ; (5) Infant Baptism ; (6) Episcopacy ; (7) Divine Right of Kings ; (8) Original Sin. There is, indeed, a kind of mystery in the way in which the chance words of a simple narrative, the occurrence of some accidental event, the use even of a figure of speech, or a mistranslation of a word in Latin or English, have affected the thoughts of future ages and distant countries. Nothing so slight that it has not been caught at ; nothing so plain that it may not be explained away. What men have brought to the text they have also found there ; what has received no interpretation or witness, either in the customs of the Church or in 'the thoughts of many hearts', is still 'an unknown tongue' to them. It is with Scripture as with oratory, its effect partly depends on the preparation in the mind or in circumstances for the reception of it. There is no use of Scripture, no quotation or even misquotation of a word which is not a power in the world, when it embodies the spirit of a great movement or is echoed by the voice of a large party.

On the first of the subjects referred to above, it is argued from Scripture that adulterers should not be allowed to marry again ; and the point of the argument turns on the question whether the words *ἐκτὸς λόγου πορνείας* (saving for the cause of fornication), which occur in the first clause of an important text on marriage, were designedly or accidentally omitted in the second (*Matt.*, v, 32 : 'Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery, and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery' ; compare also *Mark*, x, 11, 12). (2) The Scripture argument in the second instance is almost invisible, being drawn from a passage the meaning of which is irrelevant (*Lev.*, xviii, 18 : 'Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister to vex her, to uncover her nakedness beside the other in her lifetime') ; and transferred from the Polygamy which prevailed in Eastern countries 3000 years ago to the Monogamy of the nineteenth century and the Christian Church, in spite of the custom and tradition of the

Jews and the analogy of the brother's widow. (3) In the third case the word (*θεόπνευστος*) 'given by inspiration of God' is spoken of the Old Testament, and is assumed to apply to the New, including that *Epistle* in which the expression occurs (2 *Tim.*, iii, 16). (4) In the fourth example the words used are mysterious (*John*, xiv, 26; xvi, 15), and seem to come out of the depths of a divine consciousness; they have sometimes, however, received a more exact meaning than they could truly bear; what is spoken in a figure is construed with the severity of a logical statement, while passages of an opposite tenour are overlooked or set aside. (5) In the fifth instance, the mere mention of a family of a jailer at Philippi who was baptized ('he and all his', *Acts*, xvi, 33) has led to the inference that in this family there were probably young children, and hence that infant baptism is, first, permissive, secondly, obligatory. (6) In the sixth case the chief stress of the argument from Scripture turns on the occurrence of the word (*ἐπίσκοπος*) bishop, in the *Epistles to Timothy* and *Titus*, which is assisted by a supposed analogy between the position of the Apostles and of their successors; although the term bishop is clearly used in the passages referred to as well as in other parts of the New Testament indistinguishably from Presbyter, and the magisterial authority of bishops in after ages is unlike rather than like the personal authority of the Apostles in the beginning of the Gospel. The further development of Episcopacy into Apostolical succession has often been rested on the promise: 'Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world'. (7) In the seventh case the precepts of order which are addressed in the *Epistle* to the 'fifth monarchy men of those days', are transferred to a duty of obedience to hereditary princes; the fact of the house of David, 'the Lord's anointed', sitting on the throne of Israel is converted into a principle for all times and countries. And the higher lesson which our Saviour teaches: 'Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's', that is to say, 'Render unto all their due, and to God above all', is spoiled by being made into a precept of political subjection. (8) Lastly, the justice of God 'who rewardeth every man according to his works', and the Christian scheme of redemption has been staked on two figurative expressions of St Paul to which there is no parallel in any other part of Scripture (1 *Cor.*, xv, 22; 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive', and the corresponding passage in *Rom.*, v, 12); notwithstanding the declaration of the Old Testament as also of the New, 'Every soul shall bear its own iniquity', and 'neither this man sinned nor his parents'.

It is not necessary for our purpose to engage further in the matters of dispute which have arisen by the way in attempting to illustrate the general argument. Yet to avoid misconception it may be remarked, that many of the principles, rules, or truths mentioned, as for example, Infant Baptism, or the Episcopal Form of Church Government, have sufficient grounds; the weakness is the attempt to derive them from Scripture.

With this minute and rigid enforcement of the words of Scripture in passages where the ideas expressed in them either really or apparently agree with received opinions or institutions, there remains to be contrasted the neglect, or in some instances the misinterpretation of other words which are not equally in harmony with the spirit of the age. In many of our Lord's discourses He speaks of the 'blessedness of poverty': of the hardness which they that have riches will experience 'in attaining eternal life'. 'It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye', and 'Son, thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things', and again 'One thing thou lackest, go sell all that thou hast'. Precepts like these do not appeal to our own experience of life; they are unlike anything that we see around us at the present day, even among good men; to some among us they will recall the remarkable saying of Lessing that 'the Christian religion had been tried for eighteen centuries; the religion of Christ remained to be tried'. To take them literally would be injurious to ourselves and to society (at least, so we think). Religious sects or orders who have seized this aspect of Christianity have come to no good, and have often ended in extravagance. It will not do to go into the world saying 'Woe unto you, ye rich men', or on entering a noble mansion to repeat the denunciations of the prophet about 'cedar and vermilion', or on being shown the prospect of a magnificent estate to cry out 'Woe unto them that lay field to field that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth'. Times have altered, we say, since these denunciations were uttered; what appeared to the Prophet or Apostle a violation of the appointment of Providence has now become a part of it. It will not do to make a great supper, and mingle at the same board the two ends of society, as modern phraseology calls them, fetching in 'the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind', to fill the vacant places of noble guests. That would be eccentric in modern times, and even hurtful. Neither is it suitable for us to wash one another's feet, or to perform any other menial office, because our Lord set us the example. The customs of society do not admit it; no good would be done by it, and singularity is of itself an evil. Well, then, are the pre-



cepts of Christ not to be obeyed? Perhaps in their fullest sense they cannot be obeyed. But at any rate they are not to be explained away; the standard of Christ is not to be lowered to ordinary Christian life, because ordinary Christian life cannot rise, even in good men, to the standard of Christ. And there may be 'standing among us' some one in ten thousand 'whom we know not', in whom there is such a divine union of charity and prudence that he is most blest in the entire fulfilment of the precept 'Go sell all that thou hast', which to obey literally in other cases would be evil, and not good. Many there have been, doubtless (not one or two only), who have given all that they had on earth to their family or friends—the poor servant 'casting her two mites into the treasury', denying herself the ordinary comforts of life for the sake of an erring parent or brother; that is not probably an uncommon case, and as near an approach as in this life we make to heaven. And there may be some one or two rare natures in the world in whom there is such a divine courtesy, such a gentleness and dignity of soul, that differences of rank seem to vanish before them, and they look upon the face of others, even of their own servants and dependents, only as they are in the sight of God and will be in His kingdom. And there may be some tender and delicate woman among us, who feels that she has a divine vocation to fulfil the most repulsive offices towards the dying inmates of a hospital, or the soldier perishing in a foreign land. Whether such examples of self-sacrifice are good or evil, must depend, not altogether on social or economical principles, but on the spirit of those who offer them, and the power which they have in themselves of 'making all things kin'. And even if the ideal itself were not carried out by us in practice, it has nevertheless what may be termed a truth of feeling. 'Let them that have riches be as though they had them not'. 'Let the rich man wear the load lightly; he will one day fold them up as a vesture'. Let not the refinement of society make us forget that it is not the refined only who are received into the kingdom of God; nor the daintiness of life hide from us the bodily evils of which the rich man and Lazarus are alike heirs. Thoughts such as these have the power to reunite us to our fellow-creatures from whom the accidents of birth, position, wealth have separated us; they soften our hearts towards them, when divided not only by vice and ignorance, but what is even a greater barrier, difference of manners and associations. For if there be anything in our own fortune superior to that of others, instead of idolizing or cherishing it in the blood, the Gospel would have us cast it from

us ; and if there be anything mean or despised in those with whom we have to do, the Gospel would have us regard such as friends and brethren, yea, even as having the person of Christ.

Another instance of apparent, if not real neglect of the precepts of Scripture, is furnished by the commandment against swearing. No precept about divorce is so plain, so universal, so exclusive as this ; ' Swear not at all '. Yet we all know how the custom of Christian countries has modified this ' counsel of perfection ' which was uttered by the Saviour. This is the more remarkable because in this case the precept is not, as in the former, practically impossible of fulfilment or even difficult. And yet in this instance again, the body who have endeavoured to follow more nearly the letter of our Lord's commandment, seem to have gone against the common sense of the Christian world. Or to add one more example : Who, that hears of the Sabbatarianism, as it is called, of some Protestant countries, would imagine that the Author of our religion had cautioned His disciples, not against the violation of the Sabbath, but only against its formal and Pharisaical observance ; or that the chiefest of the Apostles had warned the Colossians to ' Let no man judge them in respect of the new moon, or of the sabbath-days ' (ii, 16).

The neglect of another class of passages is even more surprising, the precepts contained in them being quite practicable and in harmony with the existing state of the world. In this instance it seems as if religious teachers had failed to gather those principles of which they stood most in need. ' Think ye that those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell ? ' is the characteristic lesson of the Gospel on the occasion of any sudden visitation. Yet it is another reading of such calamities which is commonly insisted upon. The observation is seldom made respecting the parable of the good Samaritan, that the true neighbour is also a person of a different religion. The words ' Forbid him not : for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me ' are often said to have no application to sectarian differences in the present day, when the Church is established and miracles have ceased. The conduct of our Lord to the woman taken in adultery, though not intended for our imitation always, yet affords a painful contrast to the excessive severity with which even a Christian society punishes the errors of women. The boldness with which St Paul applies the principle of individual judgment, ' Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind ', as exhibited also in the words quoted above, ' Let no man judge you in respect of

the new moon, or of the sabbath-days', is far greater than would be allowed in the present age. Lastly, that the tenet of the damnation of the heathen should ever have prevailed in the Christian world, or that the damnation of Catholics should have been a received opinion among Protestants, implies a strange forgetfulness of such passages as *Romans*, ii, 1-16. 'Who rewardeth every man according to his work', and 'When the Gentiles, which know not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law', &c. What a difference between the simple statement which the Apostle makes of the justice of God and the 'uncovenanted mercies' or 'invincible ignorance' of theologians half reluctant to give up, yet afraid to maintain the advantage of denying salvation to those who are '*extra palum Ecclesiæ*'!

The same habit of silence or misinterpretation extends to words or statements of Scripture in which doctrines are thought to be interested. When maintaining the Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity, we do not readily recall the verse, 'of that hour knoweth no man, no not the Angels of God, *neither the Son*, but the Father' (*Mark*, xiii, 32). The temper or feeling which led St Ambrose to doubt the genuineness of the words marked in italics, leads Christians in our own day to pass them over. We are scarcely just to the Millenarians or to those who maintain the continuance of miracles or spiritual gifts in the Christian Church, in not admitting the degree of support which is afforded to their views by many passages of Scripture. The same remark applies to the Predestinarian controversy; the Calvinist is often hardly dealt with, in being deprived of his real standing ground in the third and ninth chapters of the *Epistle to the Romans*. And the Protestant who thinks himself bound to prove from Scripture the very details of doctrine or discipline which are maintained in his Church, is often obliged to have recourse to harsh methods, and sometimes to deny appearances which seem to favour some particular tenet of Roman Catholicism (*Matt.*, xvi, 18, 19; xviii, 18; *1 Cor.*, iii, 15). The Roman Catholic, on the other hand, scarcely observes that nearly all the distinctive articles of his creed are wanting in the New Testament; the Calvinist in fact ignores almost the whole of the sacred volume for the sake of a few verses. The truth is, that in seeking to prove our own opinions out of Scripture, we are constantly falling into the common fallacy of opening our eyes to one class of facts and closing them to another. The favourite verses shine like stars, while the rest of the page is thrown into the shade.

Nor indeed is it easy to say what is the meaning of 'proving

a doctrine from Scripture'. For when we demand logical equivalents and similarity of circumstances, when we balance adverse statements, St James and St Paul, the New Testament with the Old, it will be hard to demonstrate from Scripture any complex system either of doctrine or practice. The Bible is not a book of statutes in which words have been chosen to cover the multitude of cases, but in the greater portion of it, especially the *Gospels* and *Epistles*, 'like a man talking to his friend'. Nay, more, it is a book written in the East, which is in some degree liable to be misunderstood, because it speaks the language and has the feeling of Eastern lands. Nor can we readily determine in explaining the words of our Lord or of St Paul, how much (even of some of the passages just quoted) is to be attributed to Oriental modes of speech. Expressions which would be regarded as rhetorical exaggerations in the Western world are the natural vehicles of thought to an Eastern people. How great then must be the confusion where an attempt is made to draw out these Oriental modes with the severity of a philosophical or legal argument! Is it not such a use of the words of Christ which He Himself rebukes when He says: 'It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing' (*John*, vi, 52, 63).

There is a further way in which the language of creeds and liturgies as well as the ordinary theological use of terms exercises a disturbing influence on the interpretation of Scripture. Words which occur in Scripture are singled out and incorporated in systems, like stones taken out of an old building and put into a new one. They acquire a technical meaning more or less divergent from the original one. It is obvious that their use in Scripture, and not their later and technical sense, must furnish the rule of interpretation. We should not have recourse to the meaning of a word in Polybius, for the explanation of its use in Plato, or to the turn of a sentence in Lycophron, to illustrate a construction of Æschylus. It is the same kind of anachronism which would interpret Scripture by the scholastic or theological use of the language of Scripture. It is remarkable that this use is indeed partial, that is to say it affects one class of words and not another. Love and truth, for example, have never been theological terms; grace and faith, on the other hand, always retain an association with the Pelagian or Lutheran controversies. Justification and inspiration are derived from verbs which occur in Scripture, and the later substantive has clearly affected the meaning of the original verb or verbal in the places where they occur. The remark might be further illustrated by the use of Scriptural language respecting the Sacraments, which has also

had a reflex influence on its interpretation in many passages of Scripture, especially in the *Gospel of St John* (*John*, iii, 5 ; vi, 56, &c). Minds which are familiar with the mystical doctrine of the Sacraments seem to see a reference to them in almost every place in the Old Testament as well as in the New, in which the words 'water' or 'bread and wine' may happen to occur.

Other questions meet us on the threshold, of a different kind, which also affect the interpretation of Scripture, and therefore demand an answer. Is it admitted that the Scripture has one and only one true meaning ? Or are we to follow the Fathers into mystical and allegorical explanations ? or with the majority of modern interpreters to confine ourselves to the double senses of prophecy, and the symbolism of the Gospel in the law ? In either case, we assume what can never be proved, and an instrument is introduced of such subtlety and pliability as to make the Scriptures mean anything—'*Gallus in campanili*', as the Waldenses described it ; 'the weathercock on the church tower', which is turned hither and thither by every wind of doctrine. That the present age has grown out of the mystical methods of the early Fathers is a part of its intellectual state. No one will now seek to find hidden meanings in the scarlet thread of Rahab, or the number of Abraham's followers, or in the little circumstance mentioned after the resurrection of the Saviour that St Peter was the first to enter the sepulchre. To most educated persons in the nineteenth century, these applications of Scripture appear foolish. Yet it is rather the excess of the method which provokes a smile than the method itself. For many remains of the mystical interpretation exist among ourselves ; it is not the early Fathers only who have read the Bible crosswise, or deciphered it as a book of symbols. And the uncertainty is the same in any part of Scripture if there is a departure from the plain and obvious meaning. If, for example, we alternate the verses in which our Lord speaks of the last things between the day of judgment and the destruction of Jerusalem ; or, in the elder prophecies, which are the counterparts of these, make a corresponding division between the temporal and the spiritual Israel ; or again if we attribute to the details of the Mosaical ritual a reference to the New Testament ; or, once more, supposing the passage of the Red Sea to be regarded not merely as a figure of baptism, but as a pre-ordained type, the principle is conceded ; there is no good reason why the scarlet thread of Rahab should not receive the explanation given to it by Clement. A little more or a little less of the method does not make the difference between certainty and uncertainty in

the interpretation of Scripture. In whatever degree it is practised it is equally incapable of being reduced to any rule ; it is the interpreter's fancy, and is likely to be not less but more dangerous and extravagant when it adds the charm of authority from its use in past ages.

The question which has been suggested runs up into a more general one, ' the relation between the Old and New Testaments '. For the Old Testament will receive a different meaning accordingly as it is explained from itself or from the New. In the first case a careful and conscientious study of each one for itself is all that is required ; in the second case the types and ceremonies of the law, perhaps the very facts and persons of the history, will be assumed to be predestined or made after a pattern corresponding to the things that were to be in the latter days. And this question of itself stirs another question respecting the interpretation of the Old Testament in the New. Is such interpretation to be regarded as the meaning of the original text, or an accommodation of it to the thoughts of other times ?

Our object is not to attempt here the determination of these questions, but to point out that they must be determined before any real progress can be made or any agreement arrived at in the interpretation of Scripture. With one more example of another kind we may close this part of the subject. The origin of the three first *Gospels* is an inquiry which has not been much considered by English theologians since the days of Bishop Marsh. The difficulty of the question has been sometimes misunderstood ; the point being how there can be so much agreement in words, and so much disagreement both in words and facts ; the double phenomenon is the real perplexity—how in short there can be all degrees of similarity and dissimilarity, the kind and degree of similarity being such as to make it necessary to suppose that large portions are copied from each other or from common documents ; the dissimilarities being of a kind which seem to render impossible any knowledge in the authors of one another's writings. The most probable solution of this difficulty is, that the tradition on which the three first *Gospels* are based was at first preserved orally, and slowly put together and written in the three forms which it assumed at a very early period, those forms being in some places, perhaps, modified by translation. It is not necessary to develop this hypothesis farther. The point to be noticed is, that whether this or some other theory be the true account (and some such account is demonstrably necessary), the assumption of such a theory, or rather the observation of the facts on which it rests, cannot but

exercise an influence on interpretation. We can no longer speak of three independent witnesses of the Gospel narrative. Hence there follow some other consequences. (1) There is no longer the same necessity as heretofore to reconcile inconsistent narratives; the harmony of the *Gospels* only means the parallelism of similar words. (2) There is no longer any need to enforce everywhere the connexion of successive verses, for the same words will be found to occur in different connexions in the different *Gospels*. (3) Nor can the designs attributed to their authors be regarded as the free handling of the same subject on different plans; the difference consisting chiefly in the occurrence or absence of local or verbal explanations, or the addition or omission of certain passages. Lastly, it is evident that no weight can be given to traditional statements of facts about the authorship, as, for example, that respecting St Mark being the interpreter of St Peter, because the Fathers who have handed down these statements were ignorant or unobservant of the great fact, which is proved by internal evidence, that they are for the most part of common origin.

Until these and the like questions are determined by interpreters, it is not possible that there should be agreement in the interpretation of Scripture. The Protestant and Catholic, the Unitarian and Trinitarian will continue to fight their battle on the ground of the New Testament. The Preterists and Futurists, those who maintain that the roll of prophecies is completed in past history or in the apostolical age; those who look forward to a long series of events which are yet to come [*εἰς ἀφανὲς τὸν μῦθον ἀνενεγκῶν οὐκ ἔχει ἐλεγχῆν*], may alike claim the authority of the *Book of Daniel*, or the *Revelation*. Apparent coincidences will always be discovered by those who want to find them. Where there is no critical interpretation of Scripture, there will be a mystical or rhetorical one. If words have more than one meaning, they may have any meaning. Instead of being a rule of life or faith, Scripture becomes the expression of the ever-changing aspect of religious opinions. The unchangeable word of God, in the name of which we repose, is changed by each age and each generation in accordance with its passing fancy. The book in which we believe all religious truth to be contained, is the most uncertain of all books, because interpreted by arbitrary and uncertain methods.

§ 3. It is probable that some of the preceding statements may be censured as a wanton exposure of the difficulties of Scripture. It will be said that such inquiries are for the few,

while the printed page lies open to the many, and that the obtrusion of them may offend some weaker brother, some half-educated or prejudiced soul, 'for whom', nevertheless, in the touching language of St Paul, 'Christ died'. A confusion of the heart and head may lead sensitive minds into a desertion of the principles of the Christian life, which are their own witness, because they are in doubt about facts which are really external to them. Great evil to character may sometimes ensue from such causes. 'No man can serve two' opinions without a sensible harm to his nature. The consciousness of this responsibility should be always present to writers on theology. But the responsibility is really two-fold; for there is a duty to speak the truth as well as a duty to withhold it. The voice of a majority of the clergy throughout the world, the half sceptical, half conservative instincts of many laymen, perhaps, also, individual interest, are in favour of the latter course; while a higher expediency pleads that 'honesty is the best policy', and that truth alone 'makes free'. To this it may be replied, that truth is not truth to those who are unable to use it; no reasonable man would attempt to lay before the illiterate such a question as that concerning the origin of the *Gospels*. And yet it may be rejoined once more, the healthy tone of religion among the poor depends upon freedom of thought and inquiry among the educated. In this conflict of reasons, individual judgment must at last decide. That there has been no rude, or improper unveiling of the difficulties of Scripture in the preceding pages, is thought to be shown by the following considerations:

First, that the difficulties referred to are very well known; they force themselves on the attention, not only of the student, but of every intelligent reader of the New Testament, whether in Greek or English. The treatment of such difficulties in theological works is no measure of public opinion respecting them. Thoughtful persons, whose minds have turned towards theology, are continually discovering that the critical observations which they make themselves have been made also by others apparently without concert. The truth is that they have been led to them by the same causes, and these again lie deep in the tendencies of education and literature in the present age. But no one is willing to break through the reticence which is observed on these subjects; hence a sort of smouldering scepticism. It is probable that the distrust is greatest at the time when the greatest efforts are made to conceal it. Doubt comes in at the window, when Inquiry is denied at the door. The thoughts of able and highly educated young men almost always stray towards the



first principles of things ; it is a great injury to them, and tends to raise in their minds a sort of incurable suspicion, to find that there is one book of the fruit of the knowledge of which they are forbidden freely to taste, that is, the Bible. The same spirit renders the Christian minister almost powerless in the hands of his opponents. He can give no true answer to the mechanic or artisan who has either discovered by his mother-wit or who retails at second-hand the objections of critics ; for he is unable to look at things as they truly are.

Secondly, as the time has come when it is no longer possible to ignore the results of criticism, it is of importance that Christianity should be seen to be in harmony with them. That objections to some received views should be valid, and yet that they should be always held up as the objections of infidels, is a mischief to the Christian cause. It is a mischief that critical observations which any intelligent man can make for himself, should be ascribed to atheism or unbelief. It would be a strange and almost incredible thing that the Gospel, which at first made war only on the vices of mankind, should now be opposed to one of the highest and rarest of human virtues—the love of truth. And that in the present day the great object of Christianity should be, not to change the lives of men, but to prevent them from changing their opinions ; that would be a singular inversion of the purposes for which Christ came into the world. The Christian religion is in a false position when all the tendencies of knowledge are opposed to it. Such a position cannot be long maintained, or can only end in the withdrawal of the educated classes from the influences of religion. It is a grave consideration whether we ourselves may not be in an earlier stage of the same religious dissolution, which seems to have gone further in Italy and France. The reason for thinking so is not to be sought in the external circumstances of our own or any other religious communion, but in the progress of ideas with which Christian teachers seem to be ill at ease. Time was when the Gospel was before the age ; when it breathed a new life into a decaying world—when the difficulties of Christianity were difficulties of the heart only, and the highest minds found in its truths not only the rule of their lives, but a well-spring of intellectual delight. Is it to be held a thing impossible that the Christian religion, instead of shrinking into itself, may again embrace the thoughts of men upon the earth ? Or is it true that since the Reformation ‘all intellect has gone the other way’, and that in Protestant countries reconciliation is as hopeless as Protestants commonly believe to be the case in Catholic ?

Those who hold the possibility of such a reconciliation or restoration of belief, are anxious to disengage Christianity from all suspicion of disguise or unfairness. They wish to preserve the historical use of Scripture as the continuous witness in all ages of the higher things in the heart of man, as the inspired source of truth and the way to the better life. They are willing to take away some of the external supports, because they are not needed and do harm ; also, because they interfere with the meaning. They have a faith, not that after a period of transition all things will remain just as they were before, but that they will all come round again to the use of man and to the glory of God. When interpreted like any other book, by the same rules of evidence and the same canons of criticism, the Bible will still remain unlike any other book ; its beauty will be freshly seen, as of a picture which is restored after many ages to its original state ; it will create a new interest and make for itself a new kind of authority by the life which is in it. It will be a spirit and not a letter ; as it was in the beginning, having an influence like that of the spoken word, or the book newly found. The purer the light in the human heart, the more it will have an expression of itself in the mind of Christ ; the greater the knowledge of the development of man, the truer will be the insight gained into the 'increasing purpose' of revelation. In which also the individual soul has a practical part, finding a sympathy with its own imperfect feelings, in the broken utterance of the Psalmist or the Prophet as well as in the fulness of Christ. The harmony between Scripture and the life of man, in all its stages, may be far greater than appears at present. No one can form any notion from what we see around us, of the power which Christianity might have if it were at one with the conscience of man, and not at variance with his intellectual convictions. There, a world weary of the heat and dust of controversy—of speculations about God and man—wary too of the rapidity of its own motion, would return home and find rest.

But for the faith that the Gospel might win again the minds of intellectual men, it would be better to leave religion to itself, instead of attempting to draw them together. Other walks in literature have peace and pleasure and profit ; the path of the critical Interpreter of Scripture is almost always a thorny one in England. It is not worth while for any one to enter upon it who is not supported by a sense that he has a Christian and moral object. For although an Interpreter of Scripture in modern times will hardly say, with the emphasis of the Apostle,

'Woe is me, if I speak not the truth without regard to consequences', yet he too may feel it a matter of duty not to conceal the things which he knows. He does not hide the discrepancies of Scripture, because the acknowledgment of them is the first step towards agreement among interpreters. He would restore the original meaning because 'seven other' meanings take the place of it; the book is made the sport of opinion and the instrument of perversion of life. He would take the excuses of the head out of the way of the heart; there is hope too that by drawing Christians together on the ground of Scripture, he may also draw them nearer to one another. He is not afraid that inquiries, which have for their object the truth, can ever be displeasing to the God of truth; or that the Word of God is in any such sense a word as to be hurt by investigations into its human origin and conception.

It may be thought another ungracious aspect of the preceding remarks, that they cast a slight upon the interpreters of Scripture in former ages. The early Fathers, the Roman Catholic mystical writers, the Swiss and German Reformers, the Non-conformist divines, have qualities for which we look in vain among ourselves; they throw an intensity of light upon the page of Scripture which we nowhere find in modern commentaries. But it is not the light of interpretation. They have a faith which seems indeed to have grown dim nowadays, but that faith is not drawn from the study of Scripture; it is the element in which their own mind moves which overflows on the meaning of the text. The words of Scripture suggest to them their own thoughts or feelings. They are preachers, or in the New Testament sense of the word, prophets rather than interpreters. There is nothing in such a view derogatory to the saints and doctors of former ages. That Aquinas or Bernard did not shake themselves free from the mystical method of the Patristic times or the Scholastic one which was more peculiarly their own; that Luther and Calvin read the Scriptures in connexion with the ideas which were kindling in the mind of their age, and the events which were passing before their eyes, these and similar remarks are not to be construed as depreciatory of the genius or learning of famous men of old; they relate only to their interpretation of Scripture, in which it is no slight upon them, to maintain that they were not before their day.

What remains may be comprised in a few precepts, or rather is the expansion of a single one. *Interpret the Scripture like any other book.* There are many respects in which Scripture is unlike any other book; these will appear in the results of such an

interpretation. The first step is to know the meaning, and this can only be done in the same careful and impartial way that we ascertain the meaning of Sophocles or of Plato. The subordinate principles which flow out of this general one will also be gathered from the observation of Scripture. No other science of Hermeneutics is possible but an inductive one, that is to say, one based on the language and thoughts and narrations of the sacred writers. And it would be well to carry the theory of interpretation no further than in the case of other works. Excessive system tends to create an impression that the meaning of Scripture is out of our reach, or is to be attained in some other way than by the exercise of manly sense and industry. Who would write a bulky treatise about the method to be pursued in interpreting Plato or Sophocles? Let us not set out on our journey so heavily equipped that there is little chance of our arriving at the end of it. The method creates itself as we go on, beginning only with a few reflections directed against plain errors. Such reflections are the rules of common sense, which we acknowledge with respect to other works written in dead languages; without pretending to novelty they may help us to 'return to nature' in the study of the sacred writings.

First, it may be laid down, that Scripture has one meaning—the meaning which it had to the mind of the Prophet or Evangelist who first uttered or wrote, to the hearers or readers who first received it. Another view may be easier or more familiar to us, seeming to receive a light and interest from the circumstances of our own age. But such accommodation of the text must be laid aside by the interpreter, whose business is, to place himself as nearly as possible in the position of the sacred writer. That is no easy task—to call up the inner and outer life of the contemporaries of our Saviour; to follow the abrupt and involved utterance of St Paul or of one of the old Prophets; to trace the meaning of words when language first became Christian. He will often have to choose the more difficult interpretation (*Gal.*, ii, 20; *Rom.*, iii, 15, &c.), and to refuse one more in agreement with received opinions, because the latter is less true to the style and time of the author. He may incur the charge of singularity, or confusion of ideas, or ignorance of Greek, from a misunderstanding of the peculiarity of the subject in the person who makes the charge. For if it be said that the translation of some Greek words is contrary to the usages of grammar (*Gal.*, iv, 13), that is not in every instance to be denied; the point is, whether the usages of grammar are always observed. Or if it be objected to some interpretation of Scripture that it is diffi-

cult and perplexing, the answer is—'that may very well be—it is the fact', arising out of differences in the modes of thought of other times, or irregularities in the use of language which no art of the interpreter can evade. One consideration should be borne in mind, that the Bible is the only book in the world written in different styles and at many different times, which is in the hands of persons of all degrees of knowledge and education. The benefit of this outweighs the evil, yet the evil should be admitted—namely, that it leads to a hasty and partial interpretation of Scripture, which often obscures the true one. A sort of conflict arises between scientific criticism and popular opinion. The indiscriminate use of Scripture has a further tendency to maintain erroneous readings or translations; some which are allowed to be such by scholars have been stereotyped in the mind of the English reader; and it becomes almost a political question how far we can venture to disturb them.

There are difficulties of another kind in many parts of Scripture, the depth and inwardness of which require a measure of the same qualities in the interpreter himself. There are notes struck in places, which like some discoveries of science have sounded before their time; and only after many days have been caught up and found a response on the earth. There are germs of truth which after thousands of years have never yet taken root in the world. There are lessons in the Prophets which, however simple, mankind have not yet learned even in theory; and which the complexity of society rather tends to hide; aspects of human life in *Job* and *Ecclesiastes* which have a truth of desolation about them which we faintly realize in ordinary circumstances. It is, perhaps, the greatest difficulty of all to enter into the meaning of the words of Christ—so gentle, so human, so divine, neither adding to them nor marring their simplicity. The attempt to illustrate or draw them out in detail, even to guard against their abuse, is apt to disturb the balance of truth. The interpreter needs nothing short of 'fashioning' in himself the image of the mind of Christ. He has to be born again into a new spiritual or intellectual world, from which the thoughts of this world are shut out. It is one of the highest tasks on which the labour of a life can be spent, to bring the words of Christ a little nearer the heart of man.

But while acknowledging this inexhaustible or infinite character of the sacred writings, it does not, therefore, follow that we are willing to admit of hidden or mysterious meanings in them: in the same way we recognize the wonders and complexity of the laws of nature to be far beyond what eye has seen

or knowledge reached, yet it is not therefore to be supposed, that we acknowledge the existence of some other laws different in kind from those we know which are incapable of philosophical analysis. In like manner we have no reason to attribute to the Prophet or Evangelist any second or hidden sense different from that which appears on the surface. All that the Prophet meant may not have been consciously present to his mind ; there were depths which to himself also were but half revealed. He beheld the fortunes of Israel passing into the heavens ; the temporal kingdom was fading into an eternal one. It is not to be supposed that what he saw at a distance only was clearly defined to him ; or that the universal truth which was appearing and reappearing in the history of the surrounding world took a purely spiritual or abstract form in his mind. There is a sense in which we may still say with Lord Bacon, that the words of prophecy are to be interpreted as the words of one 'with whom a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years'. But that is no reason for turning days into years, or for interpreting the things 'that must shortly come to pass' in the *Book of Revelation*, as the events of modern history, or for separating the day of judgment from the destruction of Jerusalem in the *Gospels*. The double meaning which is given to our Saviour's discourse respecting the last things is not that 'form of eternity' of which Lord Bacon speaks ; it resembles rather the doubling of an object when seen through glasses placed at different angles. It is true also that there are types in Scripture which were regarded as such by the Jews themselves, as for example, the scapegoat, or the paschal lamb. But that is no proof of all outward ceremonies being types when Scripture is silent ;—if we assume the New Testament as a tradition running parallel with the Old, may not the Roman Catholic assume with equal reason tradition running parallel with the New ? Prophetic symbols, again, have often the same meaning in different places (*e.g.* the four beasts or living creatures, the colours white or red) ; the reason is that this meaning is derived from some natural association (as of fruitfulness, purity, or the like) ; or again, they are borrowed in some of the later prophecies from earlier ones ; we are not, therefore, justified in supposing any hidden connexion in the prophecies where they occur. Neither is there any ground for assuming design of any other kind in Scripture any more than in Plato or Homer. Wherever there is beauty and order, there is design ; but there is no proof of any artificial design, such as is often traced by the Fathers, in the relation of the several parts of a book, or of the several books to each other.

That is one of those mischievous notions which enables us, under the disguise of reverence, to make Scripture mean what we please. Nothing that can be said of the greatness or sublimity, or truth, or depth, or tenderness, of many passages, is too much. But that greatness is of a simple kind ; it is not increased by double senses, or systems of types, or elaborate structure, or design. If every sentence was a mystery, every word a riddle, every letter a symbol, that would not make the Scriptures more worthy of a Divine author ; it is a heathenish or Rabbinical fancy which reads them in this way. Such complexity would not place them above but below human compositions in general ; for it would deprive them of the ordinary intelligibility of human language. It is not for a Christian theologian to say that words were given to mankind to conceal their thoughts, neither was revelation given them to conceal the Divine.

The second rule is an application of the general principle ; 'interpret Scripture from itself' as in other respects, like any other book written in an age and country of which little or no other literature survives, and about which we know almost nothing except what is derived from its pages. Not that all the parts of Scripture are to be regarded as an indistinguishable mass. The Old Testament is not to be identified with the New, nor the Law with the Prophets, nor the *Gospels* with the *Epistles*, nor the *Epistles* of St Paul to be violently harmonized with the *Epistle of St James*. Each writer, each successive age, has characteristics of its own, as strongly marked, or more strongly, than those which are found in the authors or periods of classical literature. These differences are not to be lost in the idea of a Spirit from whom they proceed or by which they were overruled. And therefore, illustration of one part of Scripture by another should be confined to writings of the same age and the same authors, except where the writings of different ages or persons offer obvious similarities. It may be said further that illustration should be chiefly derived, not only from the same author, but from the same writing, or from one of the same period of his life. For example, the comparison of St John and the 'synoptic' *Gospels*, or of the *Gospel of St John* with the *Revelation of St John*, will tend rather to confuse than to elucidate the meaning of either ; while, on the other hand, the comparison of the Prophets with one another, and with the *Psalms*, offers many valuable helps and lights to the interpreter. Again, the connexion between the *Epistles* written by the Apostle St Paul about the same time (e.g. *Romans*, 1 and 2 *Corinthians*, *Galatians*,—*Colossians*, *Philippians*, *Ephesians*,—compared with

*Romans, Colossians,—Ephesians, Galatians, &c.*), is far closer than of *Epistles* which are separated by an interval of only a few years.

But supposing all this to be understood, and that by the interpretation of Scripture from itself is meant a real interpretation of like by like, it may be asked, what is it that we gain from a minute comparison of a particular author or writing? The indiscriminate use of parallel passages taken from one end of Scripture and applied to the other (except so far as earlier compositions may have afforded the material or the form of later ones) is useless and uncritical. The uneducated, or imperfectly educated person who looks out the marginal references of the English Bible, imagining himself in this way to gain a clearer insight into the Divine meaning, is really following the religious associations of his own mind. Even the critical use of parallel passages is not without danger. For are we to conclude that an author meant in one place what he says in another? Shall we venture to mend a corrupt phrase on the model of some other phrase, which memory, prevailing over judgment, calls up and thrusts into the text? It is this fallacy which has filled the pages of classical writers with useless and unfounded emendations.

The meaning of the Canon '*Non nisi ex Scriptura Scripturam potes interpretari*' is only this, 'that we cannot understand Scripture without becoming familiar with it'. Scripture is a world by itself, from which we must exclude foreign influences, whether theological or classical. To get inside that world is an effort of thought and imagination, requiring the sense of a poet as well as a critic—demanding, much more than learning, a degree of original power and intensity of mind. Any one who, instead of burying himself in the pages of the commentators, would learn the sacred writings by heart, and paraphrase them in English, will probably make a nearer approach to their true meaning than he would gather from any commentary. The intelligent mind will ask its own questions, and find for the most part its own answers. The true use of interpretation is to get rid of interpretation, and leave us alone in company with the author. When the meaning of Greek words is once known, the young student has almost all the real materials which are possessed by the greatest Biblical scholar, in the book itself. For almost our whole knowledge of the history of the Jews is derived from the Old Testament and the Apocryphal books, and almost our whole knowledge of the life of Christ and of the Apostolical Age is derived from the New; whatever is added



to them is either conjecture, or very slight topographical or chronological illustration. For this reason the rule given above, which is applicable to all books, is applicable to the New Testament more than any other.

Yet in this consideration of the separate books of Scripture it is not to be forgotten that they have also a sort of continuity. We make a separate study of the subject, of the mode of thought, in some degree also of the language of each book. And at length the idea arises in our minds of a common literature, a pervading life, an overruling law. It may be compared to the effect of some natural scene in which we suddenly perceive a harmony or picture, or to the imperfect appearance of design which suggests itself in looking at the surface of the globe. That is to say, there is nothing miraculous or artificial in the arrangement of the books of Scripture ; it is the result, not the design, which appears in them when bound in the same volume. Or if we like so to say, there *is* design, but a natural design which is revealed to after ages. Such continuity or design is best expressed under some notion of progress or growth, not regular, however, but with broken and imperfect stages, which the want of knowledge prevents our minutely defining. The great truth of the unity of God was there from the first ; slowly as the morning broke in the heavens, like some central light, it filled and afterwards dispersed the mists of human passion in which it was itself enveloped. A change passes over the Jewish religion from fear to love, from power to wisdom, from the justice of God to the mercy of God, from the nation to the individual, from this world to another ; from the visitation of the sins of the fathers upon the children, to ' every soul shall bear its own iniquity ' ; from the fire, the earthquake, and the storm, to the still small voice. There never was a time after the deliverance from Egypt, in which the Jewish people did not bear a kind of witness against the cruelty and licentiousness of the surrounding tribes. In the decline of the monarchy, as the kingdom itself was sinking under foreign conquerors, whether springing from contact with the outer world, or from some reaction within, the undergrowth of morality gathers strength ; first, in the anticipation of prophecy, secondly, like a green plant in the hollow rind of Pharisaism—and individuals pray and commune with God each one for himself. At length the tree of life blossoms ; the faith in immortality which had hitherto slumbered in the heart of man, intimated only in doubtful words (2 *Sam.*, xii, 23 ; *Psalms* xvii, 15), or beaming for an instant in dark places (*Job*, xix, 25), has become the prevailing belief.

There is an interval in the Jewish annals which we often exclude from our thoughts, because it has no record in the canonical writings—extending over about four hundred years, from the last of the prophets of the Old Testament to the forerunner of Christ in the New. This interval, about which we know so little, which is regarded by many as a portion of secular rather than of sacred history, was nevertheless as fruitful in religious changes as any similar period which preceded. The establishment of the Jewish sects, and the wars of the Maccabees, probably exercised as great an influence on Judaism as the captivity itself. A third influence was that of the Alexandrian literature, which was attracting the Jewish intellect, at the same time that the Galilæan zealot was tearing the nation in pieces with the doctrine that it was lawful to call ‘no man master but God’. In contrast with that wild fanaticism as well as with the proud Pharisee, came One most unlike all that had been before, as the kings or rulers of mankind. In an age which was the victim of its own passions, the creature of its own circumstances, the slave of its own degenerate religion, our Saviour taught a lesson absolutely free from all the influences of a surrounding world. He made the last perfect revelation of God to man ; a revelation not indeed immediately applicable to the state of society or the world, but in its truth and purity inexhaustible by the after generations of men. And of the first application of the truth which He taught as a counsel of perfection to the actual circumstances of mankind, we have the example in the *Epistles*.

Such a general conception of growth or development in Scripture, beginning with the truth of the Unity of God in the earliest books and ending with the perfection of Christ, naturally springs up in our minds in the perusal of the sacred writings. It is a notion of value to the interpreter, for it enables him at the same time to grasp the whole and distinguish the parts. It saves him from the necessity of maintaining that the Old Testament is one and the same everywhere ; that the books of Moses contain truths or precepts, such as the duty of prayer or the faith in immortality, or the spiritual interpretation of sacrifice, which no one has ever seen there. It leaves him room enough to admit all the facts of the case. No longer is he required to defend, or to explain away, David’s imprecations against his enemies, or his injunctions to Solomon, any more than his sin in the matter of Uriah. Nor is he hampered with a theory of accommodation. Still, the sense of ‘the increasing purpose which through the ages ran’ is present to him, nowhere else continuously discernible or ending in a divine perfection. No-

where else is there found the same interpenetration of the political and religious element—a whole nation, 'though never good for much at any time', possessed with the conviction that it was living in the face of God—in whom the Sun of righteousness shone upon the corruption of an Eastern nature—the 'fewest of all people', yet bearing the greatest part in the education of the world. Nowhere else among the teachers and benefactors of mankind is there any form like His, in whom the desire of the nation is fulfilled, and 'not of that nation only', but of all mankind, whom He restores to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God.

Such a growth or development may be regarded as a kind of progress from childhood to manhood. In the child there is an anticipation of truth; his reason is latent in the form of feeling; many words are used by him which he imperfectly understands; he is led by temporal promises, believing, that to be good is to be happy always; he is pleased by marvels and has vague terrors. He is confined to a spot of earth, and lives in a sort of prison of sense, yet is bursting also with a fulness of childish life: he imagines God to be like a human father, only greater and more awful; he is easily impressed with solemn thoughts, but soon 'rises up to play' with other children. It is observable that his ideas of right and wrong are very simple, hardly extending to another life; they consist chiefly in obedience to his parents, whose word is his law. As he grows older he mixes more and more with others; first with one or two who have a great influence in the direction of his mind. At length the world opens upon him; another work of education begins; and he learns to discern more truly the meaning of things and his relation to men in general. You may complete the image, by supposing that there was a time in his early days when he was a helpless outcast 'in the land of Egypt and the house of bondage'. And as he arrives at manhood he reflects on his former years, the progress of his education, the hardships of his infancy, the home of his youth (the thought of which is ineffaceable in after life), and he now understands that all this was but a preparation for another state of being, in which he is to play a part for himself. And once more in age you may imagine him like the patriarch looking back on the entire past, which he reads anew, perceiving that the events of life had a purpose or result which was not seen at the time; they seem to him bound 'each to each by natural piety'.

'Which things are an allegory', the particulars of which any one may interpret for himself. For the child born after

the flesh is the symbol of the child born after the Spirit. 'The law was a schoolmaster to bring men to Christ', and now 'we are under a schoolmaster' no longer. The anticipation of truth which came from without to the childhood or youth of the human race is witnessed to within; the revelation of God is not lost but renewed in the heart and understanding of the man. Experience has taught us the application of the lesson in a wider sphere. And many influences have combined to form the 'after life' of the world. When at the close (shall we say) of a great period in the history of man, we cast our eyes back on the course of events, from the 'angel of his presence in the wilderness' to the multitude of peoples, nations, languages, who are being drawn together by His Providence—from the simplicity of the pastoral state in the dawn of the world's day, to all the elements of civilization and knowledge which are beginning to meet and mingle in a common life, we also understand that we are no longer in our early home, to which, nevertheless, we fondly look; and that the end is yet unseen, and the purposes of God towards the human race only half revealed. And to turn once more to the Interpreter of Scripture, he too feels that the continuous growth of revelation which he traces in the Old and New Testament is a part of a larger whole extending over the earth and reaching to another world.

§ 4. Scripture has an inner life or soul; it has also an outward body or form. That form is language, which imperfectly expresses our common notions, much more those higher truths which religion teaches. At the time when our Saviour came into the world the Greek language was itself in a state of degeneracy and decay. It had lost its poetic force, and was ceasing to have the sway over the mind which classical Greek once held. That is a more important revolution in the mental history of mankind, than we easily conceive in modern times, when all languages sit loosely on thought, and the peculiarities or idiosyncrasies of one are corrected by our knowledge of another. It may be numbered among the causes which favoured the growth of Christianity. That degeneracy was a preparation for the Gospel—the decaying soil in which the new elements of life were to come forth—the beginning of another state of man, in which language and mythology and philosophy were no longer to exert the same constraining power as in the ancient world. The civilized portion of mankind were becoming of one speech, the diffusion of which along the shores of the Mediterranean sea made a way for the entrance of Christianity into the human

understanding, just as the Roman empire prepared the framework of its outward history. The first of all languages, 'for glory and for beauty', had become the 'common dialect' of the Macedonian kingdoms; it had been moulded in the schools of Alexandria to the ideas of the East and the religious wants of Jews. Neither was it any violence to its nature to be made the vehicle of the new truths which were springing up in the heart of man. The definiteness and absence of reflectiveness in the earlier forms of human speech, would have imposed a sort of limit on the freedom and spirituality of the Gospel; even the Greek of Plato would have 'coldly furnished forth' the words of 'eternal life'. A religion which was to be universal required the divisions of languages, as of nations, to be in some degree broken down [*Pæna linguarum dispersit homines, donum linguarum in unum collegit*']. But this community or freedom of language was accompanied by corresponding defects; it had lost its logical precision; it was less coherent; and more under the influence of association. It might be compared to a garment which allowed and yet impeded the exercise of the mind by being too large and loose for it.

From the inner life of Scripture it is time to pass on to the consideration of this outward form, including that other framework of modes of thought and figures of speech which is between the two. A knowledge of the original language is a necessary qualification of the Interpreter of Scripture. It takes away at least one chance of error in the explanation of a passage; it removes one of the films which have gathered over the page; it brings the meaning home in a more intimate and subtle way than a translation could do. To this, however, another qualification should be added, which is, the logical power to perceive the meaning of words in reference to their context. And there is a worse fault than ignorance of Greek in the interpretation of the New Testament, that is, ignorance of any language. The Greek Fathers, for example, are far from being the best verbal commentators, because their knowledge of Greek often leads them away from the drift of the passage. The minuteness of the study in our own day has also a tendency to introduce into the text associations which are not really found there. There is a danger of making words mean too much; refinements of signification are drawn out of them, perhaps contained in their etymology, which are lost in common use and parlance. There is the error of interpreting every particle, as though it were a link in the argument, instead of being, as is often the case, an excrescence of style. The verbal critic magnifies his art, which

is really great in Æschylus or Pindar, but not of equal importance in the interpretation of the simpler language of the New Testament. His love of scholarship will sometimes lead him to impress a false system on words and constructions. A great critic <sup>1</sup> who has commented on the three first chapters of the *Epistle to the Galatians*, has certainly afforded a proof that it is possible to read the New Testament under a distorting influence from classical Greek. The tendency gains support from the undefined feeling that Scripture does not come behind in excellence of language any more than of thought. And if not as in former days, the classic purity of the Greek of the New Testament, yet its certainty and accuracy, the assumption of which, as any other assumption, is only the parent of inaccuracy, is still maintained.

The study of the language of the New Testament has suffered in another way by following too much in the track of classical scholarship. All dead languages which have passed into the hands of grammarians, have given rise to questions which have either no result or in which the importance of the result, or the certainty, if certain, is out of proportion to the labour spent in attaining it. The field is exhausted by great critics, and then subdivided among lesser ones. The subject, unlike that of physical science, has a limit, and unless new ground is broken up, as for example in mythology, or comparative philology, is apt to grow barren. Though it is not true to say that 'we know as much about the Greeks and Romans as we ever shall', it is certain that we run a danger from the deficiency of material, of wasting time in questions which do not add anything to real knowledge, or in conjectures which must always remain uncertain, and may in turn give way to other conjectures in the next generation. Little points may be of great importance when rightly determined, because the observation of them tends to quicken the instinct of language; but conjectures about little things or rules respecting them which were not in the mind of Greek authors themselves, are not of equal value. There is the scholasticism of philology, not only in the Alexandrian, but in our own times; as in the Middle Ages, there was the scholasticism of philosophy. Questions of mere orthography, about which there cannot be said to have been a right or wrong, have been pursued almost with a Rabbinical minuteness. The story of the scholar who regretted 'that he had not concentrated his life on the dative case', is hardly a caricature of the spirit of such inquiries. The form of notes to the classics often seems

<sup>1</sup> Herman.

to arise out of a necessity for observing a certain proportion between the commentary and the text. And the same tendency is noticeable in many of the critical and philological observations which are made on the New Testament. The field of Biblical criticism is narrower, and its materials more fragmentary ; so too the minuteness and uncertainty of the questions raised has been greater. For example, the discussions respecting the chronology of St Paul's life and his second imprisonment : or about the identity of James, the brother of the Lord, or in another department, respecting the use of the Greek article, have gone far beyond the line of utility.

There seem to be reasons for doubting whether any considerable light can be thrown on the New Testament from inquiry into the language. Such inquiries are popular, because they are safe ; but their popularity is not the measure of their use. It has not been sufficiently considered that the difficulties of the New Testament are for the most part common to the Greek and the English. The noblest translation in the world has a few great errors, more than half of them in the text ; but ' we do it violence ' to haggle over the words. Minute corrections of tenses or particles are no good ; they spoil the English without being nearer the Greek. Apparent mistranslations are often due to a better knowledge of English rather than a worse knowledge of Greek. It is true that the signification of a few uncommon expressions, *e.g.* ἐξουσία, ἐπιβαλῶν, συναπαγόμενοι, κ.τ.λ., is yet uncertain. But no result of consequence would follow from the attainment of absolute certainty respecting the meaning of any of these. A more promising field opens to the interpreter in the examination of theological terms, such as faith (πίστις), grace (χάρις), righteousness (δικαιοσύνη), sanctification (ἁγιασμός), the law (νόμος), the spirit (πνεῦμα), the comforter (παράκλητος), &c., provided always that the use of such terms in the New Testament is clearly separated (1) from their derivation or previous use in Classical or Alexandrian Greek, (2) from their after use in the Fathers and in systems of theology. To which may be added another select class of words descriptive of the offices or customs of the Apostolic Church, such as Apostle (ἀπόστολος), Bishop (ἐπίσκοπος), Elder (πρεσβύτερος), Deacon and Deaconess (ὁ καὶ ἡ διάκονος), love-feast (ἀγάπαι), the Lord's day (ἡ κυριακὴ ἡμέρα), &c. It is a lexilogus of these and similar terms, rather than a lexicon of the entire Greek Testament that is required. Interesting subjects of real inquiry are also the comparison of the Greek of the New Testament with modern Greek on the one hand, and the Greek of the LXX on the other. It is not likely, how-

ever, that they will afford much more help than they have already done in the elucidation of the Greek of the New Testament.

It is for others to investigate the language of the Old Testament, to which the preceding remarks are only in part applicable. And it may be observed in passing of this, as of any other old language, that not the later form of the language, but the cognate dialects, must ever be the chief source of its illustration. For in every ancient language, antecedent or contemporary forms, not the subsequent ones, afford the real insight into its nature and structure. It must also be admitted, that very great and real obscurities exist in the English translation of the Old Testament, which even a superficial acquaintance with the original has a tendency to remove. Leaving, however, to others the consideration of the Semitic languages which raise questions of a different kind from the Hellenistic Greek, we will offer a few remarks on the latter. Much has been said of the increasing accuracy of our knowledge of the language of the New Testament; the old Hebraistic method of explaining difficulties of language or construction has retired within very narrow limits; it might probably with advantage be confined to still narrower ones—[if it have any place at all except in the *Apocalypse* or the *Gospel of St Matthew*]. There is, perhaps, some confusion between accuracy of our knowledge of language, and the accuracy of language itself; which is also strongly maintained. It is observed that the usages of barbarous as well as civilized nations conform perfectly to grammatical rules; that the uneducated in all countries have certain laws of speech as much as Shakespeare or Bacon; the usages of Lucian, it may be said, are as regular as those of Plato, even when they are different. The decay of language seems rather to witness to the permanence than to the changeableness of its structure; it is the flesh, not the bones, that begins to drop off. But such general remarks, although just, afford but little help in determining the character of the Greek of the New Testament, which has of course a certain system, failing in which it would cease to be a language. Some further illustration is needed of the change which has passed upon it. All languages do not decay in the same manner; and the influence of decay in the same language may be different in different countries; when used in writing and in speaking—when applied to the matters of ordinary life and to the higher truths of philosophy or religion. And the degeneracy of language itself is not a mere principle of dissolution, but creative also; while dead and rigid in some of its uses, it is elastic and expansive in others. The decay of an ancient language is the beginning of the construction



of a modern one. The loss of some usages gives a greater precision or freedom to others. The logical element, as for example in the Medieval Latin, will probably be strongest when the poetical has vanished. A great movement, like the Reformation in Germany, passing over a nation, may give a new birth also to its language.

These remarks may be applied to the Greek of the New Testament, which although classed vaguely under the 'common dialect', has, nevertheless, many features which are altogether peculiar to itself, and such as are found in no other remains of ancient literature. 1. It is more unequal in style even in the same books, that is to say, more original and plastic in one part, more rigid and unpliant in another. There is a want of the continuous power to frame a paragraph or to arrange clauses in subordination to each other, even to the extent in which it was possessed by a Greek scholiast or rhetorician. On the other hand there is a fulness of life, 'a new birth', in the use of abstract terms which is not found elsewhere, after the golden age of Greek philosophy. Almost the only passage in the New Testament which reads like a Greek period of the time, is the first paragraph of the *Gospel according to St Luke*, and the corresponding words of the *Acts*. But the power and meaning of the characteristic words of the New Testament is in remarkable contrast with the vapid and general use of the same words in Philo about the same time. There is also a sort of lyrical passion in some passages (1 *Cor.*, xiii; 2 *Cor.*, vi, 6-10; xi, 21-33) which is a new thing in the literature of the world; to which, at any rate, no Greek author of a later age furnishes any parallel. 2. Though written, the Greek of the New Testament partakes of the character of a spoken language; it is more lively and simple, and less structural than ordinary writing—a peculiarity of style which further agrees with the circumstance that the *Epistles* of St Paul were not written with his own hand, but probably dictated to an amanuensis, and that the *Gospels* also probably originate in an oral narrative. 3. The ground colours of the language may be said to be two; first, the LXX; which is modified, secondly, by the spoken Greek of eastern countries, and by the differences which might be expected to arise between a translation and an original; many Hebraisms would occur in the Greek of a translator, which would never have come to his pen but for the influence of the work which he was translating. 4. To which may be added a few Latin and Chaldee words, and a few Rabbinical formulæ. The influence of Hebrew or Chaldee in the New Testament is for the most part at a distance, in the

background, acting not directly, but mediately, through the LXX. It has much to do with the clausular structure and general form, but hardly anything with the grammatical usage. Philo too, did not know Hebrew, or at least the Hebrew Scriptures, yet there is also a 'mediate' influence of Hebrew traceable in his writings. 5. There is an element of constraint in the style of the New Testament, arising from the circumstance of its authors writing in a language which was not their own. This constraint shows itself in the repetition of words and phrases; in the verbal oppositions and anacolutha of St Paul; in the short sentences of St John. This is further increased by the fact that the writers of the New Testament were 'unlearned men', who had not the same power of writing as of speech. Moreover, as has been often remarked, the difficulty of composition increases in proportion to the greatness of the subject; e.g. the narrative of Thucydides is easy and intelligible, while his reflections and speeches are full of confusion; the effort to concentrate seems to interfere with the consecutiveness and fluency of ideas. Something of this kind is discernible in those passages of the *Epistles* in which the Apostle St Paul is seeking to set forth the opposite sides of God's dealing with man, e.g. *Rom.*, iii, 1-9; ix, x; or in which the sequence of the thought is interrupted by the conflict of emotions, *1 Cor.*, ix, 20; *Gal.*, iv, 11-20. 6. The power of the Gospel over language must be recognized, showing itself, first of all, in the original and consequently variable signification of words (*πίστις*, *χάρις*, *σωτηρία*), which is also more comprehensive and human than the heretical usage of many of the same terms, e.g. *γνώσις* (knowledge), *σοφία* (wisdom), *κτίσις* (creature, creation); secondly, in a peculiar use of some constructions, such as—*δικαιοσύνη Θεοῦ* (righteousness of God), *πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* (faith of Jesus Christ), *ἐν Χριστῷ* (in Christ), *ἐν Θεῷ* (in God), *ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν* (for us), in which the meaning of the genitive case or of the preposition almost escapes our notice, from familiarity with the sound of it. Lastly, the degeneracy of the Greek language is traceable in the failure of syntactical power; in the insertion of prepositions to denote relations of thought, which classical Greek would have expressed by the case only; in the omission of them when classical Greek would have required them; in the incipient use of *ὡς* with the subjunctive for the infinitive; in the confusion of ideas of cause and effect; in the absence of the article in the case of an increasing number of words which are passing into proper names; in the loss of the finer shades of difference in the negative particles; in the occasional confusion of the aorist and perfect; in excessive fondness for particles of

reasoning or inference ; in various forms of apposition, especially that of the word to the sentence ; in the use, sometimes emphatic, sometimes only pleonastic, of the personal and demonstrative pronouns. These are some of the signs that the language is breaking up and losing its structure.

Our knowledge of the New Testament is derived almost exclusively from itself. Of the language, as well as of the subject, it may be truly said, that what other writers contribute is nothing in comparison to that which is gained from observation of the text. Some inferences which may be gathered from this general fact, are the following : First, that less weight should be given to lexicons, that is, to the authority of other Greek writers, and more to the context. The use of a word in a new sense, the attribution of a neuter meaning to a verb elsewhere passive (*Rom.*, iii, 9, *προεχόμεθα*), the resolution of the compound into two simple notions (*Gal.*, iii, 1, *προεγράφη*), these, when the context requires it, are not to be set aside by the scholar because sanctioned by no known examples. The same remark applies to grammars as well as lexicons. We cannot be certain that *διὰ* with the accusative never has the same meaning as *διὰ* with the genitive (*Gal.*, iv, 13 ; *Phil.*, i, 15), or that the article always retains its defining power (*2 Cor.*, i, 17 ; *Acts*, xvii, 1), or that the perfect is never used in place of the aorist (*1 Cor.*, xv, 4 ; *Rev.*, v, 7, &c.) ; still less can we affirm that the latter end of a sentence never forgets the beginning (*Rom.*, ii, 17–21 ; v, 12–8 ; ix, 22 ; xvi, 25–7 ; &c. &c.). Foreign influences tend to derange the strong natural perception or remembrance of the analogy of our own language. That is very likely to have occurred in the case of some of the writers of the New Testament ; that there is such a derangement, is a fact. There is no probability in favour of St Paul writing in broken sentences, but there is no improbability which should lead us to assume, in such sentences, continuous grammar and thought, as appears to have been the feeling of the copyists who have corrected the anacolutha. The occurrence of them further justifies the interpreter in using some freedom with other passages in which the syntax does not absolutely break down. When ‘confusion of two constructions’, ‘meaning to say one thing and finishing with another’ ; ‘saying two things in one instead of disposing them in their logical sequence’, are attributed to the Apostle ; the use of these and similar expressions is defended by the fact that more numerous anacolutha occur in St Paul’s writings than in any equal portion of the New Testament, and far more than in the writings of any other Greek author of equal length.

Passing from the grammatical structure, we may briefly consider the logical character of the language of the New Testament. Two things should be here distinguished, the logical form and the logical sequence of thought. Some ages have been remarkable for the former of these two characteristics; they have dealt in opposition, contradiction, climax, pleonasm, reason within reason, and the like; mere statements taking the form of arguments—each sentence seeming to be a link in a chain. In such periods of literature, the appearance of logic is rhetorical, and is to be set down to the style. That is the case with many passages in the New Testament which are studded with logical or rhetorical formulæ, especially in the *Epistles* of St Paul. Nothing can be more simple or natural than the object of the writer. Yet 'forms of the schools' appear (whether learnt at the feet of Gamaliel, that reputed master of Greek learning, or not,) which imply a degree of logical or rhetorical training.

The observation of this rhetorical or logical element has a bearing on the Interpretation of Scripture. For it leads us to distinguish between the superficial connexion of words and the real connexion of thoughts. Otherwise injustice is done to the argument of the sacred writer, who may be supposed to violate logical rules, of which he is unconscious. For example, the argument of *Rom.*, iii, 19, may be classed by the logicians under some head of fallacy ('Ex aliquo non sequitur omnis'); the series of inferences which follow one another in *Rom.*, i, 16-8, are for the most part different aspects or statements of the same truth. So in *Rom.*, i, 32, the climax rather appears to be an anticlimax. But to dwell on these things interferes with the true perception of the Apostle's meaning, which is not contained in the repetitions of γάρ by which it is hooked together; nor are we accurately to weigh the proportions expressed by his οὐ μόνον—ἀλλὰ καὶ; or πολλῶ μᾶλλον; neither need we suppose that where μὲν is found alone, there was a reason for the omission of δὲ (*Rom.*, i, 8; iii, 2); or that the opposition of words and sentences is always the opposition of ideas (*Rom.*, v, 7; x, 10). It is true that these and similar forms or distinctions of language, admit of translation into English; and in every case the interpreter may find some point of view in which the simplest truth of feeling may be drawn out in an antithetical or argumentative form. But whether these points of view were in the Apostle's mind at the time of writing may be doubted; the real meaning, or kernel, seems to lie deeper and to be more within. When we pass from the study of each verse to survey the whole at a greater distance, the form of thought is again seen to be unimportant

in comparison to the truth which is contained in it. The same remark may be extended to the opposition, not only of words, but of ideas, which is found in the Scriptures generally, and almost seems to be inherent in human language itself. The law is opposed to faith, good to evil, the spirit to the flesh, light to darkness, the world to the believer; the sheep are set 'on his right hand, but the goats on the left'. The influence of this logical opposition has been great and not always without abuse in practice. For the opposition is one of ideas only which is not realized in fact. Experience shows us not that there are two classes of men animated by two opposing principles, but an infinite number of classes or individuals from the lowest depth of misery and sin to the highest perfection of which human nature is capable, the best not wholly good, the worst not entirely evil. But the figure or mode of representation changes these differences of degree into differences of kind. And we often think and speak and act in reference both to ourselves and others, as though the figure were altogether a reality.

Other questions arise out of the analysis of the modes of thought of Scripture. Unless we are willing to use words without inquiring into their meaning, it is necessary for us to arrange them in some relation to our own minds. The modes of thought of the Old Testament are not the same with those of the New, and those of the New are only partially the same with those in use among ourselves at the present day. The education of the human mind may be traced as clearly from the *Book of Genesis* to the *Epistles* of St Paul, as from Homer to Plato and Aristotle. When we hear St Paul speaking of 'body and soul and spirit', we know that such language as this would not occur in the Books of Moses or in the Prophet Isaiah. It has the colour of a later age, in which abstract terms have taken the place of expressions derived from material objects. When we proceed further to compare these or other words or expressions of St Paul with 'the body and mind', or 'mind' and 'matter', which is a distinction, not only of philosophy, but of common language among ourselves, it is not easy at once to determine the relation between them. Familiar as is the sound of both expressions, many questions arise when we begin to compare them.

This is the metaphysical difficulty in the Interpretation of Scripture, which it is better not to ignore, because the consideration of it is necessary to the understanding of many passages, and also because it may return upon us in the form of materialism or scepticism. To some who are not aware how little words affect the nature of things it may seem to raise speculations of

a very serious kind. Their doubts would, perhaps, find expression in some such exclamations as the following: 'How is religion possible when modes of thought are shifting? and words changing their meaning, and statements of doctrine, though "starved" with philosophy, are in perpetual danger of dissolution from metaphysical analysis?'

The answer seems to be, that Christian truth is not dependent on the fixedness of modes of thought. The metaphysician may analyze the ideas of the mind just as the physiologist may analyze the powers or parts of the bodily frame, yet morality and social life still go on, as in the body digestion is uninterrupted. That is not an illustration only; it represents the fact. Though we had no words for mind, matter, soul, body, and the like, Christianity would remain the same. This is obvious, whether we think of the case of the poor, who understand such distinctions very imperfectly, or of those nations of the earth, who have no precisely corresponding division of ideas. It is not of that subtle or evanescent character which is liable to be lost in shifting the use of terms. Indeed, it is an advantage at times to discard these terms with the view of getting rid of the oppositions to which they give rise. No metaphysical analysis can prevent 'our taking up the cross and following Christ', or receiving the kingdom of heaven as little children. To analyze the 'trichotomy' of St Paul is interesting as a chapter in the history of the human mind and necessary as a part of Biblical exegesis, but it has nothing to do with the religion of Christ. Christian duties may be enforced, and the life of Christ may be the centre of our thoughts, whether we speak of reason and faith, of soul and body, or of mind and matter, or adopt a mode of speech which dispenses with any of these divisions.

Connected with the modes of thought or representation in Scripture, are the figures of speech of Scripture, about which the same question may be asked: 'What division can we make between the figure and the reality?' And the answer seems to be of the same kind, that 'We cannot precisely draw the line between them'. Language, and especially the language of Scripture, does not admit of any sharp distinction. The simple expressions of one age become the allegories or figures of another; many of those in the New Testament are taken from the Old. But neither is there anything really essential in the form of these figures; nay, the literal application of many of them has been a great stumbling-block to the reception of Christianity. A recent commentator on Scripture appears willing to peril religion on the literal truth of such an expression as 'We shall be caught

up to meet the Lord in the air'. Would he be equally ready to stake Christianity on the literal meaning of the words, 'Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched'?

Of what has been said, this is the sum: 'That Scripture, like other books, has one meaning, which is to be gathered from itself without reference to the adaptations of Fathers or Divines; and without regard to *a priori* notions about its nature and origin. It is to be interpreted like other books, with attention to the character of its authors, and the prevailing state of civilization and knowledge, with allowance for peculiarities of style and language, and modes of thought and figures of speech. Yet not without a sense that as we read there grows upon us the witness of God in the world, anticipating in a rude and primitive age the truth that was to be, shining more and more unto the perfect day in the life of Christ, which again is reflected from different points of view in the teaching of His Apostles'.

§ 5. It has been a principal aim of the preceding pages to distinguish the interpretation from the application of Scripture. Many of the errors alluded to, arise out of a confusion of the two. The present is nearer to us than the past; the circumstances which surround us preoccupy our thoughts; it is only by an effort that we reproduce the ideas, or events, or persons of other ages. And thus, quite naturally, almost by a law of the human mind, the application of Scripture takes the place of its original meaning. And the question is, not how to get rid of this natural tendency, but how we may have the true use of it. For it cannot be got rid of, or rather is one of the chief instruments of religious usefulness in the world: 'Ideas must be given through something'; those of religion find their natural expression in the words of Scripture, in the adaptation of which to another state of life it is hardly possible that the first intention of the writers should be always preserved. Interpretation is the province of few; it requires a finer perception of language, and a higher degree of cultivation than is attained by the majority of mankind. But applications are made by all, from the philosopher reading 'God in History', to the poor woman who finds in them a response to her prayers, and the solace of her daily life. In the hour of death we do not want critical explanations; in most cases, those to whom they would be offered are incapable of understanding them. A few words, breathing the sense of the whole Christian world, such as 'I know that my Redeemer liveth' (though the exact meaning of them may be doubtful to

the Hebrew scholar) ; ' I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me ' ; touch a chord which would never be reached by the most skilful exposition of the argument of one of St Paul's *Epistles*.

There is also a use of Scripture in education and literature. This literary use, though secondary to the religious one, is not unimportant. It supplies a common language to the educated and uneducated, in which the best and highest thoughts of both are expressed ; it is a medium between the abstract notions of the one and the simple feelings of the other. To the poor especially, it conveys in the form which they are most capable of receiving, the lesson of history and life. The beauty and power of speech and writing would be greatly impaired, if the Scriptures ceased to be known or used among us. The orator seems to catch from them a sort of inspiration ; in the simple words of Scripture which he stamps anew, the philosopher often finds his most pregnant expressions. If modern times have been richer in the wealth of abstract thought, the contribution of earlier ages to the mind of the world has not been less, but, perhaps greater, in supplying the poetry of language. There is no such treasury of instruments and materials as Scripture. The loss of Homer, or the loss of Shakespeare, would have affected the whole series of Greek or English authors who follow. But the disappearance of the Bible from the books which the world contains, would produce results far greater ; we can scarcely conceive the degree in which it would alter literature and language—the ideas of the educated and philosophical, as well as the feelings and habits of mind of the poor. If it has been said, with an allowable hyperbole, that ' Homer is Greece ', with much more truth may it be said, that ' the Bible is Christendom '.

Many by whom considerations of this sort will be little understood, may, nevertheless, recognize the use made of the Old Testament in the New. The religion of Christ was first taught by an application of the words of the *Psalms* and the Prophets. Our Lord Himself sanctions this application. ' Can there be a better use of Scripture than that which is made by Scripture ? ' ' Or any more likely method of teaching the truths of Christianity than that by which they were first taught ? ' For it may be argued that the critical interpretation of Scripture is a device almost of yesterday ; it is the vocation of the scholar or philosopher, not of the Apostle or Prophet. The new truth which was introduced into the Old Testament, rather than the old truth which was found there, was the salvation and the conversion of the world. There are many quotations from the *Psalms* and the Prophets in the *Epistles*, in which the meaning is quickened



or spiritualized, but hardly any, probably none, which is based on the original sense or context. That is not so singular a phenomenon as may at first sight be imagined. It may appear strange to us that Scripture should be interpreted in Scripture, in a manner not altogether in agreement with modern criticism ; but would it not be more strange that it should be interpreted otherwise than in agreement with the ideas of the age or country in which it was written ? The observation that there is such an agreement, leads to two conclusions which have a bearing on our present subject. First, it is a reason for not insisting on the applications which the New Testament makes of passages in the Old, as their original meaning. Secondly, it gives authority and precedent for the use of similar applications in our own day.

But, on the other hand, though interwoven with literature, though common to all ages of the Church, though sanctioned by our Lord and His Apostles, it is easy to see that such an employment of Scripture is liable to error and perversion. For it may not only receive a new meaning ; it may be applied in a spirit alien to itself. It may become the symbol of fanaticism, the cloke of malice, the disguise of policy. Cromwell at Drogheda, quoting Scripture to his soldiers ; the well-known attack on the Puritans in the State Service for the Restoration, ' Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord ' ; the reply of the Venetian Ambassador to the suggestion of Wolsey, that Venice should take a lead in Italy, '*which was only* the Earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof', are examples of such uses. In former times, it was a real and not an imaginary fear, that the wars of the Lord in the Old Testament might arouse a fire in the bosom of Franks and Huns. In our own day such dangers have passed away ; it is only a figure of speech when the preacher says ' Gird on thy sword, O thou most mighty '. The warlike passions of men are not roused by quotations from Scripture, nor can states of life such as slavery or polygamy, which belong to a past age, be defended, at least in England, by the example of the Old Testament. The danger or error is of another kind ; more subtle, but hardly less real. For if we are permitted to apply Scripture under the pretence of interpreting it, the language of Scripture becomes only a mode of expressing the public feeling or opinion of our own day. Any passing phase of politics or art, or spurious philanthropy, may have a kind of Scriptural authority. The words that are used are the words of the Prophet or Evangelist, but we stand behind and adapt them to our purpose. Hence it is necessary to consider the limits and manner of a just adapta-

tion ; how much may be allowed for the sake of ornament ; how far the Scripture, in all its details, may be regarded as an allegory of human life—where the true analogy begins—how far the interpretation of Scripture will serve as a corrective to its practical abuse.

Truth seems to require that we should separate mere adaptations, from the original meaning of Scripture. It is not honest or reasonable to confound illustration with argument, in theology, any more than in other subjects. For example, if a preacher chooses to represent the condition of a church or of an individual in the present day, under the figure of Elijah left alone among the idolatrous tribes of Israel, such an allusion is natural enough ; but if he goes on to argue that individuals are therefore justified in remaining in what they believe to be an erroneous communion—that is a mere appearance of argument which ought not to have the slightest weight with a man of sense. Such a course may indeed be perfectly justifiable, but not on the ground that a prophet of the Lord once did so, two thousand five hundred years ago. Not in this sense were the lives of the Prophets written for our instruction. There are many important morals conveyed by them, but only so far as they themselves represent universal principles of justice and love. These universal principles they clothe with flesh and blood : they show them to us written on the hearts of men of like passions with ourselves. The prophecies, again, admit of many applications to the Christian Church or to the Christian life. There is no harm in speaking of the Church as the Spiritual Israel, or in using the imagery of Isaiah respecting Messiah's kingdom, as the type of good things to come. But when it is gravely urged, that from such passages as ' Kings shall be thy nursing fathers ', we are to collect the relations of Church and State, or from the pictorial description of Isaiah, that it is to be inferred there will be a reign of Christ on earth—that is a mere assumption of the forms of reasoning by the imagination. Nor is it a healthful or manly tone of feeling which depicts the political opposition to the Church in our own day, under imagery which is borrowed from the desolate Sion of the captivity. Scripture is apt to come too readily to the lips, when we are pouring out our own weaknesses, or enlarging on some favourite theme—perhaps idealizing in the language of prophecy the feebleness of preaching or missions in the present day, or from the want of something else to say. In many discussions on these and similar subjects, the position of the Jewish King, Church, Priest, has led to a confusion, partly caused by the use of similar words in modern senses among

ourselves. The King or Queen of England may be called the Anointed of the Lord, but we should not therefore imply that the attributes of sovereignty are the same as those which belonged to King David. All these are figures of speech, the employment of which is too common, and has been injurious to religion, because it prevents our looking at the facts of history or life as they truly are.

This is the first step towards a more truthful use of Scripture in practice—the separation of adaptation from interpretation. No one who is engaged in preaching or in religious instruction can be required to give up Scripture language ; it is the common element in which his thoughts and those of his hearers move. But he may be asked to distinguish the words of Scripture from the truths of Scripture—the means from the end. The least expression of Scripture is weighty ; it affects the minds of the hearers in a way that no other language can. Whatever responsibility attaches to idle words, attaches in still greater degree to the idle or fallacious use of Scripture terms. And there is surely a want of proper reverence for Scripture, when we confound the weakest and feeblest applications of its words with their true meaning—when we avail ourselves of their natural power to point them against some enemy—when we divert the eternal words of charity and truth into a defence of some passing opinion. For not only in the days of the Pharisees, but in our own, the letter has been taking the place of the spirit ; the least matters, of the greatest ; and the primary meaning has been lost in the secondary use.

Other simple cautions may also be added. The applications of Scripture should be harmonized and, as it were, interpenetrated with the spirit of the Gospel, the whole of which should be in every part ; though the words may receive a new sense, the new sense ought to be in agreement with the general truth. They should be used to bring home practical precepts, not to send the imagination on a voyage of discovery ; they are not the real foundation of our faith in another world, nor can they, by pleasant pictures, add to our knowledge of it. They should not confound the accidents with the essence of religion—the restrictions and burdens of the Jewish law with the freedom of the Gospel—the things which Moses allowed for the hardness of the heart, with the perfection of the teaching of Christ. They should avoid the form of arguments, or they will insensibly be used, or understood to mean more than they really do. They should be subjected to an overruling principle, which is the heart and conscience of the Christian teacher, who indeed ‘ stands

behind them', not to make them the vehicles of his own opinions, but as the expressions of justice, and truth, and love.

And here the critical interpretation of Scripture comes in and exercises a corrective influence on its popular use. We have already admitted that criticism is not for the multitude; it is not that which the Scripture terms the Gospel preached to the poor. Yet, indirectly passing from the few to the many, it has borne a great part in the Reformation of religion. It has cleared the eye of the mind to understand the original meaning. It was a sort of criticism which supported the struggle of the sixteenth century against the Roman Catholic Church; it is criticism that is leading Protestants to doubt whether the doctrine that the Pope is Antichrist, which has descended from the same period, is really discoverable in Scripture. Even the isolated thinker, against whom the religious world is taking up arms, has an influence on his opponents. The force of observations, which are based on reason and fact, remains when the tide of religious or party feeling is gone down. Criticism has also a healing influence in clearing away what may be termed the Sectarianism of knowledge. Without criticism it would be impossible to reconcile History and Science with Revealed Religion; they must remain for ever in a hostile and defiant attitude. Instead of being like other records, subject to the conditions of knowledge which existed in an early stage of the world, Scripture would be regarded on the one side as the work of organic Inspiration, and as a lying imposition on the other.

The real unity of Scripture, as of man, has also a relation to our present subject. Amid all the differences of modes of thought and speech which have existed in different ages, of which much is said in our own day, there is a common element in human nature which bursts through these differences and remains unchanged, because akin to the first instincts of our being. The simple feeling of truth and right is the same to the Greek or Hindoo as to ourselves. However great may be the diversities of human character, there is a point at which these diversities end, and unity begins to appear. Now this admits of an application to the books of Scripture, as well as to the world generally. Written at many different times, in more than one language, some of them in fragments, they, too, have a common element of which the preacher may avail himself. This element is twofold, partly divine and partly human; the revelation of the truth and righteousness of God, and the cry of the human heart towards Him. Every part of Scripture tends to raise us above ourselves—to give us a deeper sense of the feeble-

ness of man, and of the wisdom and power of God. It has a sort of kindred, as Plato would say, with religious truth everywhere in the world. It agrees also with the imperfect stages of knowledge and faith in human nature, and answers to its inarticulate cries. The universal truth easily breaks through the accidents of time and place in which it is involved. Although we cannot apply Jewish institutions to the Christian world, or venture in reliance on some text to resist the tide of civilization on which we are borne, yet it remains, nevertheless, to us, as well as to the Jews and first Christians, that 'Righteousness exalteth a nation', and that 'love is the fulfilling not of the Jewish law only, but of all law'.

In some cases, we have only to enlarge the meaning of Scripture to apply it even to the novelties and peculiarities of our own times. The world changes, but the human heart remains the same; events and details are different, but the principle by which they are governed, or the rule by which we are to act, is not different. When, for example, our Saviour says, 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free', it is not likely that these words would have conveyed to the minds of the Jews who heard Him any notion of the perplexities of doubt or inquiry. Yet we cannot suppose that our Saviour, were He to come again upon earth, would refuse thus to extend them. The Apostle St Paul, when describing the Gospel, which is to the Greek foolishness, speaks also of a higher wisdom which is known to those who are perfect. Neither is it unfair for us to apply this passage to that reconciliation of faith and knowledge, which may be termed Christian philosophy, as the nearest equivalent to its language in our own day. Such words, again, as 'Why seek ye the living among the dead?' admit of a great variety of adaptations to the circumstances of our own time. Many of these adaptations have a real germ in the meaning of the words. The precept, 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's', may be taken generally as expressing the necessity of distinguishing the divine and human—the things that belong to faith and the things that belong to experience. It is worth remarking in the application made of these words by Lord Bacon, '*Da fidei quæ fidei sunt*'; that, although the terms are altered, yet the circumstance that the form of the sentence is borrowed from Scripture gives them point and weight.

The portion of Scripture which more than any other is immediately and universally applicable to our own times is, doubtless, that which is contained in the words of Christ Himself.

The reason is that they are words of the most universal import. They do not relate to the circumstances of the time, but to the common life of all mankind. You cannot extract from them a political creed ; only, 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's', and 'The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat ; whatsoever, therefore, they say unto you do, but after their works do not'. They present to us a standard of truth and duty, such as no one can at once and immediately practise—such as, in its perfection, no one has fulfilled in this world. But this idealism does not interfere with their influence as a religious lesson. Ideals, even though unrealized, have effect on our daily life. The preacher of the Gospel is, or ought to be, aware that his calls to repentance, his standard of obligations, his lamentations over his own shortcomings or those of others, do not at once convert hundreds or thousands, as on the day of Pentecost. Yet it does not follow that they are thrown away, or that it would be well to substitute for them mere prudential or economical lessons, lectures on health or sanitary improvement. For they tend to raise men above themselves, providing them with Sabbaths as well as working days, giving them a taste of 'the good word of God' and of 'the powers of the world to come'. Human nature needs to be idealized ; it seems as if it took a dislike to itself when presented always in its ordinary attire ; it lives on in the hope of becoming better. And the image or hope of a better life—the vision of Christ crucified—which is held up to it, doubtless has an influence ; not like the rushing mighty wind of the day of Pentecost ; it may rather be compared to the leaven 'which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened'.

The Parables of our Lord are a portion of the New Testament, which we may apply in the most easy and literal manner. The persons in them are the persons among whom we live and move ; there are times and occasions at which the truths symbolized by them come home to the hearts of all who have ever been impressed by religion. We have been prodigal sons returning to our Father ; servants to whom talents have been entrusted ; labourers in the vineyard inclined to murmur at our lot, when compared with that of others, yet receiving every man his due ; well-satisfied Pharisees ; repentant Publicans : we have received the seed, and the cares of the world have choked it—we hope also at times that we have found the pearl of great price after sweeping the house—we are ready like the Good Samaritan to show kindness to all mankind. Of these circumstances of life or phases of mind, which are typified by the parables, most Christians have

experience. We may go on to apply many of them further to the condition of nations and churches. Such a treasury has Christ provided us of things new and old, which refer to all time and all mankind—may we not say in His own words—‘ Because He is the Son of Man ’ ?

There is no language of Scripture which penetrates the individual soul, and embraces all the world in the arms of its love, in the same manner as that of Christ Himself. Yet the *Epistles* contain lessons which are not found in the *Gospels*, or, at least, not expressed with the same degree of clearness. For the *Epistles* are nearer to actual life—they relate to the circumstances of the first believers, to their struggles with the world without, to their temptations and divisions from within—their subject is not only the doctrine of the Christian religion, but the business of the early Church. And although their circumstances are not our circumstances—we are not afflicted or persecuted, or driven out of the world, but in possession of the blessings, and security, and property of an established religion—yet there is a Christian spirit which infuses itself into all circumstances, of which they are a pure and living source. It is impossible to gather from a few fragmentary and apparently not always consistent expressions, how the Communion was celebrated, or the Church ordered, what was the relative position of Presbyters and Deacons, or the nature of the gift of tongues, as a rule for the Church in after ages ;—such inquiries have no certain answer, and at the best, are only the subject of honest curiosity. But the words, ‘ Charity never faileth ’ and ‘ Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am nothing ’—these have a voice which reaches to the end of time. There are no questions of meats and drinks nowadays, yet the noble words of the Apostle remain : ‘ If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend ’. Moderation in controversy, toleration towards opponents, or erring members, is a virtue which has been thought by many to belong to the development and not to the origin of Christianity, and which is rarely found in the commencement of a religion. But lessons of toleration may be gathered from the Apostle, which have not yet been learned either by theologians or by mankind in general. The persecutions and troubles which awaited the Apostle, no longer await us ; we cannot, therefore, without unreality, except, perhaps, in a very few cases, appropriate his words, ‘ I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ’. But that other text still sounds gently in our ears : ‘ My strength

is perfected in weakness', and 'when I am weak, then am I strong'. We cannot apply to ourselves the language of authority in which the Apostle speaks of himself as an ambassador for Christ, without something like bad taste. But it is not altogether an imaginary hope that those of us who are ministers of Christ, may attain to a real imitation of his great diligence, of his sympathy with others, and consideration for them—of his willingness to spend and be spent in his Master's service.

Such are a few instances of the manner in which the analogy of faith enables us to apply the words of Christ and His Apostles, with a strict regard to their original meaning. But the Old Testament has also its peculiar lessons which are not conveyed with equal point or force in the New. The beginnings of human history are themselves a lesson having a freshness as of the early dawn. There are forms of evil against which the Prophets and the prophetic spirit of the Law carry on a warfare, in terms almost too bold for the way of life of modern times. There, more plainly than in any other portion of Scripture, is expressed the antagonism of outward and inward, of ceremonial and moral, of mercy and sacrifice. There all the masks of hypocrisy are rudely torn asunder, in which an unthinking world allows itself to be disguised. There the relations of rich and poor in the sight of God, and their duties towards one another, are most clearly enunciated. There the religion of suffering first appears—'adversity, the blessing' of the Old Testament, as well as of the New. There the sorrows and aspirations of the soul find their deepest expression, and also their consolation. The feeble person has an image of himself in the 'bruised reed'; the suffering servant of God passes into the 'beloved one, in whom my soul delighteth'. Even the latest and most desolate phases of the human mind are reflected in *Job* and *Ecclesiastes*; yet not without the solemn assertion that 'to fear God and keep his commandments' is the beginning and end of all things.

It is true that there are examples in the Old Testament which were not written for our instruction, and that, in some instances, precepts or commands are attributed to God Himself, which must be regarded as relative to the state of knowledge which then existed of the Divine nature, or given 'for the hardness of men's hearts'. It cannot be denied that such passages of Scripture are liable to misunderstanding; the spirit of the Old Covenanters, although no longer appealing to the action of Samuel, 'hewing Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal', is not altogether extinguished. And a community of recent origin in America found their doctrine of polygamy on the Old



Testament. But the poor generally read the Bible unconsciously ; they take the good, and catch the prevailing spirit, without stopping to reason whether this or that practice is sanctioned by the custom or example of Scripture. The child is only struck by the impiety of the children who mocked the prophet ; he does not think of the severity of the punishment which is inflicted on them. And the poor, in this respect, are much like children ; their reflection on the morality or immorality of characters or events is suppressed by reverence for Scripture. The Christian teacher has a sort of tact by which he guides them to perceive only the spirit of the Gospel everywhere ; they read in the *Psalms*, of David's sin and repentance ; of the never-failing goodness of God to him, and his never-failing trust in Him, not of his imprecations against his enemies. Such difficulties are greater in theory and on paper, than in the management of a school or parish. They are found to affect the half-educated, rather than either the poor, or those who are educated in a higher sense. To be above such difficulties is the happiest condition of human life and knowledge, or to be below them ; to see, or think we see, how they may be reconciled with Divine power and wisdom, or not to see how they are apparently at variance with them.

§ 6. Some application of the preceding subject may be further made to theology and life.

Let us introduce this concluding inquiry with two remarks.

First, it may be observed, that a change in some of the prevailing modes of interpretation is not so much a matter of expediency as of necessity. The original meaning of Scripture is beginning to be clearly understood. But the apprehension of the original meaning is inconsistent with the reception of a typical or conventional one. The time will come when educated men will be no more able to believe that the words, ' Out of Egypt have I called my son ' (*Matt.*, ii, 15 ; *Hosea*, xi, 1), were *intended* by the prophet to refer to the return of Joseph and Mary from Egypt, than they are now able to believe the Roman Catholic explanation of *Genesis*, iii, 15 : ' Ipsa conteret caput tuum '. They will no more think that the first chapters of *Genesis* relate the same tale which Geology and Ethnology unfold than they now think the meaning of *Joshua*, x, 12, 13, to be in accordance with Galileo's discovery.

From the circumstance that in former ages there has been a four-fold or a seven-fold Interpretation of Scripture, we cannot argue to the possibility of upholding any other than the original one in our own. The mystical explanations of Origen or Philo

were not seen to be mystical ; the reasonings of Aquinas and Calvin were not supposed to go beyond the letter of the text. They have now become the subject of apology ; it is justly said that we should not judge the greatness of the Fathers or Reformers by their suitability to our own day. But this defence of them shows that their explanations of Scripture are no longer tenable ; they belong to a way of thinking and speaking which was once diffused over the world, but has now passed away. And what we give up as a general principle we shall find it impossible to maintain partially, *e.g.* in the types of the Mosaic Law and the double meanings of prophecy, at least, in any sense in which it is not equally applicable to all deep and suggestive writings.

The same observation may be applied to the historical criticism of Scripture. From the fact that Paley or Butler were regarded in their generation as supplying a triumphant answer to the enemies of Scripture, we cannot argue that their answer will be satisfactory to those who inquire into such subjects in our own. Criticism has far more power than it formerly had ; it has spread itself over ancient, and even modern, history ; it extends to the thoughts and ideas of men as well as to words and facts ; it has also a great place in education. Whether the habit of mind which has been formed in classical studies will not go on to Scripture ; whether Scripture can be made an exception to other ancient writings, now that the nature of both is more understood ; whether in the fuller light of history and science the views of the last century will hold out—these are questions respecting which the course of religious opinion in the past does not afford the means of truly judging.

Secondly, it has to be considered whether the intellectual forms under which Christianity has been described may not also be in a state of transition and resolution, in this respect contrasting with the never-changing truth of the Christian life (1 *Cor.*, xiii, 8). Looking backwards at past ages, we experience a kind of amazement at the minuteness of theological distinctions, and also at their permanence. They seem to have borne a part in the education of the Christian world, in an age when language itself had also a greater influence than nowadays. It is admitted that these distinctions are not observed in the New Testament, and are for the most part of a later growth. But little is gained by setting up theology against Scripture, or Scripture against theology ; the Bible against the Church, or the Church against the Bible. At different periods either has been a bulwark against some form of error : either has tended to correct the abuse of the other. A true inspiration guarded the writers of the New

Testament from Gnostic or Manichean tenets ; at a later stage, a sound instinct prevented the Church from dividing the humanity and Divinity of Christ. It may be said that the spirit of Christ forbids us to determine beyond what is written ; and the decision of the council of Nicæa has been described by an eminent English prelate as ' the greatest misfortune that ever befel the Christian world '. That is, perhaps, true ; yet a different decision would have been a greater misfortune. Nor does there seem any reason to suppose that the human mind could have been arrested in its theological course. It is a mistake to imagine that the dividing and splitting of words is owing to the depravity of the human heart ; was it not rather an intellectual movement (the only phenomenon of progress then going on among men) which led, by a sort of necessity, some to go forward to the completion of the system, while it left others to stand aside ? A veil was on the human understanding in the great controversies which absorbed the Church in earlier ages ; the cloud which the combatants themselves raised intercepted the view. They did not see—they could not have imagined—that there was a world which lay beyond the range of the controversy.

And now, as the Interpretation of Scripture is receiving another character, it seems that distinctions of theology, which were in great measure based on old Interpretations, are beginning to fade away. A change is observable in the manner in which doctrines are stated and defended ; it is no longer held sufficient to rest them on texts of Scripture, one, two, or more, which contain, or appear to contain, similar words or ideas. They are connected more closely with our moral nature ; extreme consequences are shunned ; large allowances are made for the ignorance of mankind. It is held that there is truth on both sides ; about many questions there is a kind of union of opposites ; others are admitted to have been verbal only ; all are regarded in the light which is thrown upon them by church history and religious experience. A theory has lately been put forward, apparently as a defence of the Christian faith, which denies the objective character of any of them. And there are other signs that times are changing, and we are changing too. It would be scarcely possible at present to revive the interest which was felt less than twenty years ago in the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration ; nor would the arguments by which it was supported or impugned have the meaning which they once had. The communion of the Lord's Supper is also ceasing, at least in the Church of England, to be a focus or centre of disunion :

Our greatest love turned to our greatest hate.

A silence is observable on some other points of doctrine around which controversies swarmed a generation ago. Persons begin to ask what was the real difference which divided the two parties. They are no longer within the magic circle, but are taking up a position external to it. They have arrived at an age of reflection, and begin to speculate on the action and reaction, the irritation and counter-irritation, of religious forces ; it is a common observation that 'revivals are not permanent' ; the movement is criticized even by those who are subject to its influence. In the present state of the human mind, any consideration of these subjects, whether from the highest or lowest or most moderate point of view, is unfavourable to the stability of dogmatical systems, because it rouses inquiry into the meaning of words. To the sense of this is probably to be attributed the reserve on matters of doctrine and controversy which characterizes the present day, compared with the theological activity of twenty years ago.

These reflections bring us back to the question with which we began—'What effect will the critical interpretation of Scripture have on theology and on life ?' Their tendency is to show that the result is beyond our control, and that the world is not unprepared for it. More things than at first sight appear are moving towards the same end. Religion often bids us think of ourselves, especially in later life, as, each one in his appointed place, carrying on a work which is fashioned within by unseen hands. The theologian, too, may have peace in the thought, that he is subject to the conditions of his age rather than one of its moving powers. When he hears theological inquiry censured as tending to create doubt and confusion, he knows very well that the cause of this is not to be sought in the writings of so-called rationalists or critics who are disliked partly because they unveil the age to itself ; but in the opposition of reason and feeling, of the past and the present, in the conflict between the Calvinistic tendencies of an elder generation, and the influences which even in the same family naturally affect the young.

This distraction of the human mind between adverse influences and associations, is a fact which we should have to accept and make the best of, whatever consequences might seem to follow to individuals or Churches. It is not to be regarded as a merely heathen notion that 'truth is to be desired for its own sake even though no "good" result from it'. As a Christian paradox it may be said, 'What hast thou to do with "good" ; follow thou Me'. But the Christian revelation does not require

of us this stoicism in most cases ; it rather shows how good and truth are generally coincident. Even in this life, there are numberless links which unite moral good with intellectual truth. It is hardly too much to say that the one is but a narrower form of the other. Truth is to the world what holiness of life is to the individual—to man collectively the source of justice and peace and good.

There are many ways in which the connexion between truth and good may be traced in the interpretation of Scripture. Is it a mere chimera that the different sections of Christendom may meet on the common ground of the New Testament ? Or that the individual may be urged by the vacancy and unprofitableness of old traditions to make the Gospel his own—a life of Christ in the soul, instead of a theory of Christ which is in a book or written down ? Or that in missions to the heathen Scripture may become the expression of universal truths rather than of the tenets of particular men or churches ? That would remove many obstacles to the reception of Christianity. Or that the study of Scripture may have a more important place in a liberal education than hitherto ? Or that the 'rational service' of interpreting Scripture may dry up the crude and dreamy vapours of religious excitement ? Or, that in preaching, new sources of spiritual health may flow from a more natural use of Scripture ? Or that the lessons of Scripture may have a nearer way to the hearts of the poor when disengaged from theological formulas ? Let us consider more at length some of these topics.

1. No one casting his eye over the map of the Christian world can desire that the present lines of demarcation should always remain, any more than he will be inclined to regard the division of Christians to which he belongs himself, as in a pre-eminent or exclusive sense the Church of Christ. Those lines of demarcation seem to be political rather than religious ; they are differences of nations, or governments, or ranks of society, more than of creeds or forms of faith. The feeling which gave rise to them has, in a great measure, passed away ; no intelligent man seriously inclines to believe that salvation is to be found only in his own denomination. Examples of this 'sturdy orthodoxy', in our own generation, rather provoke a smile than arouse serious disapproval. Yet many experiments show that these differences cannot be made up by any formal concordat or scheme of union ; the parties cannot be brought to terms, and if they could, would cease to take an interest in the question at issue. The friction is too great when persons are invited to

meet for a discussion of differences ; such a process is like opening the doors and windows to put out a slumbering flame. But that is no reason for doubting that the divisions of the Christian world are beginning to pass away. The progress of politics, acquaintance with other countries, the growth of knowledge and of material greatness, changes of opinion in the Church of England, the present position of the Roman Communion—all these phenomena show that the ecclesiastical state of the world is not destined to be perpetual. Within the envious barriers which 'divide human nature into very little pieces' (Plato, *Rep.*, iii, 395), a common sentiment is springing up of religious truth ; the essentials of Christianity are contrasted with the details and definitions of it ; good men of all religions find that they are more nearly agreed than heretofore. Neither is it impossible that this common feeling may so prevail over the accidental circumstances of Christian communities, that their political or ecclesiastical separation may be little felt. The walls which no adversary has scaled may fall down of themselves. We may perhaps figure to ourselves the battle against error and moral evil taking the place of one of sects and parties.

In this movement, which we should see more clearly but for the divisions of the Christian world which partly conceal it, the critical interpretation of Scripture will have a great influence. The Bible will be no longer appealed to as the witness of the opinions of particular sects, or of our own age ; it will cease to be the battle-field of controversies. But as its true meaning is more clearly seen, its moral power will also be greater. If the outward and inward witness, instead of parting into two, as they once did, seem rather to blend and coincide in the Christian consciousness, that is not a source of weakness but of strength. The Book itself, which links together the beginning and end of the human race, will not have a less inestimable value because the Spirit has taken the place of the letter. Its discrepancies of fact, when we become familiar with them, will seem of little consequence in comparison with the truths which it unfolds. That these truths, instead of floating down the stream of tradition, or being lost in ritual observances, have been preserved for ever in a book, is one of the many blessings which the Jewish and Christian revelations have conferred on the world—a blessing not the less real, because it is not necessary to attribute it to miraculous causes.

Again, the Scriptures are a bond of union to the whole Christian world. No one denies their authority, and could all be brought to an intelligence of their true meaning, all might come

to agree in matters of religion. That may seem to be a hope deferred, yet not altogether chimerical. If it is not held to be a thing impossible, that there should be agreement in the meaning of Plato or Sophocles, neither is it to be regarded as absurd, that there should be a like agreement in the interpretation of Scripture. The disappearance of artificial notions and systems will pave the way to such an agreement. The recognition of the fact, that many aspects and stages of religion are found in Scripture ; that different, or even opposite parties existed in the Apostolic Church ; that the first teachers of Christianity had a separate and individual mode of regarding the Gospel of Christ ; that any existing communion is necessarily much more unlike the brotherhood of love in the New Testament than we are willing to suppose—Protestants in some respects, as much so as Catholics—that rival sects in our own day—Calvinists and Arminians—those who maintain and those who deny the final restoration of man—may equally find texts which seem to favour their respective tenets (*Mark*, ix, 44-8 ; *Rom.*, xi, 32)—the recognition of these and similar facts will make us unwilling to impose any narrow rule of religious opinion on the ever-varying conditions of the human mind and Christian society.

II. Christian missions suggest another sphere in which a more enlightened use of Scripture might offer a great advantage to the teacher. The more he is himself penetrated with the universal spirit of Scripture, the more he will be able to resist the literal and servile habits of mind of Oriental nations. You cannot transfer English ways of belief, and almost the history of the Church of England itself, as the attempt is sometimes made—not to an uncivilized people, ready like children to receive new impressions, but to an ancient and decaying one, furrowed with the lines of thought, incapable of the principle of growth. But you may take the purer light or element of religion, of which Christianity is the expression, and make it shine on some principle in human nature which is the fallen image of it. You cannot give a people who have no history of their own, a sense of the importance of Christianity, as an historical fact ; but, perhaps, that very peculiarity of their character may make them more impressible by the truths or ideas of Christianity. Neither is it easy to make them understand the growth of Revelation in successive ages—that there are precepts of the Old Testament which are reversed in the New—or that Moses allowed many things for the hardness of men's hearts. They are in one state of the world, and the missionary who teaches them is in another, and the Book through which they are taught does not altogether

coincide with either. Many difficulties thus arise which we are most likely to be successful in meeting when we look them in the face. To one inference they clearly point, which is this: that it is not the *Book of Scripture* which we should seek to give them, to be revered like the *Vedas* or the *Koran*, and consecrated in its words and letters, but the truth of the Book, the mind of Christ and His Apostles, in which all lesser details and differences should be lost and absorbed. We want to awaken in them the sense that God is their Father, and they His children—that is of more importance than any theory about the inspiration of Scripture. But to teach in this spirit, the missionary should himself be able to separate the accidents from the essence of religion; he should be conscious that the power of the Gospel resides not in the particulars of theology, but in the Christian life.

III. It may be doubted whether Scripture has ever been sufficiently regarded as an element of liberal education. Few deem it worth while to spend in the study of it the same honest thought or pains which are bestowed on a classical author. Nor as at present studied, can it be said always to have an elevating effect. It is not a useful lesson for the young student to apply to Scripture principles which he would hesitate to apply to other books; to make formal reconcilements of discrepancies which he would not think of reconciling in ordinary history; to divide simple words into double meanings; to adopt the fancies or conjectures of Fathers and Commentators as real knowledge. This laxity of knowledge is apt to infect the judgment when transferred to other subjects. It is not easy to say how much of the unsettlement of mind which prevails among intellectual young men is attributable to these causes; the mixture of truth and falsehood in religious education, certainly tends to impair, at the age when it is most needed, the early influence of a religious home.

Yet Scripture studied in a more liberal spirit might supply a part of education which classical literature fails to provide. 'The best book for the heart might also be made the best book for the intellect'. The noblest study of history and antiquity is contained in it; a poetry which is also the highest form of moral teaching; there, too, are lives of heroes and prophets, and especially of One whom we do not name with them, because He is above them. This history, or poetry, or biography, is distinguished from all classical or secular writings by the contemplation of man as he appears in the sight of God. That is a sense of things into which we must grow as well as reason ourselves, without which human nature is but a truncated, half-



educated sort of being. But this sense or consciousness of a Divine presence in the world, which seems to be natural to the beginnings of the human race, but fades away and requires to be renewed in its after history, is not to be gathered from Greek or Roman literature, but from the Old and New Testament. And before we can make the Old and New Testament a real part of education, we must read them not by the help of custom or tradition, in the spirit of apology or controversy, but in accordance with the ordinary laws of human knowledge.

iv. Another use of Scripture is that in sermons, which seems to be among the tritest, and yet is far from being exhausted. If we could only be natural and speak of things as they truly are with a real interest and not merely a conventional one! The words of Scripture come readily to hand, and the repetition of them requires no effort of thought in the writer or speaker. But, neither does it produce any effect on the hearer, which will always be in proportion to the degree of feeling or consciousness in ourselves. It may be said that originality is the gift of few; no Church can expect to have, not a hundred, but ten such preachers as Robertson or Newman. But, without originality, it seems possible to make use of Scripture in sermons in a much more living way than at present. Let the preacher make it a sort of religion, and proof of his reverence for Scripture, that he never uses its words without a distinct meaning; let him avoid the form of argument from Scripture, and catch the feeling and spirit. Scripture is itself a kind of poetry, when not overlaid with rhetoric. The scene and country has a freshness which may always be renewed; there is the interest of antiquity and the interest of home or common life as well. The facts and characters of Scripture might receive a new reading by being described simply as they are. The truths of Scripture again would have greater reality if divested of the scholastic form in which theology has cast them. The universal and spiritual aspects of Scripture might be more brought forward to the exclusion of questions of the Jewish law, or controversies about the sacraments, or exaggerated statements of doctrines which seem to be at variance with morality. The life of Christ, regarded quite naturally as of one 'who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin', is also the life and centre of Christian teaching. There is no higher aim which the preacher can propose to himself than to awaken what may be termed the feeling of the presence of God and the mind of Christ in Scripture; not to collect evidences about dates and books, or to familiarize metaphysical distinctions; but to make the heart and conscience of

his hearers bear him witness that the lessons which are contained in Scripture—lessons of justice and truth—lessons of mercy and peace—of the need of man and the goodness of God to him, are indeed not human but divine.

v. It is time to make an end of this long disquisition—let the end be a few more words of application to the circumstances of a particular class in the present age. If any one who is about to become a clergyman feels, or thinks that he feels, that some of the preceding statements cast a shade of trouble or suspicion on his future walk of life, who, either from the influence of a stronger mind than his own, or from some natural tendency in himself, has been led to examine those great questions which lie on the threshold of the higher study of theology, and experiences a sort of shrinking or dizziness at the prospect which is opening upon him; let him lay to heart the following considerations: First, that he may possibly not be the person who is called upon to pursue such inquiries. No man should busy himself with them who has not clearness of mind enough to see things as they are, and a faith strong enough to rest in that degree of knowledge which God has really given; or who is unable to separate the truth from his own religious wants and experiences. For the theologian as well as the philosopher has need of 'dry light', 'unmingled with any tincture of the affections', the more so as his conclusions are oftener liable to be disordered by them. He who is of another temperament may find another work to do, which is in some respects a higher one. Unlike philosophy, the Gospel has an ideal life to offer, not to a few only, but to all. There is one word of caution, however, to be given to those who renounce inquiry; it is, that they cannot retain the right to condemn inquirers. Their duty is to say with Nicodemus, 'Doth the Gospel condemn any man before it hear him?', although the answer may be only 'Art thou also of Galilee?'. They have chosen the path of practical usefulness, and they should acknowledge that it is a narrow path. For any but a 'strong swimmer' will be insensibly drawn out of it by the tide of public opinion or the current of party.

Secondly, let him consider that the difficulty is not so great as imagination sometimes paints it. It is a difficulty which arises chiefly out of differences of education in different classes of society. It is a difficulty which tact, and prudence, and, much more, the power of a Christian life may hope to surmount. Much depends on the manner in which things are said; on the evidence in the writer or preacher of a real good will to his opponents, and a desire for the moral improvement of men. There is an

aspect of truth which may always be put forward so as to find a way to the hearts of men. If there is danger and shrinking from one point of view, from another there is freedom and sense of relief. The wider contemplation of the religious world may enable us to adjust our own place in it. The acknowledgment of churches as political and national institutions is the basis of a sound government of them. Criticism itself is not only negative; if it creates some difficulties, it does away others. It may put us at variance with a party or section of Christians in our own neighbourhood. But on the other hand, it enables us to look at all men as they are in the sight of God, not as they appear to human eye, separated and often interdicted from each other by lines of religious demarcation; it divides us from the parts to unite us to the whole. That is a great help to religious communion. It does away with the supposed opposition of reason and faith. It throws us back on the conviction that religion is a personal thing, in which certainty is to be slowly won and not assumed as the result of evidence or testimony. It places us, in some respects (though it be deemed a paradox to say so), more nearly in the position of the first Christians to whom the New Testament was not yet given, in whom the Gospel was a living word, not yet embodied in forms or supported by ancient institutions.

Thirdly, the suspicion or difficulty which attends critical inquiries is no reason for doubting their value. The Scripture nowhere leads us to suppose that the circumstance of all men speaking well of us is any ground for supposing that we are acceptable in the sight of God. And there is no reason why the condemnation of others should be witnessed to by our own conscience. Perhaps it may be true that, owing to the jealousy or fear of some, the reticence of others, the terrorism of a few, we may not always find it easy to regard these subjects with calmness and judgment. But, on the other hand, these accidental circumstances have nothing to do with the question at issue; they cannot have the slightest influence on the meaning of words, or on the truth of facts. No one can carry out the principle that public opinion or church authority is the guide to truth, when he goes beyond the limits of his own church or country. That is a consideration which may well make him pause before he accepts of such a guide in the journey to another world. All the arguments for repressing inquiries into Scripture in Protestant countries hold equally in Italy and Spain for repressing inquiries into matters of fact or doctrine, and so for denying the Scriptures to the common people.

Lastly, let him be assured that there is some nobler idea of truth than is supplied by the opinion of mankind in general, or the voice of parties in a church. Every one, whether a student of theology or not, has need to make war against his prejudices no less than against his passions ; and, in the religious teacher, the first is even more necessary than the last. For, while the vices of mankind are in a great degree isolated, and are, at any rate, reprobated by public opinion, their prejudices have a sort of communion or kindred with the world without. They are a collective evil, and have their being in the interest, classes, states of society, and other influences amid which we live. He who takes the prevailing opinions of Christians and decks them out in their gayest colours—who reflects the better mind of the world to itself—is likely to be its favourite teacher. In that ministry of the Gospel, even when assuming forms repulsive to persons of education, no doubt the good is far greater than the error or harm. But there is also a deeper work which is not dependent on the opinions of men in which many elements combine, some alien to religion, or accidentally at variance with it. That work can hardly expect to win much popular favour, so far as it runs counter to the feelings of religious parties. But he who bears a part in it may feel a confidence, which no popular caresses or religious sympathy could inspire, that he has by a Divine help been enabled to plant his foot somewhere beyond the waves of time. He may depart hence before the natural term, worn out with intellectual toil ; regarded with suspicion by many of his contemporaries ; yet not without a sure hope that the love of truth, which men of saintly lives often seem to slight, is, nevertheless, accepted before God.

## Evils in the Church of the Apostolical Age

WERE we, with the view of forming a judgment of the moral state of the early Church, to examine the subjects of rebuke most frequently referred to by the Apostle, these would be found to range themselves under four heads: first, licentiousness; secondly, disorder; thirdly, scruples of conscience; fourthly, strifes about doctrine and teachers. The consideration of these four subjects, the two former falling in with the argument of the *Epistle to the Thessalonians*, the two latter more closely connected with the Romans and the Galatians, will give what may be termed the darker side of the primitive Church.

1. Licentiousness was the besetting sin of the Roman world. Except by a miracle, it was impossible that the new converts could be at once and wholly freed from it. It lingered in the flesh when the spirit had cast it off. It had interwoven itself in the pagan religions; and, if we may believe the writings of adversaries, was ever reappearing on the confines of the Church in the earliest heresies. It was possible for men 'to resist unto death, striving against sin', yet to fall beneath its power. Even within the pale of the Church, it might assume the form of a mystic Christianity. The very ecstasy of conversion would often lead to a reaction. Nothing is more natural than that in a licentious city, like Corinth or Ephesus, those who were impressed by St Paul's teaching should have gone their way, and returned to their former life. In this case it would seldom happen that they apostatized into the ranks of the heathen: the same impulse which led them to the Gospel, would lead them also to bridge the gulf which separated them from its purer morality. Many may have sinned and repented again and again, unable to stand themselves in the general corruption, yet unable to cast aside utterly the image of innocence and good-

ness which the Apostle had set before them. There were those, again, who consciously sought to lead the double life, and imagined themselves to have found in licentiousness the true freedom of the Gospel.

How the consciences of men were aroused to the sense that sins of the flesh were really sins, may be seen by the manner in which the Apostle speaks of them. His tone respecting them is very different from that of moralists, or of common conversation even among serious men in modern times. He says nothing of the distrust which they infuse into society, or the consequences to the individual himself. It is not in this way that moral evils are presented to us in Scripture. Neither does he appeal to public opinion as condemning them, or dwell on the ruin involved in them to one half of the human race. True and forcible as these aspects of such sins are, they are the result of modern reflection, not the first instincts of reason and conscience. They strengthen the moral principles of mankind, but are not of a kind to touch the individual soul. They are a good defence for the existing order of things; but they will not purify the nature of man, or extinguish the flames of lust.

It is a new and hitherto unheard of language in which the Apostle denounces sins of impurity. They are not moral evils, but spiritual. They corrupt the soul; they defile the temple of the Holy Ghost; they cut men off from the body of Christ. Of morality, as distinct from religion, there is hardly a trace in the *Epistles* of St Paul. He cannot appeal to public opinion, for public opinion does not exist; the Gospel itself has to make the standard to the level of which it will raise the world. Fornication and uncleanness were mildly, when at all, censured by heathen philosophy. From within, not from without, the nature of sin has to be explained; as it appears in the depths of the human soul, in the awakening conscience of mankind. Even its consequences in another state of being are but slightly touched upon, in comparison with that living death which itself is. It is not merely a vice or crime, or even an offence against the law of God, to be punished here or hereafter. It is more than this. It is what men feel in themselves, not what they observe in those around them; not what shall be, but what is; a terrible consciousness, a mystery of iniquity, a communion with unseen powers of evil.

All sin is spoken of in the *Epistles* of St Paul, as rooted in human nature, and quickened by the consciousness of law; but especially is this the case with the sin which is more than any other the type of sin in general—fornication. It is, in a

peculiar sense, the sin of the flesh, with which the very idea of the corruption of the flesh is closely connected, just as, in 1 *Thess.*, iv, 3, the idea of holiness is regarded as almost equivalent to abstinence from the commission of it. It is a sin against a man's own body, distinguished from all other sins by its personal and individual nature. No other is at the same time so gross and so insidious; no other partakes so much of the slavery of sin. As marriage is the type of the communion of Christ and His Church, as the body is the member of Christ, so the sin of fornication is a strange and mysterious union with evil.

But although such is the tone of the Apostle, there is no violence to human nature in his commands respecting it. He knew how easily extremes meet, how hard it is for asceticism to make clean that which is within, how quickly it might itself pass into its opposite. Nothing can be more different from the spirit of early ecclesiastical history on this subject, than the moderation of St Paul. The remedy for sin is not celibacy, but marriage. Even second marriages are, for the prevention of sin, to be encouraged. In the same spirit is his treatment of the incestuous person. He had committed a sin not even named among the Gentiles, for which he was to be delivered unto Satan, for which all the Church should humble themselves; yet upon his true repentance, no ban is to separate him from the rest of the brethren, no doom of endless penance is recorded against him. Whatever might have been the enormity of his offence, he was to be forgiven, as in heaven, so on earth.

The manner in which the Corinthian Church are described as regarding this offence before the Apostle's rebuke to them, no less than the lenient sentence of the Apostle himself afterwards, as well as his constant admonitions on the same subject in all his *Epistles*, must be regarded as indications of the state of morality among the first converts. Above all other things, the Apostle insisted on purity as the first note of the Christian character; and yet the very earnestness and frequency of his warnings show that he is speaking, not of a sin hardly named among saints, but of one the victory over which was the greatest and most difficult triumph of the cross of Christ.

2. It is hard to resist the impression which naturally arises in our minds, that the early Church was without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; as it were, a bride adorned for her husband, the type of Christian purity, the model of Apostolical order. The real image is marred with human frailty; its evils, perhaps, arising more from this cause than any other, that in

its commencement it was a kingdom not of this world ; in other words, it had no political existence or legal support ; hence there is no evil more frequently referred to in the *Epistles* than disorder.

This spirit of disorder was manifested in various ways. In the Church of Corinth, the communion of the Lord's Supper was administered so as to be a scandal ; 'one was hungry, and another was drunken'. There was as yet no rite or custom to which all conformed. In the same Church, the spiritual gifts were manifested without rule or order. It seemed as if God was not the author of peace, but of confusion. All spoke together, men and women, apparently without distinction, singing, praying, teaching, uttering words unintelligible to the rest, with no regular succession or subordination (1 *Cor.*, xiv). The scene in their assemblies was such, that if an unbeliever had come in, he would have said they were mad. There is no other Church into which we have the same particular insight ; but it is not likely that more regularity was observed in the Galatian Church, which was distracted between St Paul and the false teachers, than in the Corinthian, which still, though in disorder, acknowledged his authority. In the Church to which the *Epistle of Jude* is addressed, the worst heretics are described as joining in the love feasts of its members, 'feeding without fear'. The *Second Epistle of Peter* uses nearly the same words to the Jews of the dispersion (*Jude*, 12 ; 2 *Pet.*, ii, 13).

Evils of this kind in a great measure arose from the absence of Church authority. Even the Apostle himself persuades more often than commands, and often uses language which implies a sort of hesitation whether his rule would be acknowledged or not. The freedom with which the Church of Corinth challenges particulars in his life and conduct (1 *Cor.*, ix) reminds us rather of the license of a modern congregation in censuring a minister of the Gospel, who was under its control, than of the position which we should expect an Apostle to have held in the minds of the first converts. The diverse offices, the figure of the members and the body, do not refer to what was, but to what ought to have been ; to an ideal of harmonious life and action, which the Apostle holds up before them, which in practice was far from being realized. The Church was not organized, but was in process of organization. Its only punishment was excommunication, which, as in modern so in primitive times, could not be enforced against the wishes of the majority. In two cases only are members of the Church 'delivered unto Satan' (1 *Cor.*, v, 5 ; 1 *Tim.*, i, 20). It was a moral and spiritual, not a legal control



that was exercised. Hence the frequent admonitions given doubtless, because they were needed: 'Obey them that have the rule over you'.

A second kind of disorder arose from unsettlement of mind. Of such unsettlement we find traces in the levity and vanity of the Corinthians; in the fickleness with which the Galatians left St Paul for the false teacher; almost (may we not say?) in the very passion with which the Apostle addresses them; above all, in the case of the Thessalonians. How few, among all the converts, were there capable of truly discerning their relation to the world around! or of supporting themselves alone when the fervour of conversion had passed away and the Apostle was no longer present with them! They had entered into a state so different from that of their fellow-men, that it might well be termed supernatural. The ordinary experience of men was no longer their guide. They left their daily employments. The great change which they felt within, seemed to extend itself without and involve the world in its shadow. So 'palpable to sense' was the vision of Christ's coming again, that their only fear or doubt was how the departed would have a share in it. No religious belief could be more unsettling than this: that to-day, or to-morrow, or the third day, before the sun set or the dawn arose, the sign of the Son of man might appear in the clouds of heaven. It was not possible to take thought for the morrow, to study to be quiet and get their own living, when men hardly expected the morrow. Death comes to individuals now, as nature prepares them for it; but the immediate expectation of Christ's coming is out of the course of nature. Young and old alike look for it. It is a resurrection of the world itself, and implies a corresponding revolution in the thoughts, feelings, and purposes of men.

A third kind of disorder may have arisen from the same causes, but seems to have assumed another character. As among the Jews, so among the first Christians, there were those who needed to be perpetually reminded, that the powers that be were ordained of God. The heathen converts could not at once lay aside the licentiousness of manners amid which they had been brought up; no more could the Jewish converts give up their aspirations, that at this time 'the kingdom was to be restored to Israel', which had perhaps been in some cases their first attraction to the Gospel. A community springing up in Palestine under the dominion of the Romans, could not be expected exactly to draw the line between the things that were Cæsar's and the things that were God's, or to understand in

what sense 'the children were free', in what sense it was nevertheless their duty to pay tribute. The spirit of those Galileans, 'who called no man Lord', must have sometimes found its way into the early Christian Church. When men are 'wrestling against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in heavenly places', they do not find it easy to reconcile their course of action with the bidding of those 'who sit in Moses's seat'. That one of the chief apprehensions of the Apostle was this tendency to rebellion, is proved by the frequency of the exhortations to obey magistrates, and the energy with which he sets himself against it.

3. The third head of our inquiry related to scruples of conscience, which were chiefly of two kinds; regarding either the observance of days, or the eating with unclean or unbelievers. Were they, or were they not, to observe the Jewish Sabbath, or new moon, or passover? Such questions as these are not to be considered the fancies or opinions of individuals; but, as mankind are quick enough to discover, involve general principles, and are but the outward signs of some deep and radical difference. In the question of the observance of Jewish feasts, and still more in the question of going in unto men uncircumcized and eating with them, was implied the whole question of the relation of the disciple of Christ to the Jew, just as the question of sitting at meat in the idol's temple was the question of the relation of the disciple of Christ to the Gentile. Was the Christian to preserve his caste, and remain within the pale of Judaism? Was he in his daily life to carry his religious scruples so far as to exclude himself from the social life of the heathen world? How much prudence and liberty and charity was necessary for the solution of such difficulties!

Freedom is the key-note of the Gospel, as preached by St Paul. 'All things are lawful'. 'There is no distinction of Jew or Greek, barbarian or Scythian, bond or free'. 'Let no man judge you of a new moon or a Sabbath'. 'Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty'. And yet, if we go back to its origin, the Christian Church was born into the world marked and diversified with the features of the religions that had preceded it, bound within the curtains of the tabernacle, coloured with Oriental opinions that refused to be washed out of the minds of men. The scruples of individuals are but indications of the elements out of which the Church was composed. There were narrow paths in which men walked, customs which clung to them long after the reason of them had ceased, observances which they were unable to give up, though con-

science and reason alike disowned them, which were based on the traditions of half the world, and could not be relinquished, however alien to the spirit of the Gospel. Slowly and gradually, as Christianity itself became more spread, these remnants of Judaism or Orientalism disappeared, and the spirit which had been taught from the beginning made itself felt in the hearts of men and in the institutions of the Church.

4. The heresies of the Apostolical Age are a subject too wide for illustration in a note. We shall attempt no more than to bring together the names and heads of opinion which occur in Scripture, with the view of completing the preceding sketch.

There was the party of Peter and of Paul, of the circumcision and of the uncircumcision. There were those who knew 'Christ according to the flesh'; those who, like St Paul, knew him only as revealed within. There were others who, after casting aside circumcision, were still struggling between the old dispensation and the new. There were those who never went beyond the baptism of John; others, again, to whom the Gospel of Christ clothed itself in Alexandrian language. There were prophets, speakers with tongues, discerners of spirits, interpreters of tongues. There were seekers after 'knowledge, falsely so called', 'spoilers of others with philosophy and vain deceit', 'worshippers of angels, intruders into things they had not seen'. There were those who looked daily for the coming of Christ; others who 'said that the Resurrection was passed already'. There were some who maintained an Oriental asceticism in their lives, 'forbidding to marry, commanding to abstain from meats'. There were individuals, like Hymenæus and Alexander, who had 'made shipwreck of their faith'; like Phygellus and Hermogenes, who had 'turned away' from St Paul; like Diotrophes, the leader in the Church of Ephesus, who refused to 'receive' St John. There were national differences, Jewish Sectarian tendencies, heathen systems of philosophy; stones of another workmanship built into the fabric of the Christian Church. There was the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, the synagogue of Satan, who 'said that they were Jews, and are not', 'the woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess'. There were wild heretics, 'many Antichrists', 'grievous wolves, entering into the fold', apostasy of whole churches at once. There were mingled anarchy and licentiousness, 'filthy dreamers, despising dominion, speaking evil of dignities', of whom no language is too strong for St Paul or St John to use, though they seem to have been separated by no definite line from the Church itself. There were fainter contrasts, too, of those who

agreed in the unity of the same spirit, aspects, and points of view, as we term them, of faith and works, of the *Epistle to the Romans* and the *Epistle to the Hebrews*.

How this outline is to be filled up must for ever remain, in a great degree, matter of speculation. Yet there is not a single trait here mentioned which does not reappear in the second century, either within the Church or without it, more or less prominent as favoured by circumstances or the reverse. The beginning of Ebionitism, Sabaism, Gnosticism, Montanism, Alexandrianism, Orientalism, and of the licentiousness which marked the track of some of them, are all discernible in the Apostolical Age. They would be more correctly regarded, not as offshoots of Christianity, but as the soil in which it grew up. We are surrounded by them, in the *Epistles* of St Paul, as truly as the Israelites were surrounded by their enemies when they first took possession of the Promised Land. They are not errors which arose when men began to speculate on the truths of the Gospel: Gnosticism, in particular, would be more nearly described as the mental atmosphere of the Greek cities of Asia, a conducting medium between heathenism and Christianity, in the magic light of which all religions faded and reappeared. None of them pass away at once; some even acquire a temporary principle of life, and grow up parallel with the Church itself. As opinions and tendencies of the human mind, many linger among us to the present day. Only after the destruction of Jerusalem, with the spread of the Gospel over the world, as the spirit of the East moves towards the West, Judaism dies away, to rise again, as some hold, in the glorified form of a mediæval Church.

Such is the reverse side of the picture of the Apostolical Age; what proportions we should give to each feature it is impossible to determine. We need not infer that all Churches were in the same disorder as Corinth and Galatia; or like Sardis, in which only 'a few names had not defiled their garments'; nor can we say how far the more flagrant evils were tamely submitted to by the Church itself. There was much of good that we can never know; much also of evil. The first Christians stood alone in the world: many of them were ready to venture their lives for the faith; most of them had probably suffered persecution—a difference between ourselves and them than which none can be greater. And perhaps the general lesson which we gather from the preceding considerations is, not that the state of the primitive Church was better or worse than our first thoughts would have suggested, but that

its state was one in which good and evil exercised a more vital power, were more subtly intermingled with, and more easily passed into, each other. All things were coming to the birth, some in one way, some in another. The supports of custom, of opinion, of tradition, had given way; human nature was thrown upon itself and the guidance of the Spirit of God. There were as many diversities of human character in the world then as now; more strange influences of religion and race than have ever since met in one; a far greater yearning of the human intellect to solve the problems of existence. There was no settled principle of morality independent of and above religious convictions. All these causes are sufficient to account for the diversities of opinion or practice, as well as for the extremes which met in the bosom of the primitive Church.

## On the Belief in the Coming of Christ in the Apostolical Age

‘Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you’ (*Luke*, xvii, 21).

THE belief in the near approach of the coming of Christ is spoken of or implied in almost every book of the New Testament; in the discourses of our Lord Himself, as well as in the *Acts of the Apostles*; in the *Epistles* of St Paul no less than in the *Book of the Revelation*. The remains of such a belief are discernible in the Montanism of the second century, which is separated by a scarcely definable line from the Church itself. Nor is there wanting in our own day a dim and meagre shadow of the same primitive faith, moving around, and sometimes within, the pale of our own communion. There are still those who argue, from the very lapse of time, that ‘now is their salvation nearer than when they believed’. All religious men have at times blended in their thoughts earth and heaven; while there are some who have raised their passing feelings into a system of doctrinal truth, and have seemed to see in the temporary state of the first converts the type of Christian life in all ages.

The influence which this belief exercised on the beginnings of the Church, and the manner in which it is interwoven in the writings of the New Testament, render the consideration of it necessary for the right understanding of St Paul’s *Epistles*. Yet it is a subject from which the interpreter of Scripture would gladly turn aside. For it seems as if he were compelled to allow ‘that St Paul was mistaken, and that in support of his mistake he could appeal to the words of Christ Himself’. Nothing can be plainer than the Apostle’s meaning; he says, that men living in his own day will be ‘caught up to meet the Lord in the air’; and yet, after eighteen centuries, the world is

as it was. The language which is attributed in the *Epistle of St Peter* to the unbelievers of that age has become the language of believers in our own: 'Since the fathers have fallen asleep, all things remain the same from the beginning'. No one can now be looking daily for the visible coming of Christ any more than, in a land where nature is at rest, he would live in expectation of an earthquake. Not 'the hardness of men's hearts', but the experience of eighteen hundred years has made it impossible, consistently with the laws of the human mind, that the belief of the first Christians should continue among ourselves.

Why, then, were the traces of such a belief permitted to appear in the New Testament? That is a question which we debate with ourselves the moment the difficulty is perceived, which receives various answers. There are some who say, 'as a trial of our faith'; while others have recourse to the double senses of prophecy, to divide the past from the future, the day of judgment from the destruction of Jerusalem. Others cite its existence as a proof that the books of Scripture were compiled at a time when such a belief was still living, and this not without, but within the circle of the Church itself. It may be also regarded as an indication that we were not intended to interpret Scripture apart from the light of experience, or violently to bend life and truth into agreement with isolated texts. Lastly, so far as we can venture to move such a question of our Lord Himself, we may observe that His teaching here, as in other places, is on a level with the modes of thought of His age, clothed in figures, as it must necessarily be, to express 'the things that eye hath not seen', limited by time, as if to give the sense of reality to what otherwise would be vague and infinite, yet mysterious in this respect too, for of 'that hour knoweth no man'; and that, however these figures of speech are explained, or these opposite aspects reconciled, their meaning, breaking through the horizon of earth, has been the stay and hope of the believer in all ages, who knows, nevertheless, that the Apostles have passed away, and no 'sign has yet appeared in the clouds', and that 'the round world is set so fast that it cannot be moved'.

The surprise that we naturally feel, when the attention is first called to this singular discrepancy between faith and experience, is greatly lessened, by our observing that even the language of Scripture is not free from inconsistency. For the words of our Lord Himself are not more in apparent contradiction with the course of events, than they are with other words which are equally attributed to Him by the Evangelists. He

who says 'This generation shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled' is the same as He who tells His disciples—'of that hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels of God, nor the Son, but the Father'. Is it reverent, or irreverent, to say that Christ knew what He Himself declares that He did not know? Place, as well as time, is described in language equally uncertain. For Jerusalem is the scene of the coming events; and yet, 'wherever the carcase is there will the eagles be gathered together'. And once again, in words which are for all time, the Saviour says 'The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, Lo here, or, lo there, for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you'. The same uncertainty is faithfully reflected in the *Epistles* of St Paul. For, at first, he is waiting for and hastening to the day of the Lord; then he anticipates a falling away; in the course of years he grows up into a higher truth, that 'to depart and be with Christ is far better'. Even in our own ways of thinking we may trace parallel inconsistencies. For at one time the kingdom of heaven seems to us to be beyond the stars, at another time to have its dwelling-place in the heart of man. Conceptions both of time and space become indistinct as we enter into the unseen world. Whether, 'if God would make windows in heaven, this thing might be', we cannot tell. But neither Scripture nor reason allow us to pass the limits of our own faculties in the conception of another life.

But instead of regarding this or any other fact of Scripture as a difficulty to be explained away, it will be more instructive for us to consider the nature of the belief and its probable effect on the infant communion. In its origin it was simple and childlike, the belief of men who saw but a little way into the purposes of Providence, who never dreamed of a vista of futurity. It was not what we should term an article of faith, but natural and necessary, flowing immediately out of the life and state of the earliest believers. It was the feeling of men who looked for the coming of Christ as we might look for the return of a lost friend, many of whom had seen Him on earth, and could not believe that He was taken from them for ever. Those who remembered the Lord would often say one to another, 'Yet a little while, and we do not see him; and again a little while, and we shall see him'. And sometimes, as years rolled on, they would ask the question which they had once asked in His lifetime 'What was this that he said? we cannot tell what this was which he said'. Let us imagine them, 'with their lamps lighted and their loins girded', in the spirit of our



Lord's discourses, waiting for His appearing. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; already they see the streaks of the morning light. And then again the light fails and fades; it was the light as of a distant city: the hour is not yet come; their own wishes had made them fancy it nearer than it was. Time passes; one by one the Fathers fall asleep; at last, 'a lingering star with lessening ray', the beloved Apostle, alone remains—the saying goes forth 'that that disciple should not die'; and the daylight indeed appears, but it is the light not of another world but of this.

So we may trace in a figure the thoughts of the first disciples respecting the coming of the Lord, towards whom they yearned, and the end of the world; the course of events silently rebuking them and saying 'It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power'. But the belief in the expectation of the coming of Christ has other aspects also—which are equally interesting and important. It was the beginning of the Church. It was the feeling of men who, in the language of St Paul, were 'baptized into one body and drunk of one spirit'; the kingdom of God creating itself in the heart of man, when, in modern language, it was still an idea and not an outward institution—the liquid ore, as it were, melted by the heavenly flame, but not cast in the mould. It was the feeling of men who had an intense sense of the change that had been wrought in themselves, and to whom this change seemed like the beginning of a greater change that was overflowing on the world around them. It was the feeling of men who looked back upon the past, of which they knew so little, and discerned in it the workings of the same spirit, one and continuous, which they felt in their own souls; to whom the world within and the world without were reflected upon one another, and the history of the Jewish race was a parable, an 'open secret', of the things to come. It was the feeling of men who were living not amid the aspirations of prophecy, but in the hour of its fulfilment; who clothed their own times in its glorious imagery; to whom the veil that was on the face of Moses was done away in Christ. It was the putting of the garment of the old dispensation upon the new. It was the feeling of men who were saying, Lord, how long? whom their own sufferings assured that there was a righteous judge who would not always delay. It was the feeling of men who were living far above and away from earth, in a spiritual kingdom, who scarcely thought either of the past or the future in the eternity of the present.

Let those who think this an imaginary picture recall to mind and compare with Scripture, either what they may have read in books or experienced in themselves as the workings of a mind suddenly converted to the Gospel. Such an one seems to lose his measure of events and his true relation to the world. While other men are going on with their daily occupations, he only is out of sympathy with nature, and has fears and joys in himself, which he can neither communicate nor explain to his fellows. It is not that he is thinking of the endless ages in which he will partake of heavenly bliss; rather the present consciousness of sin, or the present sense of forgiveness and of peace in Christ, is already a sort of hell or heaven within him, which excludes the future. It is not that he has an increased insight into the original meaning of Scripture; rather he seems to absorb Scripture into himself. Least of all have persons in such a state of mind distinct or accurate conceptions of the world to come. The images in which they express themselves are carnal and visible, often inconsistent with each other, scarcely intelligible to minds which are not in sympathy with them, yet not the less the realization to them of a true and lively faith. The last thing that they desire, or could comprehend, is an intellectual theory of another life. They seem hardly to need either statements of doctrine or the religious ministrations of others; their concern is with God only.

Substitute now for a single individual, the three thousand who were converted on the day of Pentecost, the 'multitude of Jews that believed, zealous for the law'; conceive them changed at the same instant by one spirit, and we seem to see on a larger scale the same effects following. Their conversion is an exception to the course of nature; itself a revelation and inspiration, a wonder of which they can give no account to themselves or others, not the least wonderful part of which is their communion with one another. The same Divine power, which originally formed men into nations, forms them into a church now, and almost literally gives them a new language and a new speech. They come into being with common hopes and fears, at one with each other, separated from mankind at large, in new relations to their own country and kindred. They see God looking upon themselves and other men, not, as heretofore, 'winking at the times of that ignorance', but distinctly conscious of all their acts. What they feel within themselves spreads itself over the world. All men are in the presence of God: good and evil quicken into life beneath His searching eye; there is a fellowship of the saints on one side, and a mystery of iniquity on the other.

They do not read history, or comprehend the sort of imperfect necessity under which men act as creatures of their age. The same guilt which they acknowledge in themselves, they attach to other men; the same judgment which would await them, is awaiting the world everywhere. In the events around them, in their own sufferings, in their daily life, they see the preparations for the great conflict between good and evil, between Christ and Belial, if, indeed, it be not already begun. The circle of their own life includes in it the destinies of the human race itself, of which it is, as it were, the microcosm, seen by the eye of faith and the light of inward experience. This is what the law and the prophets seem to them to have meant when they spoke of God's judgment on His enemies, of the Lord coming with ten thousand of His saints. And the signs which were to accompany these things are already seen among them, 'not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance'.

To us the preaching of the Gospel is a new beginning, from which we date all things, beyond which we neither desire nor are able to inquire. To the first believers it was otherwise; not the beginning of a new world, but the end of a former one. They looked back to the past, because the veil of the future was not yet lifted up. They were living in 'the latter days', the confluence of all times, the meeting-point of the purposes of God. They read all things in the light of the approaching end of the world. They were not taught, and could not have imagined, that for eighteen centuries servants of God should continue on the earth, waiting, like themselves, for the promise of His coming. They were not taught, and could not have imagined, that after three centuries the Church, which they saw poverty-stricken and persecuted, should be the mistress of the earth, and that, in another sense than they had hoped, the kingdoms of this world should become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ. Instead of it they beheld in a figure the heavens opening, and the angels of God ascending and descending; the present outpouring of the Spirit, and the evil and perplexity of the world itself, being the earnest of the things which were shortly to come to pass.

It has been often remarked, that the belief in the coming of Christ stood in the same relation to the Apostolic Church that the expectation of death does to ourselves. Certainly the absence of exhortations based upon the shortness of life, which are not unfrequent in the Old Testament, and are so familiar to our own day, forms a remarkable feature in the writings of the New Testament, and in a measure seems to confirm such an opinion.

And yet the similarity is rather apparent than real ; or, at any rate, the difference between the two is not less remarkable. For the feeble apprehension which each man entertains of his own mortality, can bear no comparison with that living sense of the day of the Lord which was the habitual thought of the first Christians, which was not so much a 'coming' as a 'presence' to them, as its very name implied (*παρουσία*). How different also was the event looked for, no less than the anticipation of it ! There is nothing terrible in death ; it is the repose of wearied nature ; it steals men away one by one, while the world goes still on its way. We fear it at a distance, but not near. Only in youth sometimes it seems hard to die ; the language of old men is 'I have lived long enough'. But the day of the Lord was an inversion of the course of nature ; it was a change, not to the individual only, but to the world ; a scene of great fear and great joy at once to the whole Church and to all mankind, which was in its very nature sudden, unexpected, coming 'as a thief in the night, and as travail upon a woman with child'. Yet it might be said to be expected too, for the first disciples were sitting waiting for it 'with their lamps lighted and their loins girded'. It was not darkness, nor sleep, nor death, but a day of light and life, in the expectation of which men were to walk as children of the light, yet fearful by its very suddenness and the vengeance to be poured on the wicked.

Such a belief could not be without its effect on the lives of the first converts and on the state of the Church. While it increased the awfulness of life, it almost unavoidably withdrew men's thoughts from its ordinary duties. It naturally led to the state described in the Corinthian Church, in which spiritual gifts had taken the place of moral duties, and of those very gifts, the less spiritual were preferred to the more spiritual. It took the mind away from the kingdom of God within, to fix it on signs and wonders, 'the things spoken of by the prophet Joel', when the sun should be turned into darkness and the moon into blood. It made men almost ready to act contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, from the sense of what they saw, or seemed to see, in the world around them. The intensity of the spiritual state in which they lived, so far beyond that of our daily life, is itself the explanation of the spiritual disorder which seems so strange to us in men who were ready to hazard their lives for the truth, and which was but the natural reaction against their former state.

It is obvious that such a belief was inconsistent with an established Ecclesiastical order. A succession of bishops could

have had no meaning in a world that was to vanish away. Episcopacy, it has been truly remarked, was in natural antagonism to Montanism; and in the age of the Apostles as well, there is an opposition, traceable in the *Epistles* themselves, between the supernatural gifts and the order and discipline of the Church. Ecclesiastical as well as political institutions are not made, but grow. What we are apt to regard as their first idea and design, is in reality their after development, what in the fulness of time they become, not what they originally were, the former being faintly, if at all, discernible in the new birth of the Church and of the world.

Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that the meagreness of those historical memorials of the first age which survived it, has been the result of such a belief. What interest would be attached to the events of this world, if they were so soon to be lost in another? or to the lessons of history, when the nations of the earth were in a few years to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ? Even the narrative of the acts and sayings of the Saviour of mankind must have had a different degree of importance to those who expected to see with their eyes the Word of Life, and to us, to whom they are the great example, for after ages, of faith and practice. Among many causes which may be assigned for the great historical chasm which separates the life of Christ and His Apostles from after ages, this is not the least probable. The age of the Apostles was an age, not of history, but of prophecy.

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*Passages in St Paul's other Epistles bearing on the Belief in the  
Coming of Christ*

i Cor., i, 7, 8. So that ye came behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

iii, 13. Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. (?)

iv, 5. Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come. (?)

vi, 2. Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?

vii, 29-31. But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.

x, 11. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

xv, 12. Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

51. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. *Compare Lachmann*: We shall all sleep, but we shall not all be changed.

2 *Cor.*, i, 14. We are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

iii, 18. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 *Cor.*, v, 1-10. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens . . . Therefore, we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

*Rom.*, ii, 15, 16. Their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

xiii, 11, 12. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

*Eph.*, i, 3. Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

ii, 4-6. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

iv, 30. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

*Philipp.*, i, 23. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.

iii, 11. If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

20, 21. For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

iv, 5. The Lord is at hand.

*Col.*, i, 5. For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.

12, 13. Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

And now 'the fathers have fallen asleep, all things remain the same as at the beginning'. More clearly than in former times, we see the discrepancy between the meaning of Scripture and the order of events which history discloses to us. The fact stares us in the face. We feel no satisfaction or security in attempting to conceal it; we cannot do so if we would. It is right, therefore, that we should be assured, that, even if the Apostles were mistaken, 'our faith' is not 'vain'. Our hope of life and immortality is not taken away, because the language of St Paul in some passages seems to fix the times and the seasons which our Saviour, in His last words on earth, tells His Apostles, 'it is not for you to know'.

The subject of the preceding essay may be considered apologetically; that is, with a view to meet objections in two ways—either as affecting theology, or belief and practice.

1. Most of the difficulties of theology are self-made, and ready to vanish away when we consider them naturally. They generally arise out of certain hypotheses which we vainly try to reconcile with obvious facts; often they are the opinions of a

past day lingering on into the present. The belief of St Paul in the immediate coming of Christ is not at all different from what we should have expected, or in any degree inconsistent with the laws of the human mind, or, again, unlike the analogy of prophecy and of religion generally. It was a natural interpretation of the old prophetic writings. Our difficulty is really of a different kind—how to reconcile such a belief with the infallibility of the Apostle. He never claims this infallibility; it is we ourselves who love to ascribe it to him. It is true that the Apostle, if infallible, could not have erred respecting the end of the world; and if we could prove that he was infallible, we might deny that he was in error. But the ascription of infallibility to him involves further and almost endless difficulties. For it seems, to use an expression of Bishop Butler's, as if 'there would be no stopping', until revelation was wholly different from what it is. Its truths should no longer be expressed in human language, or under the limitation of human faculties; they must have dropped from heaven; that is, have found their way into the world out of the course of nature, unconnected with history, in no relation to the thoughts of men, and therefore powerless to assimilate the human heart to themselves.

Not in this way has it 'pleased God to reveal his Son in us'. The New Testament came through the Old; it did not rudely break with the former Dispensation. It appropriated the figures of the law, it clothed itself in the imagery of the prophets. It was preached to the poor, and therefore it was on a level with the modes of thought which prevailed in the age in which it was given. It is foolish to admit this in words, and to deny the inferences which unavoidably flow from it. The lesson which it taught was pure and divine, and so far as it was connected at all with facts of history, historically true: but it was not supernaturally guarded against error. It left the Jewish belief in Messiah's kingdom as it had been before; only it purified, sanctified, spiritualized it. Herein is the great difference between what, without detracting from the divine character of Christianity, we may be permitted to call the error of the Apostles and erroneous assumptions of modern interpreters of prophecy respecting the end of the world. The first was natural, arising out of the circumstances and modes of thought of the first Christians; the other is an intrusion into the unseen future, which experience has shown to be irreverent and unmeaning. The difference is of the same kind as between voluntary error and the unavoidable imperfection of human knowledge in a particular age or country.



But neither is the New Testament to be interpreted apart from the course of events. The world is left to itself to clear up as it goes on ; many lessons even in divinity are only learnt by experience. Time may often enlarge faith ; it may also correct it. The belief and practice of the early Church, respecting the admission of the Gentiles, were greatly altered by the fact that the Gentiles themselves flocked in : ' the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and the violent took it by force '. In like manner, the faith respecting the coming of Christ was modified by the continuance of the world itself. Common-sense suggests that those who were in the first ecstasy of conversion, and those who after the lapse of years saw the world unchanged and the fabric of the Church on earth rising around them, could not regard the day of the Lord with the same feelings. While to the one it seemed near and present, at any moment ready to burst forth ; to the other it was a long way off, separated by time, and as it were by place ; a world beyond the stars, yet also having its dwelling in the heart of man : as to ourselves, it is a world inseparably bound up with our consciousness of a Divine Being. Not at once, but gradually did the cloud clear up, and the one mode of faith take the place of the other. Apart from the prophets, through them, beyond them, springing up in a new and living way in the soul of man, corrected by long experience, as ' the Fathers ' one by one ' fell asleep ', as the hope of the Jewish race declined, as ecstatic gifts ceased, as a regular hierarchy was established in the Church, the belief in the coming of Christ was transformed from being outward to becoming inward, from being national to becoming individual and universal, from being Jewish to becoming Christian.

II. It would be a serious error to rest our belief in a future life or judgment to come on those expressions of our Saviour or of St Paul, which, as we are taught by time, have not received a literal fulfilment. An argument is sometimes used as a sort of lever to force our assent to the letter of Scripture, or of Church teaching, when it is too plain that the letter kills. The argument is of this kind ; it seeks to connect what is accidental and superficial with what is essential, in the hope that we may be compelled to accept both from the fear of rejecting both : ' Believe this, believe also that ; if you do not believe that, you cannot believe this '. Such an argument we may conceive, in reference to our present subject, taking the following form ; it would say ' If you will not believe literally that we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, why believe that we shall be judged at all ? If the Apostle erred respecting the time

of Christ's coming, might he not have erred also respecting the fact of His coming?' So it is thought that we shall be won back again to consider the question by such lights only as tradition or authority supply, and prudently keep away from the letter of the text.

No doubt it would be possible to draw, from the storehouse of metaphysical theology, distinctions and modes of expression which would 'skin' or conceal the weak place. It might be said that the words of St Paul had an ideal or symbolical meaning, that they become true to the individual as he passes out of life, that to the religious mind the end of the world is ever going—'Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht'. The matter has been stated here without any of these attempts at disguise or concealment. Does it therefore follow that our life is really bounded by the horizon of earth?—or that the belief in a world to come has passed away, because the language in which St Paul described it is seen to be taken from Jewish prophecy?

The belief in a future life is not derived from revelation, though greatly strengthened by it. It is the growing sense of human nature respecting itself. Scarcely any one passes out of existence fearing that he will cease to be; perhaps no one whose mind may be regarded as in a natural state. Absurd superstitions, even the painful efforts to get rid of self, in some of the Eastern religions, indirectly bear witness to the same truth. They seem to say 'Stamp upon the Soul, crush it as you will, the poor worm will still creep out into the sunshine of the Almighty'. Nor is the consciousness of another life a mere instinct which, however distorted, still remains: to those who reason it is inseparably connected with our highest, that is, with our moral notions. We feel that God cannot have given us capacities and affections, that they should find no other fulfilment than they attain here; that he cannot intend the unequal measure of good and evil which he has assigned to men on earth to be the end of all: nor can we believe that the crimes or sins which go unpunished in this world, are to pass away as though they had never been; that the cries of saints and heroes, and the work of the Saviour Himself, have gone up unheard before His throne. That can never be. Equally impossible is it to suppose that creatures whom He has endowed with reason are, like the great multitude of the human race, to be sunk for ever in hopeless ignorance and unconsciousness. It is true that the nature of the change which is to come over them and us is not disclosed: 'The times and the seasons the Father has put in his own power'. Had it been otherwise.

immortality must have overpowered us ; the thought of another state would have swallowed up this.

And this sense of a future life and judgment to come, has been so quickened in us by Christianity, that it may be said almost to have been created by it. It is the witness of Christ Himself, than which to the Christian no assurance can be greater. He who meditates on this divine life in the brief narrative which has been preserved of it, will find the belief in another world come again to him when many physical and metaphysical proofs are beginning to be as broken reeds. He will find more than enough to balance the difficulties of the manner 'how' or the time 'when'; he will find, as he draws nearer to Christ, a sort of impossibility of believing otherwise. When we ask 'How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?' St Paul answers 'Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die'; when we raise objections to the narrative which has been preserved of our Saviour's discourse respecting the last things and the end of the world, may not the answer to this as well as to many other difficulties be gathered from His own words: 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you they are Spirit, and they are truth'?

There was a sense in which our Saviour said that it was better for His disciples that He should be taken from them, that the Comforter should come unto them. There is also a blessing recorded in the *Gospels* on those who had not seen and yet had believed. Is there not a sense in which it is more blessed to live at a distance from those events which are the beginning of Christianity, than under their immediate influence, to see them as they truly are in the light of this world as well as of another? If it was an illusion in the first Christians to believe in the immediate coming of Christ, is it not a cause of thankfulness that now we see clearly? Of truth, as well as of love, it may be said there is no fear in truth, but perfect truth casteth out fear. The eye which is strong enough to pierce through the shadow of death, is not troubled because the golden mist is dispelled and it looks on the open heaven.

And though prophecy may fail and tongues cease, though to those who look back upon them when they are with the past, they are different from what they were to those who melted under their influence, the pure moral and spiritual nature of Christianity, the 'kingdom of God within', remains as at the first, the law of Christian love becoming more and more, and all in all.

## Is it possible for the same Word to have two Meanings in the same Passage?

Note on 1 *Thess.*, ii, 2; 1 *Cor.*, ii, 10-6; *Rom.*, vii, 9-viii, 3, viii, 19-22,  
and other places.

THE word *ἀγών*, in 1 *Thessalonians*, ii, 2, has been variously explained of the inward conflict and of the outward persecution which the Apostle underwent in preaching the Gospel at Thessalonica. Reasons are adduced from the context, and from the use of the word in other places, in favour of either interpretation. The opinions of commentators may be urged on both sides of the question. In the next verse a doubt of the same kind occurs respecting another word, *παράκλησις*, which here, as *παρακαλεῖν*, in iii, 2, and elsewhere, admits the sense either of consolation or exhortation. The observation of these and similar instances leads to the general inquiry, whether it is possible for the same Greek word to have two meanings in the same passage—the one primary, the other secondary; the one expressed, the other implied; the one presenting itself in front, the other not far behind?—whether, instead of saying ‘it must mean this or that’, it may not be reasonable also to include both senses, either because the word which is the subject of controversy has no corresponding term in another language, or because it is not defined by use, or because the idea which it is intended to convey may be incapable of being described with perfect accuracy and clearness?

The inquiry here suggested is of considerable importance in the interpretation of the New Testament. Though it relates only to a small class of words, those words are characteristic ones and of common occurrence: such are, *ζωή* (Life), *θανατός*

(Death), *ἡμέρα* (the Day), *κτίσις* (Creature), *πνεῦμα* (the Spirit), *κύριος* (the Lord), *παράκλητος* (the Comforter), and, above all, *νόμος* (the Law). The word *ἀγών* (Contention), already quoted from 1 *Thess.*, ii, 2, and *πεπληρωκένας*, in *Rom.*, xv, 19, afford lesser examples of the same indefinite or uncertain use.

This uncertainty in the meaning of words is not confined to the New Testament. Similar instances may be remarked in modern languages and also in classical writers. If a statesman were to say, in writing to a friend of some political measure which was the crisis of his fate, 'that it was a great struggle', he might mean a great struggle to himself and to his own feelings, or a great struggle of parties or opinions; it might have been also a struggle in which violence had been resorted to. It is possible that all these three associations were passing through his mind at the time he wrote down the word. Some light might be thrown by the context of the sentence, or by other parts of the letter, on the true sense. But language is not always used with the degree of exactness necessary in such cases to enable us to determine the meaning or associations of meaning which the writer had in his mind. Probably a critical analysis of the words would only lead to the conviction that the person who used them was not distinctly conscious of their import to himself.

An illustration from a modern writer will throw some further light on the nature of the question which is here raised. The author of the *Fragment on Government* criticizes the confusion into which Blackstone has fallen respecting words such as 'Society', 'State of Nature', and others, which he affirms his opponent to have used in different senses in the same paragraph. Yet the ordinary reader would not have discovered this. To a mind not under the influence of an 'illogical logic', Blackstone appears to be in the right, and his critic in the wrong, because the latter has not allowed for that natural play of language which conducts us from one aspect of a complex idea to another. He is busy pulling to pieces the several expressions, when he ought to be content with the substantial meaning of a whole passage. He exacts more of words than they are able to bear. He would have language perfect in the logical sense, in the attempt to accomplish which, he loses more than he gains, by losing its poetical element. Logic ruling absolutely over style and thought, the imagination and feelings would be dried up into the understanding. The words denoting our higher ideas would lose their associations; and the ideas which are denoted by them be reduced to the dead level of

objects of sense. St Paul himself could only be regarded as an illogical writer, whose leading terms 'chop and change' their significations, whose train of thought cannot be reduced to syllogisms, whose bursts of affection are not 'logical propositions'.

Variations of meaning may be observed to be greater than usual in certain classes of words and in particular stages of language or of philosophy. The student of the *Ethics* of Aristotle has often been puzzled with the numerous senses of the words *ἀρχή*, *τέλος*, *νοῦς*, *αἰσθησις*, *σοφία*, *δύναμις*, *φύσις*, *σύνεσις*, and others. He attempts in vain to introduce order and fixedness into the flux of meaning. He feels that no English term is equivalent to any of them. The fact is that philosophy is creating their meaning; they are in various stages of the transition from common use to a technical signification. Some of them die out (ethical science is afterwards found to have made, or rather borrowed, more words than it wants), others pass into the philosophical language of Greece, and are carried down the stream of human thought. Aristotle himself would have found the same difficulty that we do in explaining their meaning in the terms of other systems or of later times. They are a part of his mind; he is not above them, but in them. The great master of metaphysics is under the influence of language, while organizing it for his use.

Owing partly to the decline of the Greek language itself, as well as to the imperfect command over it possessed by the writers of the *Epistles*, the variation in their use of terms is greater and more striking than in classical writers. The instrument is more inadequate to the greatness and novelty of the thought; the expression more tentative, and therefore more uncertain. The life of words, which 'is not quickened except it die', becomes a conducting medium from one Dispensation to another; the *Gospels* and the *Epistles* are the translation of the law and the prophets. Merely in a philological point of view this is extremely curious. Many obscure significations of terms are thus drawn out; chance phrases have a new light thrown upon them; the Spiritual world is peopled with material images which are not wholly 'transfigured', but retain also their first material notion. Language is growing, winning for itself a meaning. The phenomenon which has been just described in the history of Greek philosophy may help us to understand the still more remarkable development to which the Gospel gave birth. Only in this latter case it was not a philosopher, the force of whose mind stamped a new impress on the counters of

knowledge, but apostles and prophets, who poured out the faith of Christ among the common people. It might be said of the first believers, in another sense from that in which the text is commonly applied, that 'they spake with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance'. Their mind was changed, and that framework of the mind which language is, adapted itself to the change. Common terms passed out of received uses into higher and spiritual ones; they became inspired, sanctified, glorified. Imagine, first, the conversion of St Paul, the intellect as well as the heart melting under the influence of the revelation which he had received; imagine such an one with a scanty knowledge of Greek, deriving something from the philosophy of his time, but much more from the Greek version of the Old Testament Scriptures, striving to express the unutterable things which he knew and felt: you have before you, as it were in process of creation, the germ of the theological diction of after ages.

As it is in vain to look for a regular order of government during the first half century after Christ, it would be a mistake also to expect that the language in which the Gospel was first uttered had a perfectly fixed and settled meaning. The age of the *Epistles* of St Paul might be described as the age before system, in which there was no rite or usage to which words conformed any more than institutions. This is one of the many points in which we would fain imagine the first century more like ourselves than it really was. We have a difficulty in conceiving a beginning of the Christian society, or the mind of Christ in His first followers; and we ascribe to the fluctuating elements the definite form which they could only have received from use and tradition. The same error reappears in another sphere, in the fixedness which is attributed to words when employed for the first time in Christian senses. For language itself also partakes of the plastic nature of the New Creation. It is relative to the first believers. Listening multitudes hung upon the lips of the first teachers without stopping to distinguish the application of terms from their original sense, or figures from realities. Much of the comparative inaccuracy of spoken discourse has passed into the written word also. The Apostle St Paul often uses the terms *ζωή*, *θάνατος*, *ἡμέρα*, in such a way that it is hard to say where the figure ends, and the meaning of the figure begins; or he employs general, where we should expect specific words; or specific, where we should expect general; or he places a connecting particle in such a double relation, that we are uncertain whether it refers to what

precedes, or to what follows, and incline sometimes to think that both constructions were intended. His love of 'parallels and conjugates', and antitheses, leads him to make distinctions where there is apparently no difference, or to identify terms which we should naturally distinguish. Two or three favourite words he plays upon as though he could never have enough of them; their original idea is almost allowed to evanesce in the transpositions which they are made to undergo. The want of an expression often occasions the repetition of an old one, the echo of which was ringing in his ears from a previous verse, where perfect clearness would have required a new term for a new idea. Another source of uncertainty is the continuance of the old or common meaning of a word side by side with the higher or ideal one, the latter, too, being susceptible of several gradations, as in the word *νόμος*, which are almost indistinguishable from one another. No doubt these difficulties are increased by the uses of theological terms in later times, which often slightly (or even considerably) vary from the use of the same terms in Scripture, and which, even where they are in general the same, have this difference, that they are more narrowed and fixed than in the Scriptural use. For example, many as appear to be the senses or applications of the word 'law' in St Paul, we may observe in modern Calvinist divines a meaning which is different from them all, and which is used with great preciseness. Nor must one other source of confusion be omitted, a sufficiently obvious one, yet often forgotten—the difference between Greek and English; some words which have one consistent meaning in the Greek appearing to have two meanings in English even in the same passage, because the Greek word has no single corresponding English one. The numerous significations which are attributed to a word in a lexicon to the New Testament are commonly more than the truth and less; that is, they add on associations which are not contained in it, while it is impossible for them to give a conception of its unity and sphere. The ease and absolute certainty with which we translate words describing objects of sense from a dead language into a living one, must not lead us to imagine that we can have equal certainty, whether in philosophy or religion, in representing the things 'which eye hath not seen'.

The first causes of this fluctuation of meaning are peculiar to the New Testament, and arise out of the circumstances of its authors: the last-mentioned difficulty is common to the interpretation of particular classes of words in all dead languages. Even the scholar finds it an endless task to put his mind back



as a 'little child' into the position of the Greek. It remains to show by examples that the uncertainty spoken of is not an imaginary phenomenon, but a real one, and, if so, an important element in the interpretation of Scripture.

And first as to the fact (compare *Rom.*, vii, 21-viii, 3):

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

It would be impossible exactly to define all the modifications of meaning which the word law undergoes in this passage: in ver. 21, according to the most probable explanation, it is used for a rule, or, as we should say, universal fact; in ver. 22, 23, for the law of God, with an allusion to the law of Moses; also for the necessary force of evil; in ver. 23, a distinction in its meaning is aimed at where it is hard to see a difference; in viii, 2, it is used for the rule or rather power of the Gospel; in viii, 3, probably for the Jewish law only, as certainly in vii, 1. Compare also the paronomasia of the 'Law of Faith' in iii, 27. Which of them would the Apostle have adopted as the original signification? Doubtless the law of Moses; yet he would not have been conscious of all the inflections of meaning through which he had allowed the word to pass. Nor would he, or those to whom he is writing, have understood our difficulty in understanding him.

It is true that many English words, such as 'law, church, principle, constitution, society, nature', might go through several changes of meaning in the same chapter or section of a book. We might speak of a good principle, or of a principle of action, or of nature in the sense of a higher or lower nature, or of the Church in the sense of the Church visible or invisible. But the use of language in the passage of the *Epistle* exceeds these bounds: whatever play or inaccuracy of phraseology may be allowed among ourselves, we should not describe 'the law of England' and 'the law of nature' under the same general term 'the law' in the same passage; at any rate, the connexion

would clearly mark that we were speaking of two laws, not of one. Nor, if the particular term 'law of England' had preceded, should we use the general term law in a new connexion in the next sentence, as the Apostle appears to have done in *Romans*, viii, 2, 3, where he speaks first of 'the law of sin and death', and then of 'the law' *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, in the next verse. And although some of the instances quoted appear at first sight like the application of a general term to a new subject, yet the application is so peculiar as to amount to a variation of meaning. No similar application of the word *νόμος* could have occurred in classical Greek.

Two other instances—one of latitude in the signification of the same words, the other, illustrative of the same uncertainty of different words with the same meaning—occur also in *Romans*, viii.

19-23. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also &c.

Here the word 'creature' has had many meanings assigned to it by interpreters, and has really more than one. It may refer to the creature considered from within, in which sense it is a personified human nature, which is the best explanation of it in ver. 19; or to the creature considered from without, as the figure of a former dispensation, which is the sense to which it inclines in ver. 20, 21; or to the creation collectively, in the idea of which man has nevertheless the principal part, as in ver. 22. That this last, however, is not to be pressed too strictly, may be inferred from ver. 23, in which the believer is spoken of, from another point of view, as distinct from the previous circle, which included, or seemed to include, all the world.

9-11. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

Here the Spirit of God is first spoken of as dwelling in man; then the Spirit of Christ takes its place; then in ver. 10 a further transition is made from the Spirit of Christ to Christ Himself, and in ver. 11 we return to the Spirit of God, that is

'of him who raised up Jesus from the dead'; as if, in the Apostle's mind, the difference of expression was nothing, or at least only served to describe the different aspects of the same idea. Compare 1 *Thess.*, iii, 11, 12, for a similar uncertainty in the use of the word *κύριος*.

Another remarkable instance of fluctuation or transition of meaning occurs in 1 *Cor.*, ii, 10-6, where the Spirit of God, which searcheth all things, is afterwards spoken of as the Spirit in the heart of man, the possession of which by those who are Spiritual enables them to judge all men. Compare *Romans*, viii, 26, 27 ['Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God'], where the Spirit is also described as crying through us to God.

Language like this would hardly be used by a modern preacher or writer. He would speak of the Spirit dwelling in the heart of man, or a man praying to God by the help of the Spirit, or of the Spirit praying for man, but he would not blend in one the acts of the Spirit and the acts of man.

Another example touching a different circle of ideas occurs in 1 *Cor.*, xv, 55. When it is said 'the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law', the connexion of the previous verses shows that death is to be taken literally; and yet death, with which sin is connected in other places, as in *Romans*, vii, 5, 11-3, is not temporal but spiritual death. Compare 2 *Cor.*, v, 14: 'If one died for all, then all died', where the word died is applied to Christ in one sense, to mankind in general in another. So in *Romans*, vi, 1-9 the idea of resurrection is blended with that of renewal.

The passage of *St John's Gospel*, v, 20-8, in which the resurrection is spoken of in terms which imply a spiritual resurrection, and then again most clearly a literal one, and the second sense in which the word Comforter is used, as the Spirit of truth who 'shall guide men into all truth', are additional illustrations of the same subject (*John*, xiv-xviii).

Altogether the ambiguities or double senses of words in the *Epistles* may be arranged under the following heads:

1. Words in themselves unambiguous, which nevertheless become ambiguous in a particular context, either from their indefiniteness or from the associations which intrude upon them from the connexion or from their use in other passages.

Instances of this class are *ἀγών* in 1 *Thess.*, ii, 2; *πεπληρωμένοι*, in *Rom.*, xv, 19; *εὐαγγέλιον*, *Rom.*, i, 9; *θηητός*, in *Rom.*, vi, 12; *σῶμα*, in 1 *Cor.*, xi, 29, *Rom.*, vii, 4, *Col.*, ii, 16-23; *κρίμα*, in *Rom.*, xiii, 2; *κρίνω*, in *Rom.*, xiv, 13; *ἀπαρχή*, *Rom.*, xi, 16; *ζῆν*, *Rom.*, xiv, 5; *κλήσις*, 1 *Cor.*, vii, 20; *πίστις*, 1 *Cor.*, xii, 9. Some of these may be termed 'growing words', that is, words which have not yet attained a fixed use in the Christian vocabulary.

2. Words which have no precise or even near exponents in English, which fall asunder into two English words, and the sphere of which includes ideas which are distinct to us, yet to the mind of the first disciples nearly equivalent and closely connected. Instances of this class of words are *παρακαλέω* and its derivatives, *διαθήκη*, *παρουσία*, *τέλος*, *αἰών*, *ἔθνη*, and probably *πλεονεξία*.

3. Words like *νόμος* or *κτίσις*, which pass through many meanings 'in quick succession of light'; these meanings are, however, so closely connected that the transition from one to the other is often unconscious.

4. Words like *ζωή*, *θανατός*, *ἡμέρα*, *πνεῦμα*, in the use of which two ideas, really distinct and having only a metaphorical connexion, are blended in the writer's mind, as, for example, temporal life and death with spiritual life and death, or renewal with resurrection.

These ambiguities are not an occasion of any real or great uncertainty in the Apostle's meaning. No one can doubt that he held sin to be the source of moral evil in the world, or that in a literal sense he believed in the resurrection. But his double use of words requires that we should interpret his *Epistles* in a large and liberal spirit. We cannot restrict him to the rules of the Aristotelian logic. The observation of this phenomenon, instead of inflicting an injury, is really of great benefit in the interpretation of Scripture; for it fixes our thoughts on the general meaning, and withdraws them from remote and uncertain conclusions based upon an overminute analysis of the letter of the text.

'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching', says the Apostle, 'to save them that believe'. It pleased God, we may say, in broken words and hesitating forms of speech, with no beauty or comeliness of style, to give a rule of life, not for one nation only, but for all mankind—not for the refined thinker only, but for the poorest and meanest—to reveal a truth of which the Greek was unconscious, and for which the language of Plato would have been no fitting temple.

## On the Man of Sin

WHETHER the prophecy of the man of sin is fulfilled or unfulfilled,—whether it is to be explained from the immediate circle of the Apostle's life, or from the distant future,—whether it relates to an individual or to an idea, to the Pharisees or to the Gnostics,—whether 'the man of sin' himself be Nero as Chrysostom imagined, or the impersonation of heresy as Theodoret and others, or the pope as the reformers, or the reformers as the pope, or Mahomet as the Greek Church, or the Emperor Caligula as Grotius, or Titus as Wetstein, or Simon Magus as Hammond, or Simon the son of Gioras as Usteri and Le Clerc, or Cromwell as Englishmen who were his subjects sometimes said, or the French revolution, or Napoleon, as the last generation, or some embodiment or power of evil which is yet to come, as was the opinion of several of the Fathers, and is also that of some modern writers ; whether 'that which letteth, and he which letteth, and will let until he be taken out of the way', is the Roman Empire, which was likewise a common opinion of the Fathers, or the German Empire, as was maintained by the early opponents of the papacy, or the purpose of God that the Gospel should be first preached, as was held by Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret, or the outpouring of spiritual gifts as Chrysostom inclined to think, or Nero as Wetstein, or Vitellius, who was proconsul of Judea in Caligula's time, as Grotius, or Elijah the prophet, who 'must first come' according to the Jewish belief, or St Paul himself as a recent interpreter ; whether the temple of God is the Christian Church or the temple at Jerusalem, or both, or neither, that is to say some temple hereafter to be built, or the temple of the human soul, a figure which the Apostle elsewhere employs ; whether the coming of Christ be His coming to judge the world at the last day, or the anticipation of that judgment on the Jews in the destruction

of Jerusalem, or the one the lesser, the other the greater fulfilment of the same prediction—are some of the principal questions which in ancient or modern times have been raised by interpreters respecting the second chapter of the *Second Epistle to the Thessalonians*.

Most of these questions may be set aside, as having no real bearing upon the interpretation of the *Epistle*. They are not found but brought there. When it is remembered that at this period of his life, as the words of the *Epistle* imply, St Paul himself expected 'to remain and be alive' (1 *Thess.*, iv, 17) in the day of the Lord, and that he expressly states that the coming of Christ was to be preceded by Antichrist, and that the coming of Antichrist was again restrained by that which let, it is clear that the vision of the future must be confined within narrow bounds, that is, within ten, twenty, or thirty years at the utmost, if it be not that the acts of the drama are contemporary, or certainly very near, 'for the mystery of iniquity already worketh'. It is not, therefore, in the wider sphere of the history of the world, but in the life of the Apostle, in the cities of Asia or Judea, perhaps at Rome in the days of Caligula or Nero, that we must look for the events, or shadow of events, which form the basis of the prophecy.

It is necessary to warn the reader, that we are not about to add another to the multitude of guesses which exist already. Our inquiry will relate rather to the style and structure of the prophecy, than to the opinions of interpreters respecting the facts which may be regarded as its fulfilment. The real facts may not have been recorded; they may have been too minute to be observed by us; they may also have been transfigured before the spiritual eye, until they are no longer recognizable as historical events. What we are attempting is not the solution of a riddle, or the reading of a hieroglyphic, but the comparison of one part of Scripture with another; and the comprehension of it, if possible, not in the letter but in the spirit.

And although it is true that there may be a disadvantage in excluding from our consideration all those topics from which the study of this remarkable passage has hitherto derived its interest and zest, let us pause to remember also how many dangers are avoided. We shall run no risk of attributing an exaggerated importance to the history of our own time. We shall be under no temptation to point the words of St Paul against an ancient enemy. We shall have no inclination to adapt the proportions of lesser events to the main event or figure which we make the centre of our system. We may hope to

escape the charge which has been brought against writers on these subjects, that they explain 'history by prophecy'. There will be no fear of our forging weapons of persecution for one body or party of Christians to use against another. We shall be in no danger of losing the simplicity of the Gospel in Apocalyptic fancies. Our own opinions, perhaps even changes of opinion, will not be imposed on others as an interpretation of Scripture, with a degree of authority which is only the veil of their extreme uncertainty. All these reproaches, however unconsciously and innocently they may be incurred by good and learned men, are injuries to the truth and dishonours to the word of God.

'The man of sin' is not a mere detached prophecy. It formed a leading subject of the Apostle's teaching. He introduces it with express reference to the fact, that on his visit to the Thessalonians he had warned them of it; and this not only in general terms, but with special mention of the times of his appearing, and the influences by which his revelation was withheld. 'Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you I told you these things?' What he had told them is contained in the description which precedes, and which is definite and precise; that man of sin, 'the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God'. All this was not new to the Thessalonian converts; they even knew of that which withheld, that he might be revealed in his own time. The Apostle adds a few other traits in the verses which follow; 'whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and lying signs and wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish'.

The sources of our information are so limited, that we are able to pronounce at once, that we know of no person or power existing in the lifetime of the Apostle, to which most of the above features will apply. We cannot say that 'the man of sin' was Caligula, whose reign had terminated about twelve years before this; or Nero, who had just mounted the imperial throne, or Simon the son of Gioras, the leader of the fanatics at Jerusalem, who had hardly come forth into public view; still less Vitellius, Vespasian, or Titus. Such guesses are only more probable than the wider ones, because they relate to persons who were actually or almost within the horizon of the Apostle's eye; but they are inconsistent with the general character of the prophecy, and offer no remarkable coincidences with its details.

In any succession of historical events, it is possible to find war and peace, order and anarchy, a king and a usurper, a lawless force and a restraining power. General resemblances of this kind prove nothing; the good and evil of every age find an expression in the language of prophecy. In times of crisis or revolution men naturally apply the words of the Apostle to themselves. Even the quiet tenor of ordinary life has been 'set on fire' by the torch of enthusiasm. But we must not confuse the original meaning of the prophecy with the application of it which is on the lips of the preacher after 1800 years. The vision of evil which the Apostle saw was around and very near him; it hung like a cloud over the first age of the Church; it cannot be dispersed in generalities; we look in vain for it in the distant future.

If, confessing that no known person or event agrees with the description of the prophecy, we try another method, and interpret the second chapter of the *Second Epistle to the Thessalonians* entirely from itself, we shall probably infer that, by the terms 'man of sin', 'son of perdition', St Paul has in view a real person, and that by his 'sitting in the temple of God' is meant literally his enthronement in the temple at Jerusalem. The grossness of the delusion which is attributed to his followers falls in with such an interpretation. The word 'apostasy' is a further indication that the new God or teacher stands in some relation either to Judaism or Christianity. He is not a mere ordinary individual coming forth from the crowd and practising an imposture, any more than he is a statue of wood or stone, but the author or symbol of some new form of spiritual evil—a false Christ or false prophet, a Simon Magus, an Elcasai, or a Barcochab. The way has been preparing for him, underground in the hearts of men; he is waiting for his appointed hour. The founder of a false religion, claiming divine honours, announcing himself as the new God of the Jewish Temple, influencing the minds of men by every sort of magic art and spiritual deception, would most adequately correspond to the description of the Apostle. Such a one, he would seem to say, was to exist for a short time, and then vanish away, not before the superior power of truth, but before the actual force of Christ and his angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance.

Natural as such an interpretation may appear, it would probably be erroneous, and for this reason, that, like many other interpretations of prophecy, it would rest too much on the words themselves, without considering the style of the language or the parallelisms in St Paul's own writings. The first question respecting all prophecies is, whether the language of them



is figurative or literal, or how far figurative and how far literal. Figurative language will commonly detect itself, as in the trumpets, viols, numbers, of the *Book of Revelation*. The very symmetry of it will indicate its true nature. Events in history are not carried on by sevens, or by twelves; nor are they exactly limited by periods of time. Nor are the powers of nature or the kingdoms of this world divisible into four or ten. Accordingly, in such instances, we readily separate the framework and compartments of the picture from the life and motion of the figures. But there are other passages in which the form and the thought are more closely united, in which the garment clings to the person, and cannot be put off without destroying the life of the prophecy. Interpretation of prophecy will, in these cases, be an imperfect analysis of what it is really impossible to analyse. Especially will this be so where the figures are traditional, and have acquired from use and familiarity a sort of permanent and apparently historical character. The vision of events themselves is then circumscribed by the circle of prophetic symbols.

Taking in this important element, we find in *Ezekiel* and *Daniel*, in the discourses of our Lord respecting the end of the world, in the *Epistles to the Thessalonians* and to *Timothy*, as well as in the *Epistles of St Peter* and *St Jude*, and in the *Book of Revelation*, a series of images of the evil which was to come upon the world in the latter days, all together furnishing a sort of chain of prophecy between the Old Testament and the New, which gradually extends and seems to pass from the realms of history into the spiritual and unseen world. One of the first links in this chain is Ezekiel's description of Gog and Magog, the symbol of the tribes of the North, whom God will bring against the land of Israel, that He may be glorified in their destruction (xxxviii, 16, 17). This prophecy, which is the beginning of many others, itself implies that it was not uttered by Ezekiel for the first time: 'Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?' (Compare *Jer.*, ii-iv). The minds of the Jewish prophets in Babylon had been led to dwell on the powers of the North, since the Scythian tribes had spread themselves over Asia. Where could they find a more striking image of the power of God than in this mighty people, 'covering' the world 'like a cloud', and suddenly, like a cloud, passing away—which had probably in Josiah's reign overspread Palestine itself? They had almost been seen by Ezekiel in the days of his youth, and the remembrances of them had stamped themselves for ages

on the Eastern world. His prophecy of them is little more than history, inspired only by the consciousness that there is One that ruleth among the children of men. There is no indication that Gog is other than a person, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. Nor is there apparently any form of spiritual evil that is symbolized in him; he is but the great enemy of Israel, who comes up with all his hosts against the people of God.

Later in the series are the prophecies of Daniel, respecting the little horn and the kings of the North and South (vii and xi), which, though retaining a certain degree of resemblance to the prophecy of Ezekiel, present also a striking difference. It is a difference in spirit as well as in style and subject. We seem to have advanced another step in the revelation of God to man; with the vision of the kingdoms of this world mingles also the vision of the final judgment. Every one admits and loves to trace the connexion between the evangelical prophecies, as they are often termed, and the Gospel itself. But perhaps it has not been equally observed that the Apocalyptic prophecies are also a link of connexion between the Old Testament and the New. As the former anticipate the moral and spiritual nature of the kingdom of Christ, so do the latter anticipate the universality of the Gospel. No two books of the Old Testament itself bear a closer resemblance to each other, than the *Book of Daniel*, the *Apocalypse* of the Old Testament, and the *Book of Revelation*, which may be termed by its Greek name the *Apocalypse* of the New. Were the one placed at the end of the Old Testament, and the other at the beginning of the New, they would seem, more than any of the canonical writings, to bridge the chasm which separates, or appears to separate, the two parts of the Sacred Volume. Both alike differ from the older prophecies, in extending the purposes of God to all time and to all mankind. The earlier history of the Jews was itself a kind of prophecy, the earlier prophecies were a kind of history of the Jews and their neighbours. There was a time when other nations seemed to be out of the way, and only occasionally to share in the mercies and judgments of God. But now the prophet lifted up his eyes east and west, north and south, to all countries of the earth, and saw in the history of the world the prelude to the final judgment.

This is the kind of difference which separates the two prophecies of Daniel from that of Ezekiel respecting Gog and Magog. The one is a part of the history of the Jews; the other is a prophecy of the latter days, an anticipation of the judgment to come. That of Ezekiel is the germ of the other, and

stands in the same relation to it, as the vision of the dry bones, in the same prophet, to the description of the general resurrection in the seventh and twelfth chapters of *Daniel*, or the vision of the Temple and the portions of the tribes, to the new Jerusalem and the 144,000, in the *Book of Revelation*. In *Ezekiel* we have not yet burst the bonds of the temporal dispensation; in *Daniel* we already pass within the veil into another world. They occupy different places in Jewish history, the very dispersion of the Jews in Asia and Egypt tending to break down the force of local feelings, and leading them to include all nations within the circle of God's providence.

Parallel with this enlargement of the symbols of prophecy is the new and nobler meaning which is given to the worship of the tabernacle and to the Jewish history, in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. A light is shed on both, derived, perhaps, from a wider experience of mankind, yet not the less coming down 'from the author and father of lights'. First the prophets, then the law, become instinct with the life of the Gospel. The only difference is that in prophecy the new takes the place of the old, in a more gradual and less perceptible manner. The law is done away in Christ; the temple made with hands is destroyed, that another temple, not made with hands, may be raised up; and the discourses of Christ respecting the end of the world, gather together in one all the threads of Old Testament prophecy.

Thus, through the whole of the books of Scripture, from the earliest to the latest, the spirit of prophecy might be said to be changing with the increasing purpose of God to man. But though the spirit changed, the imagery remained the same. The two prophecies which have been referred to, present more than one minute similarity with the second chapter of the *Second Epistle to the Thessalonians*; as, for example, the insolence and impiety of the king 'who shall exalt and magnify himself above every God', xi, 36, which may be compared with 2 *Thess.*, ii, 4: 'Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or worshipped', and 'the pollution of the sanctuary of strength, and the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place', xi, 31, quoted by our Lord, which recalls 'the man of sin sitting in the temple of God'; also the words 'have intelligence with them which forsake the holy covenant', which are a periphrasis for 'the apostasy'. It is not quite certain, nor is it important for our object to know, what was the original meaning of the passages of *Daniel*; but whether they allude to the kings of Syria and Egypt, or in part also to

the Romans, or relate to some unknown course of events, their original meaning in the *Book of Daniel* has no necessary connexion with their use and application by the Apostle. We might say, in the language of Bossuet, that St Paul spoke by the spirit of Daniel, as St Peter spoke by the mouth of Joel on the day of Pentecost, or as St John himself spoke by the spirit of Ezekiel in *Rev.*, xx, 8, where the names Gog and Magog are retained, though the meaning is generalized. Many other instances may be found in which the general subject is changed, though the ornaments remain. The same symbols which once referred to the Temple or to the tribes of Israel, are again employed, without any precise meaning, of the Church and the world at large.

It does not, therefore, follow, that, because the words of the prophecy of Daniel, or of our Lord, refer to the Romans, that they necessarily received this explanation from St Paul, any more than in the *Book of Revelation*, because mention is made of the hundred and forty and four thousand of the tribes of Israel, it follows that salvation was first to be given to the house of Israel. The forms of good and evil are idealized in the language of prophecy. The same images are handed down from one generation of prophets to another; but the state of the world, which is symbolized by them, may change and become different. As in the interpretation of prophecy, many successions of events have, in different ages of the world, been thought to correspond with the words of Daniel, or of the *Apocalypse*; so with the prophets themselves, there is a growth and adaptation of the same prophecy to various stages of human history. Not only are there many mirrors of the meaning of prophecy in the history of the world, but more than this—the last prophecy is itself, as it were, the glass through which the prophet looks forward into the future.

Hence the imagery of a prophecy in the New Testament will not be the clue to its true nature. Nay, it may be very far removed from it, sometimes even absolutely opposed to it. For it may refer to what is literal and historical, but the thing signified in the New Testament may be spiritual and ideal. Ordinary quotations from the Old Testament are to be explained by their context in the New Testament, not by their place in the Old. The same rule is applicable to the prophecies of the Old Testament when transferred to the New. In both, the spirit has commonly taken the place of the letter, the evangelical truth has lighted up the prophetic symbol. So that the true key to the interpretation of a prophecy of St Paul, is not the meaning

of the same imagery in the Old Testament, but the character of his own writings, 'Non, nisi ex ipso Paulo, Paulum potes interpretari'. The special sense is to be gathered from those points which he has distinct from the Old Testament, rather than those which he has in common with it. We do not feel certain that the man of sin, sitting in the temple of God, is more than a personification of the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet; suggested, perhaps, by the worship of the Emperor which St Paul had seen in the cities to which he had travelled, or by the attempt of Caligula, a few years previously, to place his statue in the temple at Jerusalem. But he that 'leteth, and will let, until he be taken out of the way', and the lying signs and wonders, with which the man of sin was to be accompanied, are traits which are peculiar to the Apostle, some of which are found elsewhere in his *Epistles*. Here, then, whether we are able to discern it or not, is something which we may naturally look for, not in the clouds of heaven, but in the history of the Apostolic Age.

In many other places of the New Testament, and even of the writings of St Paul himself, mention occurs of strange forms of evil. It is observable that all of them are spiritual. There are differences in the description of them, not unlike the difference which we may suppose to have existed between the author of the *Epistles* in which they are spoken of, St Paul, and St John; but they nowhere convey the impression that they represent political changes or revolutions in the kingdoms of men. The one Apostle is, as it were, hastening, amid many impediments, to the coming of the day of the Lord; the other is calmly waiting for the events that must shortly come to pass. Both seem to feel the evil of the world as a sign of 'the last time'; the one, near and present, as if involved in the conflict; the other, far off, separated from it rather than warring with it. Already there are many Antichrists, says St John, and 'Antichrist is he that denieth the Father and the Son'. So in the *First Epistle to Timothy*, iv, 1-3 it is said, 'that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth'. Compare 2 *Tim.*, iii, 1. The Apostle appears to apprehend the same danger in *Col.*, ii, 8, 16. And in the *Second Epistle of Peter*, ii, 1; iii, 3 there is the same pervading idea of the latter days, in which 'false prophets shall rise up, who privily shall bring in

damnable heresies, denying the Lord that bought them'. The evil of which the New Testament prophecies speak, is not the idolatry of the heathen, nor the conquests of great empires, but the apostasy of sometime believers, or the fanaticism of the Jews. Of something of this kind, not of Roman governors, or Jewish high priests, the Apostle is speaking when he says: 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places'. The temporal Antichrist, like the temporal Israel, has passed into a spiritual one.

Such passages are a much safer guide to the interpretation of the one we are considering, than the meaning of similar passages in the Old Testament. For they indicate to us the habitual thought of the Apostle's mind; 'a falling away first', suggested probably by the wavering which he saw around him among his own converts, the grievous wolves that were entering into the Church of Ephesus, *Acts*, xx, 29; the turning away of all them of Asia, in *2 Tim.*, i, 15. When we consider that his own converts, and his Jewish opponents, or half converts, were all the world to him, that through them, as it were in a glass, he appeared to himself to see the workings of human nature generally, we understand how this double image of good and evil should have presented itself to him, and the kind of necessity which he felt that Christ and Antichrist should alternate with each other. It was not that he foresaw some great conflict, decisive of the destinies of mankind. What he anticipated far more nearly resembled the spiritual combat in the seventh chapter of the *Romans*. It was the same struggle, written in large letters, as Plato might have said, not on the tables of the heart, but on the scene around; the world turned inside out, as it might be described; evil as it is in the sight of God, and as it realizes itself to the conscience, putting on an external shape, transforming itself into a person.

Separating the prophecy, then, into two parts, its external form and internal meaning, the one part is to be explained from the Old Testament; that is to say, it is the repetition of the images of Ezekiel and Daniel, which naturally receive a more precise character from the associations of the time in which St Paul lived; while the other part, or inward meaning, is to be illustrated by other passages in St Paul's own writings, in which he speaks of the perilous times of the latter days; of false prophets transforming themselves into Apostles of Christ; of Satan transfigured into an angel of light; of religious licentiousness; of all them of Asia falling away from him. Of all these opponents

of the Gospel the man of sin is the concentrated image ; they are already working, but are at present underground, not yet bursting forth to envelop mankind. Gnosticism, or Orientalism, or Judaism, the evil of the world as it awoke to the consciousness of higher truths, the swarming heresy of an age of religious excitement, and the persecution of the followers of Christ and His Apostles, all probably, as in the *Book of Revelation*, mingled in the vision ' of the things that should shortly come to pass '.

The personification is characteristic of the Apostle and his age. Sin, the law, faith, love, the old man, the new man, are all personified by him. The figure under which he speaks of ' the man of sin ', ' the son of perdition ', is really of the same kind, though apparently different. What are to us abstractions are to the Apostle persons, ' living creatures with hands and feet '. No difference in ways of thought can be much greater than this : it is one for which it is difficult to allow enough in the interpretation of Scripture. Fragments of prophecy and the prophetic manner of conception are always coming in, even where the general style of the writing is prosaic and matter-of-fact.

There are other traces in this passage (shall we say of the mode of speech or of thought ?) of the Apostle and his age, as for example in its alternating or antithetical character. The coming of the Lord and the revelation of the man of sin, Christ and Antichrist, are opposed to each other by a sort of necessity, as the revelation of wrath and mercy, the law and faith, Adam and Christ, in the *Epistle to the Romans*. Like the shadow and light, they are never separate, equally dividing the world or following one another. And the symbols of the Old Testament itself receive a new colour and association from passing events, such as the worship of the emperors, and in particular the attempt of Caligula to place his statue in the temple at Jerusalem. Lastly, it was a current belief of the times in which the Apostle lived that the coming of Messiah was to be preceded by the coming of Antichrist, to whom the prophecies respecting Gog and Magog were referred by the Rabbis (see the passages quoted in Gfrörer, *Jahrhundert des Heils*, part ii, 257-9). Nor is there any trace that the Apostle regarded this Jewish belief as a new revelation to himself. There is reason to think that he did no more than receive it from his contemporaries.

Thus there are altogether four elements which enter into the conception of the man of sin : (1) the traditional imagery of the elder prophets ; (2) the style of the Apostle and his age ; (3) the impression of recent historical events—which supply the form ; (4) the state of the world and the Church, and the consciousness

that, where good is, evil must ever be in aggravated proportions, which supply the matter of the prophecy.

Still we have not made a nearer approach to the true interpretation of 'him that letteth', an expression on which no light is thrown, either by the writings of St Paul, or by the symbolical language of the Old Testament. We cannot err in supposing that it intimates St Paul's belief that the coming of Antichrist was not yet. Though already working, it was restrained by a superior power. The Thessalonians were exhorted not to be troubled in mind, as though the day of the Lord was at hand, for it was to be preceded by the manifestation of the man of sin. But it was still further delayed by the interposition of 'him that letteth'. So far all is consistent. Christ, Antichrist, the restrainer of Antichrist, are the triple links of the chain by which the world is held together. In what person or thing to find the last of the three is the point of difficulty.

No stress can be laid on the use of the masculine, 'him that letteth', because it is immediately followed by that of the neuter, 'that which letteth', and may be accounted for by parallelism with the man of sin in a preceding verse. More truly might it be argued that the use of the neuter excludes the idea of a person. Nero might have been ὁ κατέχων, but could not have been τὸ κατέχων. The double use of the masculine and the neuter in some degree favours the interpretation of the prophecy which identifies the Roman empire with the restraining power. For some interpretation seems to be required which is applicable to a thing as well as to a person, as, for example, in the case of the Roman empire, τὸ κατέχων and ὁ κατέχων may contain an allusion to the empire and to the emperor. A more important circumstance than this strikes us in the examination of the passage: it is the apparent secrecy which the Apostle observes in speaking of the restraining power. It is an enigma which he will not reveal, which he had explained while he was yet with them, and dare not now write 'with pen and ink'. It reminds us of the number of the beast in the *Book of Revelation*. It recalls the words of *Daniel*, xii, 10: 'None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand'. It quickens our curiosity to know what that power could have been, which was contemporary with the Apostle, and which he would not openly mention to his converts.

Two answers suggest themselves; conjectures, it is true, because it is impossible to do more than form conjectures which may be consistent or not inconsistent with the spirit of the prophecy; but they are not, however, to be rejected on that



ground, if nothing better can be offered. The first is the Roman empire; the second, the Jewish law. According to the view which separates the traditional form from the substance of the prophecy, it would be no fatal objection to the first of these two interpretations, that the figure of Antichrist himself is taken from the image of the Roman emperors sitting in the temples as gods, while he that letteth is again the Roman emperor regarded from a new point of view. More real is the difficulty of supposing that St Paul could have expected that, within a few years, the solid frame of the Roman empire was to break up and pass away. It is unlikely that he should have even taken the kingdoms of this world into the horizon of his spiritual vision. To say that the heresies of the Ebionites or Nicolaitanes were restrained by the continuance of the Roman government, would be far-fetched: the two are not '*in pari materia*'. It might remove this difficulty if we could suppose the revelation of the man of sin to represent the rebellion of the Jews, but would leave the original one, how to account for the mystery which the Apostle observes about him which letteth. More natural is it to explain 'that which letteth' as the Jewish law, the check on spiritual licentiousness which for a little while was holding in its chains the swarms of Jewish heretics, who were soon to be let loose and sweep over the earth. Whatever other objections may be entertained to the last of the two interpretations, it has, at any rate, the advantage of consistency. It does not confuse the spiritual and historical, or take us away from the world of the human heart of which the Scripture speaks, to the world of objects and events.

Good and evil seem often to lie together flat upon the world's surface. At other times they start up, like armed men, and prepare for the last struggle. There is a state in the individual soul, in which it has entered into rest, and has its conversation in heaven, and is a partaker of the kingdom of God. There is a state also in which it is divided between two, not unconscious of good, but overpowered by evil, living in what St Paul terms the body of death. There is a third state in which it is neither conscious of good nor overpowered by evil, but in which it 'leads the life of all men' acting under the influence of habit, law, opinion. All these three states have their parallels in the history of the world. In all of them, whether in the individual or in the world, whether arising out of the purpose of God or the nature of man, there sometimes seems to be a kind of necessity which will not suffer them to be other than they are. The first is that state for which the believer looks when the kingdoms of this

world shall become the kingdoms of God and Christ. The second is that state of the world, seen also to him, but unseen to men in general, in which, in the language of prophecy, 'the wicked is revealed', in which the elements of good and evil separate and decompose themselves, in anticipation of the final judgment. The third is that fixed order of the world in which we live, which surrounds us on every side with its restraints, social, legal, moral, which, if it be not very good, is not very evil; which 'letteth and will let' as long as human nature lasts. Such 'a let' to the evil of men was the Roman empire; such 'a let', even when it had lost its inspired character, was the law of the Jews. Whether either of these, or both of them combined in the same way that in the *Book of Revelation* Rome and Jerusalem combine to form the image of the last enemy, suggested to the Apostle the thought of 'that which let'; whether the political order of the world, which was typified by them, seemed to him for a time to interpose itself against the manifestation of the man of sin, is uncertain. Such is a natural adaptation for us to make of the words of the prophecy; it is also a consistent interpretation of them when translated out of the symbolism of Ezekiel and Daniel into more general language. To suppose that there is to be some greater deluge of evil than any that has already poured over the world, at the fall of the Roman empire, or in the tenth century, some louder shriek of the human race in its agony than at the destruction of Jerusalem, to be heard again at the expiration of two thousand years, adds nothing to the credibility of the Apostle. Least of all can we imagine him to refer to a 'gigantic' development of the human intellect, which is at present believed to be held with a chain by the governments of mankind. Such opinions draw us away from the healthy atmosphere of history and experience into the unseen future; they project to an unimaginable distance, what to the Apostle was near and present. No test can be applied to them; their truth or falsehood, when we are in our graves, we shall never know. They gain no additional witness from the willingness of their authors to stake the inspiration of Scripture on the historic certainty of the event. So long as we delight to trace coincidences, or to make pictures in religion; so long as the human mind continues to prefer the extraordinary to the common, such interpretations of prophecy, in forms more or less idealized or refined, adapted to different age or capacities, will never fail. But the Spirit of prophecy in every age lives not in signs and wonders, but in the divine sense of good and evil in our own hearts, and in the world around us.

## On the Probability that Many of St Paul's Epistles have been Lost

ἐν πασῇ ἐπιστολῇ—'In every Epistle'—2 *Thess.*, iii, 17.

THESE three words, dropping out by the way, open a field for reflection to those who maintain the genuineness of the *Epistle* in which they occur, because they imply, or at least make it probable, that St Paul wrote other *Epistles*, which were never reckoned among the Canonical books, and of which all trace must therefore have disappeared in ecclesiastical history, even in that early age in which the Canon was beginning to be fixed.

Other expressions in the writings of the Apostle lead to the same inference. In the second chapter of the *Epistle* from which they are taken, which it is important to observe is almost the earliest of those extant, and the words of which cannot therefore refer to the *Epistles* which are familiar to us, he twice speaks of 'a letter as from us', as a common and possible occurrence (ver. 2, 15). In the *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, x, 10, the Apostle supposes his adversaries to say 'that his letters are weighty and powerful'; to which he replies in the next verse: 'Such as we are in word by letters when absent, such will we also be in deed when we are present'. Is it likely that the Apostle is here referring to the *First Epistle* only? The words of 1 *Cor.*, v, 9, 'I wrote unto you in the Epistle', probably allude, notwithstanding the tense, to the letter which he was writing at the time, and have, therefore, nothing to do with our present inquiry. But the general character of both *Epistles to the Corinthians* leads to the conviction that he was in habits of correspondence with the teachers of the Church of Corinth. It appears also from 1 *Cor.*, xvi, 3, that he was intending (although the intention in this instance was not fulfilled) to send messengers with letters of introduction, as we term them, to the Church at Jerusalem;—

letters of Christian courtesy, of which one only, — the short *Epistle to Philemon*—has been preserved to after ages. Similar occasions must often have occurred in the course of a long life and ministry ; St Paul did not cease to be St Paul in his feelings towards others, because what he wrote in the privacy of the closet was not destined to be read afterwards by the whole Christian world. Once more, in the *Epistle to the Colossians*, iv, 16, the Apostle enjoins the Churches of Colossæ and Laodicea to interchange the letters which they had received from him. It is only a conjecture, and one which is not favoured by the similarity of the *Epistles to the Colossians* and *Ephesians*, that the *Epistle* here referred to as the *Epistle to the Laodiceans* is the extant *Epistle to the Ephesians*. Here then are signs of another lost *Epistle*. The allusion in the *Second Epistle of St Peter*, iii, 15, 16 : ‘ Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according unto the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you ; as also in all his Epistles, speaking in them of these things ; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction ’, may be mentioned also, though it has only a general bearing on our present subject.

(ii) The character of the Apostle is a further presumption on the same side of the question. He who lives in himself the life of all the Churches, who is praying for his converts night and day, and who allows no other concerns to occupy his mind—of such an one is it reasonable to suppose that, during his whole ministry, to all his followers in many lands, he would write no other *Epistles* but those which have come down to us ? One might have thought that every year, almost every month, he would have found some exhortation to give to them ; that he would have received news of them from some quarter or other touching divisions which required healing, or persecution under which his children needed comfort, or advances of the truth which called for his counsel and sympathy. One might have thought that his affection for them, and his extreme (may we call it ?) sensitiveness to their feelings towards himself, would have led him to make use of every opportunity for writing to them or hearing from them. He who had no rest in his soul until he had sent Timothy to know their state, could not have borne to have passed a great portion of his life without knowledge of them or intercourse with them. But if so, the *Canonical Epistles* or *Letters* cannot be the only ones of which the Apostle was the author. For, including the *Pastoral Epistles*, their number is but thirteen, not one in two years for the entire active portion of the Apostle’s life, and these

very unequally spread over different periods. Of the first ten or fifteen years no *Epistle* is extant; then two short ones begin the series; after an interval of some years succeeded by another short one: then in a single year follow the three larger *Epistles* together, more than half the whole: lastly, in the years of his imprisonment, we have not much more than a short *Epistle* for every year. Is it likely that there were no others—or are we suffering ourselves to be imposed upon by the fear of disturbing a natural but superficial impression?

(iii) The *Epistles* which are extant, with the exception of the *Epistle to the Romans*, are unlike the compositions of one who in his whole life wrote only ten letters. They are too lively and draw too near to the hearts of men. Those especially to the Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, and Colossians (compare Philemon) imply habits of familiar intercourse between the Apostle and the distant Churches. Messengers are passing from him to them, and he is minutely informed of their circumstances. There is no trace of ignorance on the Apostle's part of what is going on among them. There is none of that natural formality which grows up in letters between unknown persons. Would the Apostle have written to a Church which he only addressed once in his life in a style which is more like talking than writing—and without the least allusion anywhere to the singularity of the circumstance of his writing to them?

But if, as the allusions which have been mentioned and the reason of the thing, and the style of the extant *Epistles* themselves, lead us to suppose, St Paul wrote other *Epistles*, which have not been handed down to us, then many reflections arise in our minds, some of which have an important bearing on the interpretation of Scripture.

1. It has been observed that within a single year of his life the Apostle wrote the *Epistle to the Romans* and the two *Epistles to the Corinthians*, which are in quantity equal to more than half the whole of his *Epistles*, and not much short of a seventh portion of the entire New Testament. Nor is it certain that these were the only *Epistles* written by him in the same year: the reverse is more likely. Now suppose we take this as a criterion of the probable amount of his lost writings, and that during each year of his ministry, which extended over a period of at least twenty-five years, he wrote an equal quantity—though it would not be true to say that 'the world itself would not contain the books that would have been written', yet the result would have been a volume three times the size of the New Testament. There is nothing extravagant in this speculation, although there is no

proof of it ; the allusions to lost *Epistles* make the idea extremely probable. Nor would any one think it extravagant if the Apostle had not been one of the Canonical writers, whose writings we are accustomed to regard as supernaturally preserved to us.

2. Suppose, further, that in a distant part of the world, in some Syriac, or Armenian, or Æthiopic transcript, or even in its original language, buried in the unexcavated portions of Herculaneum or Pompeii, one of these lost *Epistles* were suddenly brought to light : with what feelings would it be received by the astonished world ! The return of the Apostle himself to earth would hardly be a more surprising event. There are minds to whom such a discovery would seem to involve more danger than the loss of an *Epistle* which we already have. It is not impossible that it might be suppressed or ever it found its way to the Christian public. Suppose it to escape this fate ; it is printed and translated : with what anxiety do men turn over its pages, to find in them something which has a bearing on this or that controverted point ! If touching upon disputed matters, is it too much to conceive that it would not find equal acceptance with disputants on both sides—supposing that it favoured one of them rather than the other ? Time would elapse before the new *Epistle* would find its way into the language of theology. There would be no Fathers or Commentators to overlay it with traditional interpretations. It is strange but also true that it could never receive the deference and respect which has attached to those more legitimate *Epistles* in the possession of which the Christian Church has gloried for above eighteen centuries. And some one standing aloof might ask whether any article of faith which such an accident might disturb could be necessary to salvation.

3. Another supposition may be raised of the discovery not of one but of many lost *Epistles* of St Paul, which suggests a new question. Would the balance of Christian truth be thereby altered ? Not so. A moment's reflection will remind us that the servant is not above his Lord, nor the disciple above his Master. If we have failed to gather from the words of Christ the spirit of the Gospel, a new *Epistle* of St Paul would hardly enlighten us ; if we are partakers of that spirit we have more religious knowledge than it is possible to exhaust on earth. The alarm is no sooner raised than dispelled. The chief use of bringing the supposition before our minds is to remind us of the simplicity of the faith of Christ. - It may help to indicate also to the theological student the nature of the problem which he has to consider in the interpretation of Scripture, at once harder and easier

than he at first supposed,—easier because simpler, harder because beset with artificial difficulties. Were the *Epistles* bearing the name of St Paul not ten but thirty in number, a great change would take place in our mode of studying them. Is it not their shortness which provokes microscopic criticism, the scantiness of materials giving rise to conjectures, the fragmentary thought itself provoking system? Words and phrases such as 'justification by faith without the works of the law' could not have had such a powerful and exclusive influence on the theology of after times had they been found in two only out of thirty *Epistles*. Theories and constructions soon come to an end when materials are abundant; ingenuity ceases to make an attempt to fill up the blanks of knowledge when the mind is distinctly conscious that it is dealing not with the whole but with a part only.

4. No difference is made by the supposition which has been raised respecting the extant *Epistles* considered as a rule of life and practice. Almost any one of them is a complete witness to the Author and Finisher of our faith; a complete text-book of the truths of the Gospel. But it is obvious that the supposition, or rather the simple fact, that *Epistles* have been lost which were written by St Paul, is inconsistent with the theory of a plan which is sometimes attributed to the extant ones, which are regarded as a temple having many parts, even as there are many members in one body, and all members have not the same office. A mistaken idea of design is one of the most attractive errors in the interpretation of Scripture no less than of nature. No such plan or unity can be really conceived as existing in the Apostle's own mind; for he could never have distinguished between the *Epistles* destined to be lost and those which have been allowed to survive. And to attribute such a plan to an overruling Providence would be an arbitrary fancy, involving not inspiration, but the supernatural selection and preservation of particular *Epistles*, and destructive to all natural ideas of the Gospel. It is a striking illustration of what may be termed the incidental character of Christianity, that (not without a Providence in this as in all other earthly things) some of the *Epistles* of St Paul, in the course of nature, as if by chance, are for ever lost to us; while others, as if by chance, are handed down to be the treasures of the Christian world throughout all ages.

5. There is no reason to suppose that those *Epistles* of St Paul which have been preserved were more sacred or inspired than those which were lost, or either more so than his discourses in the synagogue at Thessalonica during 'three Sabbath days', at

Athens, at Corinth, at Rome, or the other places in which he preached the Gospel. The supposition of the lost *Epistles* indefinitely extends itself when we think of lost words. Of these it might be truly said, 'that if they were written every one, even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written'. The writings of the Apostle, like the words of our Saviour, are but a fragment of his life. And they must be restored to their context before they can be truly understood. They do not acquire any real sacredness by isolation from the rest. It would be a loss not a gain to deprive the New Testament of its natural human character,—instead of receiving a higher and diviner meaning, it would only be reduced to a level with the sacred writings of the Asiatic religions. 'So Christ and his Apostles went about speaking day after day' is a truer and more instructive thought, than 'these things were formally set down for our instruction'. Nor does it really diminish the power of Scripture to describe it, as it appears to the eye of the critical student, as a collection of fragmentary and occasional pieces. For these fragments are living plants; the germ of eternal life is in them all; the least of all seeds, when compared in bulk with human literature, they have grown up into a tree, the shade of which covers the earth.



# On Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*

## THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

No one can read books on the Evidences of the Christian Religion, written in the last century, without feeling that he has difficulties which are not met by them, and that points of view occur to him, which were not within the scope of vision that presented itself to the writer. This may be partly accounted for, from their being written in the spirit of the advocate rather than of the judge ; weak points, as in pleading before a jury, are often concealed ; the reader is scarcely expected to go out of his way to consider seriously the other side of the case. Our confidence is further weakened by observing that they are apt to shift with the metaphysical or theological schools of the age, and that some of the evidences which are in repute at home have scarcely any value in other countries. Another cause of this want of satisfaction is the growth of modern criticism, which had hardly in the last generation come into contact with the facts of Scripture, and which, as it has gradually crept over the rest of history, begins to approach more and more nearly the sacred territory.

Modern criticism, in the sense here meant, may be described shortly as the spirit of historical inquiry. This spirit of inquiry has received a great impulse in our own country and in Germany from the researches of Niebuhr and Grote, whose method, whatever abatements may be made of some of their statements, will influence all future histories of the ancient world. That is to say, the old traditional history can never return ; positive results may often be small and disappointing ; the great result is the knowledge that of early times we are destined to know less, in the absence of contemporary accounts, than we had once hoped and believed,—the little that we do know, perhaps more clearly. This result has been arrived at in three ways : first by showing the inconsistency of testimony ; secondly, by discrediting, chiefly

on grounds of internal evidence, the genuineness of documents or authorities ; thirdly, by indicating the manner in which, though false, conceptions of historical fact, and even fictitious writings, may without falsehood have sprung up, in the course of nature, during unknown ages, by the workings or impressions of the mind itself.

As the truths of Christianity have an historical as well as a doctrinal part, they cannot be wholly unaffected by that which affects all other history. They are drawn in by the application of principles which were not intended for them, and which might not have been so generally admitted, had their application been foreseen. Lessons which have been learnt in the study of profane history, are not forgotten in the perusal of the Sacred Volume. Fresh suppositions arise respecting the narrative of Scripture ; discrepancies hitherto unobserved begin to be detected ; what formerly lay flat upon the page is reconstructed with more or less ingenuity or probability into a lively edifice. Some old things are about to disappear, some new ones to appear. The date and authorship of the books of Scripture are made to pass a trying ordeal. It is natural under such circumstances for us to turn to our former defenders of the faith, and inquire how far under their protection we can still find a safe abiding place ; whether the old armour of controversy has been superseded by new modes of warfare.

Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ* has been, and always will be, to our own countrymen one of the greatest bulwarks of historical Christianity. Yet its present value must be in a measure determined by the result of the inquiry which has been just now suggested. We turn over the leaves of the work, not without anxiety to know how much must fall before the subtle shafts of German criticism. We want to see how far the author had in view the doubts of our own age as well as of his. If the theory against which Paley is contending had been one, not of total, but of partial disbelief, would the arguments which he uses have equally held good ?—especially if it had been a theory which attacked the genuineness of the books of Scripture themselves, which dismembered them into parts, and which tended to discredit the external evidence by which they were maintained ?

'Though some is taken, much remains'. True it is that Paley never contemplated the dismemberment of the *Acts of the Apostles* into original documents ; it is true also, that he did not estimate the comparative value of the coincidences which he found in different instances in the same or different writings. All the *Epistles* and every part of the *Acts* were placed by him on

the same level of authenticity and genuineness. It is true, further, that the very clearness of his style has given him a fallacious advantage with the reader, and that the extreme improbability of the hypothesis which he is combating, leaves an appearance of triumph that would not be justified by anything short of such an hypothesis. Lastly, it may be granted that the omission of many of the discrepancies in the *Epistles*, and the absence of effort to regard the subject as a whole and estimate the collective force of objections, place him in the rank of apologists, and not of impartial writers.

But after making all these deductions, it must be conceded that no author has done as much as Paley in the *Horæ Paulinæ*, to raise up a barrier against unreasoning scepticism, and to place the *Epistles* on an historical foundation. The ingenuity of his arguments, the minuteness of the intimations discovered by him, the remoteness and complexity of his combinations, leave the impression on the mind of absolute certainty, in reference to the great *Epistles to the Romans* and *Corinthians*, and of high probability, in reference to most of the others. And even though some of his defences may be untenable, it is true also, that other lines of argument first indicated by him, admit of being carried farther than he has carried them. Such are those from undesigned coincidences of style and of character, that is from similarities which, with a previous knowledge of the style and character of an author, are capable of being recognized and appreciated; and yet are so latent and complex, that no forger could have invented them.

The two chapters on the *Epistle to the Thessalonians* contain together nine different heads. Some of them afford the least favourable specimens of Paley's reasoning. All are indebted for a part of their force, to the perspicuity of the writer, which flatters the reader into intelligence, and makes him ready to admit what he can so easily understand. To estimate a criticism on Paley's writings fairly, his arguments and those of his critics should be reduced to their naked form; otherwise the controversy will insensibly degenerate into a comparison of the styles of two writers, not of the value of their arguments.

Bad reasons on behalf of a received opinion or an established authority, have often hitherto found more favour than good ones against it. Many persons like to throw into an argumentative or rhetorical form what on other and perhaps good grounds they have made up their minds to receive. But the time has passed for *ex parte* inquiries and statements, whether about the evidences of Christianity or any other historical subject. It is

the interest of every one to see how we really stand. Christians are not partisans of a side who are bound to support what other Christians have said ; it is no point of honour with us to defend ground because it has been once taken in. Many of the evidences of Christianity are rather a burden than a strength to it. Let us know the truth, and ' the truth will make us free '. Without hesitation, therefore, though not without reverence for so great a name, a brief examination will be attempted of that portion of Paley's work which relates to the *Epistles to the Thessalonians*.

## No. I

' It is known to every reader of Scripture that the *First Epistle to the Thessalonians* speaks of the coming of Christ in terms which indicate an expectation of His speedy appearance : " For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord that *we* which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then *we which are alive and remain*, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds. . . But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief " (iv, 15, 16, 17 ; v, 4).

' Whatever other construction these texts may bear, the idea they leave upon the mind of an ordinary reader is, that of the author of the *Epistle* looking for the day of judgment to take place in his own time, or near to it. Now, the use which I make of this circumstance is, to deduce from it a proof that the *Epistle* itself was not the production of a subsequent age. Would an impostor have given this expectation to St Paul, after experience had proved it to be erroneous ? or would he have put into the Apostle's mouth, or, which is the same thing, into writings purporting to come from his hand, expressions, if not necessarily conveying, at least easily interpreted to convey, an opinion which was then known to be founded in mistake ? I state this as an argument to show that the *Epistle* was contemporary with St Paul, which is little less than to show that it actually proceeded from his pen ; for I question whether any ancient forgeries were executed in the lifetime of the person whose name they bear, nor was the primitive situation of the Church likely to give birth to such an attempt.'

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It is argued that no impostor would have put into the mouth of St Paul an expectation of the coming of Christ, which experience had shown to be false. Rather say, he would have put into the mouth of St Paul anything which it came within the reach of his ingenuity to devise, and which was likely to make the *Epistle* credited as a genuine work of the Apostle. His general aim would be to support his own opinions by the name and authority of St Paul. Whether a particular statement was likely to have been made by St Paul, he would only consider in so far as might seem to affect the verisimilitude of his forgery.

Still the argument holds, if stated differently; for the impostor must have had an object, and that object or part of that object must have been to spread a belief which was shared by himself in the immediate coming of Christ. In other words the *Epistle* must have been written by a Montanist or Millenarian. But a Montanist or Millenarian, believing in the present outpouring of the Spirit, would not have had recourse to the writings of a century before to prove, what, at the time they were written, he could not suppose to have been true. No one in our own day who maintained the immediate coming of Christ would support his opinion by that of Joseph Mede, who died more than one hundred years ago, and fixed the end of the world during his own lifetime. The Montanist, though not rejecting the written word, had in himself a surer witness, and he would have felt the inappropriateness of appealing, on such a subject, from the present to the past. No one who had a sufficient motive to forge, would have cared to attach his forgery to the name of an Apostle.

That no ancient forgeries were executed in the lifetime of the person whose name they bear, is more than can be safely affirmed. That forgeries came into existence soon after the death of the person whose name they bear, is certainly proved by the example of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Clementine Homilies*, and some of the *Apocryphal Gospels*. Neither an interval of a hundred years, nor a distance of a hundred miles, requires to be interposed. It is certainly true, that the primitive situation of the Church in the year 50, so far as we are acquainted with it, was unlikely to give birth to such an attempt; that the same improbability would have existed in the year 100, is more than we can maintain.

## No. II

'OUR *Epistle* concludes with a direction, that it should be publicly read in the Church to which it was addressed: "I charge you by the Lord, that this *Epistle* be read unto all the holy brethren". The existence of this clause in the body of the *Epistle* is an evidence of its authenticity; because to produce a letter purporting to have been publicly read in the Church of Thessalonica, when no such letter in truth had been read or heard of in that Church, would be to produce an imposture destructive of itself. At least, it seems unlikely that the author of an imposture would voluntarily, and even officiously, afford a handle to so plain an objection. Either the *Epistle* was publicly read in the Church of Thessalonica during St Paul's lifetime, or it was not. If it was, no publication could be more authentic, no species of notoriety more unquestionable, no method of preserving the integrity of the copy more secure. If it was not, the clause we produce would remain a standing condemnation of the forgery, and, one would suppose, an invincible impediment to its success.

'If we connect this article with the preceding, we shall perceive that they combine into one strong proof of the genuineness of the *Epistle*. The preceding article carries up the date of the *Epistle* to the time of St Paul; the present article fixed the publication of it to the Church of Thessalonica. Either, therefore, the Church of Thessalonica was imposed upon by a false *Epistle*, which in St Paul's lifetime they received and read publicly as his, carrying on a communication with him all the while, and the *Epistle* referring to the continuance of that communication; or other Christian Churches, in the same lifetime of the Apostle, received an *Epistle* purporting to have been publicly read in the Church of Thessalonica, which nevertheless had not been heard of in that Church; or lastly, the conclusion remains, that the *Epistle* now in our hands is genuine'.

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Nothing can be apparently more conclusive than this statement, though really fallacious. The root of the fallacy seems to lie in the supposition that the moment the forged writing appeared, it would be subject to critical investigation, and that the first place it would be brought to would be the Church of Thessalonica itself. Whereas, the whole history of forgeries shows that they wandered about the world, coming and going nobody knew whence or whither, and that the concealment of

their origin was not an impediment to their success. The *Epistle to the Thessalonians*, we will suppose, suddenly made its appearance at Rome or Alexandria, in the year 120. It fell, as its author intended, into the hands of those who were predisposed to its doctrine and gladly caught at its authority. Would any one think of writing to the Church of Thessalonica to ask whether the *Epistle* had been read there during St Paul's lifetime? And if we could suppose such an inquiry to be made after an interval of fifty years or more, who could say whether it had or had not been once read, in accordance with the Apostle's direction? A parallel case will throw light on the question which we are considering. Suppose a lost book of statutes to reappear suddenly, would it be thought to militate against its genuineness that a provision was found in it that the whole book should be read once a year? And suppose, further, this book to be a forgery, would the occurrence of such a provision tend to create the slightest suspicion respecting it? Would it have been any reason for doubting the genuineness of the Book of the Law, in Josiah's time, that it contained a command that it should be read by the king?

It is highly improbable, as Paley remarks, that the Church of Thessalonica could have been imposed upon by a false *Epistle* in St Paul's lifetime; but there is no improbability in the circumstance that other Churches and individuals may have read, not perhaps during the lifetime of the Apostle, but soon after, an *Epistle* purporting to be addressed to the Church of Thessalonica, which nevertheless had not been heard of in that Church, and that such *Epistle* may have been gradually received as genuine; and therefore it is by other arguments than these that the conclusion must be proved, that the *Epistle* now in our hands is a writing of St Paul.

### No. III

'BETWEEN our *Epistle* and the history the accordancy in many points is circumstantial and complete. The history relates, that after Paul and Silas had been beaten with many stripes at Philippi, shut up in the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, as soon as they were discharged from their confinement, they departed from thence, and, when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, came to Thessalonica, where Paul opened and alleged that Jesus was the Christ, *Acts*, xvi, 23-xvii, 1-3. The *Epistle* written in the name of Paul and

Silvanus (Silas), and of Timotheus, who also appears to have been along with them at Philippi (v. *Phil.*, No. IV) speaks to the Church of Thessalonica thus: "Even after that we have suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God with much contention" (ii, 2).

'The history relates that, after they had been some time at Thessalonica, "The Jews which believed not . . . set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason (where Paul and Silas were), and sought to bring them out to the people" (*Acts*, xvii, 5). The *Epistle* declares: "When we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know" (iii, 4).

'The history brings Paul and Silas and Timothy together at Corinth, soon after the preaching of the Gospel at Thessalonica: "And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia (to Corinth), Paul was pressed in spirit" (*Acts*, xviii, 5). The *Epistle* is written in the name of these three persons, who consequently must have been together at that time, and speaks throughout of their ministry at Thessalonica as a recent transaction: "We brethren being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire" (ii, 17).

'The harmony is indubitable; but the points of history in which it consists, are so expressly set forth in the narrative, and so directly referred to in the *Epistle*, that it becomes necessary for us to show, that the facts in one writing were not copied from the other. Now, amid some minuter discrepancies, which will be noticed below, there is one circumstance which mixes itself with all the allusions in the *Epistle*, but does not appear in the history anywhere; and that is of a visit which St Paul had intended to pay to the Thessalonians during the time of his residing at Corinth: "Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us" (ii, 18). "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith. Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you" (iii, 10, 11). Concerning a design which was not executed, although the person himself, who was conscious of his own purpose, should make mention in his letters, nothing is more probable than that his historian should be silent, if not ignorant. The author of the *Epistle* could not, however, have learnt this circumstance from the history, for it is not there to be met with; nor if the historian had drawn his materials from



the *Epistle*, is it likely that he would have passed over a circumstance, which is amongst the most obvious and prominent of the facts to be collected from that source of information.'

The harmony is indubitable ; nor is there any reason for supposing that the writer of the *Acts* has taken his materials from the *Epistle*, or the writer of the *Epistle* from the *Acts*. And minute agreement in two documents or narratives which have no verbal resemblances, and in which nothing can be proved anywhere to be copied in one from the other (that is, in this instance, in any part of the *Acts* from any of the *Epistles*), is an almost certain proof of their truth and accuracy in passages where they agree. But the omission by the author or editor of the *Acts*, not of a fact, but of an intention which is alluded to in the *Epistle*, cannot be considered as any additional proof of that which hardly needs to be proved at all. It does not follow, as Paley maintains, that if the historian had 'drawn his materials from the *Epistle*' he would have mentioned the circumstance, because the intention is spoken of as never taking effect in the *Epistle* itself. Suppose that, in the biography of a traveller, or rather, to put a case more exactly parallel, in a few pages of scattered memorials of travel, no mention occurred of a design which was never carried out, and yet which the letters of the traveller at one period of his life show him to have entertained and also to have abandoned, that would not tend to prove the authenticity of either, or to guarantee their independence of each other. It would require many such omissions before any inference could be drawn from them. As well might we say that the omission of some untrue statement which may be found in a contemporary authority would prove the trustworthiness of a history.

#### No. IV

“ WHEREFORE, when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone ; and sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith . . . but now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, . . . we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith ” (iii, 1-7).

'The history relates, that when Paul came out of Macedonia to Athens, Silas and Timothy stayed behind at Berea : “ The

brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea ; but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. And they that conducted Paul brought him to Athens" (*Acts*, xvii, 14, 15). The history farther relates, that after Paul had tarried some time at Athens, and had proceeded from thence to Corinth, whilst he was exercising his ministry in that city Silas and Timothy came to him from Macedonia (*Acts*, xviii, 5). But to reconcile the history with the clause in the *Epistle* which makes St Paul say : " We thought it good to be left at Athens alone ; and sent Timotheus unto you ", it is necessary to suppose that Timothy had come up with St Paul at Athens ; a circumstance which the history does not mention. I remark, therefore, that although the history does not expressly notice this arrival, yet it contains intimations which render it extremely probable that the fact took place : First, as soon as Paul had reached Athens, he sent a message back to Silas and Timothy, " for to come to him with all speed " (*Acts*, xvii, 15). Secondly, his stay at Athens was on purpose that they might join him there : " Now while Paul waited for them at Athens his spirit was stirred in him " (*Acts*, xvii, 16). Thirdly, his departure from Athens does not appear to have been in any sort hastened, or abrupt. It is said, " after these things ", viz. his disputation with the Jews, his conferences with the philosophers, his discourse at Areopagus, and the gaining of some converts, he " departed from Athens, and came to Corinth " (*Acts*, xviii, 1). It is not hinted that he quitted Athens before the time that he had intended to leave it ; it is not suggested that he was driven from thence, as he was from many cities, by tumults or persecutions, or because his life was no longer safe. Observe then the particulars which the history *does* notice ; that Paul had ordered Timothy to follow him without delay, that he waited at Athens on purpose that Timothy might come up with him, that he stayed there as long as his own choice led him to continue. Laying these circumstances, which the history does disclose, together, it is highly probable that Timothy came to the Apostle at Athens ; a fact which the *Epistle*, we have seen, virtually asserts, when it makes Paul send Timothy back from Athens to Thessalonica. The *sending back of Timothy into Macedonia* accounts also for his not coming to Corinth till after Paul had been fixed in that city for some considerable time. Paul had found out Aquila and Priscilla, abode with them and wrought, being of the same craft ; and reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath day, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks (*Acts*, xviii, 1-5). All this passed at Corinth before Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia (*Acts*, xviii, 5). If this was the first time

of their coming up with him after their separation at Berea, there is nothing to account for a delay so contrary to what appears from the history itself to have been St Paul's plan and expectation. This is a conformity of a peculiar species. The *Epistle* discloses a fact which is not preserved in the history; but which makes what is said in the history more significant, probable, and consistent. The history bears marks of an omission; the *Epistle* by reference furnishes a circumstance which supplies that omission'.

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Here the discrepancy turns on the circumstance that, according to the *Epistle*, Timothy joined the Apostle at Athens; but, according to the narrative of the *Acts*, at Corinth. The undesigned coincidence is supposed to consist in the omission, in the *Acts*, of the return of Timothy from Athens to Thessalonica, which is thought to be intimated, however, in the command of Paul, that 'they (*i.e.* Silas and Timotheus) should come speedily to him', or, according to the true reading, 'as speedily as possible'—a command which, unless we assume such a journey, must have been neglected.

Paley has here lost sight of the natural view of the narrative of the *Acts*. For no one would have found there the shadow of inconsistency, but for the discrepancy with the Thessalonians. Let us see how the case stands: Paul waited for Timothy and Silas at Athens, not because he expected that they would come up with him there, but because he expected them somewhere. The length of his stay, either at Athens or Corinth, before he was overtaken by Silas and Timotheus, cannot really be inferred from the narrative. And even granting that the narrative does tacitly imply an interval of a few weeks in which St Paul was alone, sufficient time must also be allowed for the messengers of Paul to go from Athens to Berea, and for Timothy to return from Berea to Athens (*Acts*, xvii, 15). And, lastly, suppose that for some reason unknown, Timothy and Silas were delayed, does it follow that, unless the delay were considerable, the author of the *Acts* would necessarily have mentioned so minute a circumstance?

But for the sake of argument, let us assume the inconsistency to exist, which Paley imagines that he has discovered in the *Acts*, and what must be the inference? It must be admitted, that the writer of the *Acts* either knew, or did not know, that the return of Timothy from Athens to Thessalonica actually took place. If (1) he did know, it would be unnatural for him to have expressed himself as he has done respecting the circumstance

of Timothy and Silas coming up with the Apostle at Corinth. Two statements refer to each other : first, the command to follow quickly ; secondly, the fact that at a certain point of his journey the Apostle is overtaken by his friends. But the situation, as it existed in the author's mind, was very different from this. Timothy and Silas first rejoined the Apostle, not at Corinth, the point mentioned, but at Athens, whence they returned to Thessalonica, and finally reached Corinth. Would any one who knew this have omitted it, when the omission must necessarily lead to a false impression ? Paley should have considered, not only what was necessary to make the narrative intelligible or probable, but what was necessary to make the writer or editor of the *Acts* consistent with himself. (2) But again, if he did not know, the intimations themselves vanish. For in using these words, ' Whilst Paul waited for them at Athens ', ' he sent a message back to Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed '—he must be supposed, on Paley's view of the subject, to be saying something, the bearing of which he did not perceive ; to have spoken, not of himself, but on the authority of some other writing or narrative which he misunderstood or misquoted. But it is not likely that, with a narrative before him which mentioned the fact of Timothy's return from Athens, the compiler should have retained these intimations, and have omitted the very circumstance which was necessary to make them consistent with the rest of his history.

Our inference, therefore, must be that the method of meeting the supposed inconsistency proposed by Paley, while it assumes the inconsistency for the sake of meeting it, leads into a further anomaly.

Once more, Paley does not observe that, even admitting his hypothesis, a discrepancy still remains ; because in the *Epistle* which is addressed from ' Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus ' only Timothy is spoken of as sent from Athens ; whereas, to reconcile the *Epistle* with the *Acts*, Silas as well as Timothy must have undertaken the double journey.

The possible hypotheses respecting this subject are the following :

1. Timothy and Silas, having been left behind at Berea (according to the *Acts*), join the Apostle at Athens (not according to the *Acts*).

2. Silas, who alone is mentioned in the *Acts* as having *preached* at Thessalonica and Berea, is left behind at Berea, and Timothy follows the Apostle to Athens, whence he is sent back by him to Thessalonica. We may further suppose Timothy and Silas

returning together from Thessalonica to Corinth, and then overtaking the Apostle. This mode of explaining the two accounts reduces the discrepancy to a minimum. The writer of the *Acts* knew that Silas and Timotheus were together at Thessalonica and Berea, and were together when they overtook the Apostle at Corinth; what he did not know, was only that they were separated during the interval.

3. Another mode of escape is, to avail ourselves of the usual resource of harmonists, and repeat the event. The *Epistle* must then have a later date assigned to it. But a date much later than the Apostle's visit to Thessalonica is inconsistent with the contents of the *Epistle* itself.

The comparison of the *Acts* and the *Epistle* suggests a further objection. For Timothy is stated in the *Epistle* to have been sent back from Athens, at which place the Apostle had determined to be left alone (1 *Thess.*, iii, 1, 5). But at a later period the Apostle is not at Athens, but at Corinth and Ephesus, as we learn from the eighteenth chapter of the *Acts*.

4. Or possibly by the words 'we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus', in the *Epistle* (iii, 1, 2), may be meant only, sent Timotheus from Berea; a sense just admissible in the words, but hardly consistent with the context.

Whichever way of diminishing the difficulty be adopted, it still remains slight, but unexplainable, and cannot be by any ingenuity converted into an undesigned coincidence. Any mode of explanation which, like Paley's, does away the natural meaning of the author of the *Acts*, or like No. 4 of the *Epistle*—which dives beneath the surface to pick up what is really on the surface,—is in its tendency far more dangerous than the simple admission of the existence of a discrepancy, because it introduces into Scripture a hypercritical and unreal method of interpretation, which may be anywhere made the instrument of perverting the meaning of the text.

#### No. V

“FOR ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of *your own countrymen*, even as they have of the Jews” (ii, 14).

'To a reader of the *Acts of the Apostles* it might seem, at first sight, that the persecutions which the preachers and converts of Christianity underwent, were suffered at the hands of their old

adversaries the Jews. But if we attend carefully to the accounts there delivered, we shall observe that, though the opposition made to the Gospel usually *originated* from the enmity of the Jews, yet in almost all places the Jews went about to accomplish their purpose, by stirring up the Gentile inhabitants against their converted countrymen. Out of Judea they had not power to do much mischief in any other way. This was the case at Thessalonica in particular: "The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, set all the city in an uproar" (*Acts*, xvii, 5). It was the same a short time afterwards at Berea: "When the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people" (*Acts*, xvii, 13). And before this, our Apostle had met with a like species of persecution, in his progress through the Lesser Asia: in every city "The unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren" (*Acts*, xiv, 2). The *Epistle* therefore represents the case accurately as the history states it. It was the Jews always who set on foot the persecutions against the Apostles and their followers. He speaks truly therefore of them, when he says, in this *Epistle*, they "both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have *persecuted us* . . . forbidding us to speak unto the Gentiles" (ii, 15, 16). But out of Judea it was at the hands of the Gentiles, it was "of their own countrymen", that the injuries they underwent were immediately sustained: "Ye have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews".

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This is not a fair representation of the circumstances referred to. The fact is that there is a difficulty which arises from the discrepancy of the *Acts* and the *Epistle*; the first impression of the *Acts* being that the converts of Thessalonica were Jews persecuted by Jews, or at any rate that the element of Jews and Jewish proselytes was a principal one in the Church, and the Jews actively engaged in the persecution, or rather the main authors of it; while the only construction that can be put upon the *Epistle* is, that they were Greeks persecuted by Greeks (1 *Thess.*, ii, 14), as the Jews of Palestine, with whom they are compared, had been persecuted by Jews. This discrepancy might find a reconciliation, were we more fully acquainted with the circumstances of the case, but cannot be regarded as an undesigned coincidence. Compare *Horæ Paulinæ*, ch. v, No. V.

## No. VI

'THE apparent discrepancies between our *Epistle* and the history, though of magnitude sufficient to repel the imputation of confederacy or transcription (in which view they form a part of our argument), are neither numerous, nor very difficult to reconcile.

'One of these may be observed in the ninth and tenth verses of the second chapter: "For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." A person who reads this passage is naturally led by it to suppose that the writer had dwelt at Thessalonica for some considerable time; yet of St Paul's ministry in that city, the history gives no other account than the following:—That "they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews"; that, "as his manner was, he went in unto them, and *three sabbath days* reasoned with them out of the Scriptures"; . . . that "some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas". The history then proceeds to tell us that "the Jews which believed not . . . set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason", where Paul and his companions lodged; that the consequence of this outrage was, that "the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea" (*Acts*, xvii, 1-10). From the mention of his preaching three sabbath days in the Jewish synagogue, and from the want of any farther specification of his ministry, it has usually been taken for granted that Paul did not continue at Thessalonica more than three weeks. This, however, is inferred without necessity. It appears to have been St Paul's practice, in almost every place that he came to, upon his first arrival to repair to the synagogue. He thought himself bound to propose the Gospel to the Jews *first*, agreeably to what he declared at Antioch in Pisidia; "it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you" (*Acts*, xiii, 46). If the Jews rejected his ministry, he quitted the synagogue, and betook himself to a Gentile audience. At Corinth, upon his first coming thither, he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath; "and when the Jews opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he departed thence", expressly telling them, "from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. . . . And he continued there a year and six months" (*Acts*, xviii, 6-11). At Ephesus, in like manner,

for the space of three months he went into the synagogue ; but when divers were hardened and believed not, but spake evil of that way, he departed from them and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus ; and this continued by the space of two years (*Acts*, xix, 8, 9, 10). Upon inspecting the history I see nothing in it which negatives the supposition that St Paul pursued the same plan at Thessalonica which he adopted in other places ; and that, though he resorted to the synagogue only three sabbath days, yet he remained in the city, and in the exercise of his ministry amongst the Gentile citizens, much longer, and until the success of his preaching had provoked the Jews to excite the tumult and insurrection by which he was driven away.

‘ Another seeming discrepancy is found in the ninth verse of the first chapter of the *Epistle* : “ For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how *ye turned to God from idols*, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come ”. This text contains an assertion that, by means of St Paul’s ministry at Thessalonica, many idolatrous Gentiles had been brought over to Christianity. Yet the history, in describing the effects of that ministry, only says, that “ some of the Jews believed . . . and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few ” (*Acts*, xvii, 4). The devout Greeks were those who already worshipped the one true God ; and therefore could not be said, by embracing Christianity, “ to be turned to God from idols ”.

‘ This is the difficulty. The answer may be assisted by the following observations. The Alexandrian and Cambridge manuscripts read (for τῶν τε σεβομένων Ἑλλήνων πολὺ πλῆθος) τῶν τε σεβομένων καὶ Ἑλλήνων πολὺ πλῆθος. In which reading they are also confirmed by the Vulgate Latin. And this reading is in my opinion strongly supported by the considerations : First, that οἱ σεβόμενοι alone, *i.e.* without “Ἑλληνες, is used in this sense in this same chapter, Paul being come to Athens, διελέγετο μὲν οὖν ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις καὶ τοῖς σεβομένοις. Secondly, that σεβόμενοι and “Ἑλληνες nowhere come together. The expression is redundant. The οἱ σεβόμενοι must be “Ἑλληνες. Thirdly, that the καὶ is much more likely to have been left out, *incuria manus*, than to have been put in.

‘ Or, after all, if we be not allowed to change the present reading, which is undoubtedly retained by a great plurality of copies, may not the passage in the history be considered as describing only the effects of St Paul’s discourses during the



three sabbath days in which he preached in the synagogue ? and may it not be true, as we have remarked above, that his application to the Gentiles at large, and his success amongst them, was posterior to this ?'

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The *Epistle* says that the Apostle laboured with his own hands (ii, 9, 10), implying, therefore, that he remained at Thessalonica for some time. But the *Acts* state that he preached there three sabbath days. Paley argues, 'but he may have stayed longer, because he did so in other places'. But this is not the spirit of the narrative ; nothing can be inferred from what he did at other places where he was not driven out by persecution, as to what he did at this where he was. It might be argued, however, in favour of the genuineness of the *Epistle*, that its account is indirectly confirmed by the *Philippians*, in which it is stated, that in Thessalonica they sent once and again to the Apostle's necessity.

The fallacy of Paley's argument lies in the rejection of the *prima facie* meaning of the *Acts*. St Paul may have stayed longer, and may have converted Gentiles ; but would the author of the *Acts* have expressed himself as he has done, had he been aware of this protracted stay ? That is the point which is not in any degree met by accumulating instances that may tend to prove his practice in other places. Paley's mode of dealing with these passages is as if in ordinary conversation we took the words of a truth-speaking person, and made them mean anything they could mean without involving the speaker in positive falsehood, giving, moreover, as the reason for our tortuous interpretation of them that he had so expressed himself at other times. A better answer would be : (1) That the Apostle, even though he remained in a place but for three weeks, began by giving a specimen of his way of life. (2) That it by no means follows that he intended to remain but for three weeks, as the duration of his stay was cut short by the stirring up of persecution.

The second discrepancy Paley seeks to avoid by adopting the reading τῶν τε σεβομένων καὶ Ἑλλήνων. Granting him this, it will still not enable us to account for the exclusively Gentile character of the Church in the *Epistle*.

## THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

### No. I

'It may seem odd to allege obscurity itself as an argument, or to draw a proof in favour of a writing, from that which is usually considered as the principal defect in its composition. The present *Epistle*, however, furnishes a passage, hitherto unexplained, and probably inexplicable by us, the existence of which, under the darkness and difficulties that attend it, can only be accounted for upon the supposition of the *Epistle* being genuine; and upon that supposition is accounted for with great ease. The passage which I allude to is found in the second chapter of the *Second Epistle* (ver. 3-8): "That day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition<sup>1</sup>; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that WHEN I WAS YET WITH YOU, I TOLD YOU THESE THINGS? *And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.* For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: *only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.* And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." It were superfluous to prove, because it is in vain to deny, that this passage is involved in great obscurity, more especially the clauses distinguished by italics. Now, the observation I have to offer, is founded upon this, that the passage expressly refers to a conversation which the author had previously holden with the Thessalonians upon the same subject; "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, *I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth.*" If such conversation actually passed; if whilst he was yet with them, he *told* them "these things", then it follows that the *Epistle* is authentic. And of the reality of this conversation it appears to be a proof, that what is said

in the *Epistle* might be understood by those who had been present at such conversation, and yet be incapable of being explained by any other. No man writes unintelligibly on purpose. But it may easily happen, that a part of a letter which relates to a subject, upon which the parties had conversed together before, which refers to what had been before *said*, which is in truth a portion or continuation of a former discourse, may be utterly without meaning to a stranger who should pick up the letter upon the road, and yet be perfectly clear to the person to whom it is directed, and with whom the previous communication had passed. And if in a letter which thus accidentally fell into my hands, I found a passage expressly referring to a former conversation, and difficult to be explained without knowing that conversation, I should consider this very difficulty as a proof that the conversation had actually passed, and consequently that the letter contained the real correspondence of real persons.'

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Paley characteristically says, that 'no man writes unintelligibly on purpose', and therefore there must have been some real conversation, which is here referred to. But is not this a fallacy? He appears in this article to confuse the forger and the real author. That the real author could not have written unintelligibly on purpose is true; but it by no means follows that the forger would not have taken any mode which his ingenuity suggested of making his work appear to be a genuine writing (see No. I). He might have referred to pretended conversations, letters, circumstances, with this object. He might have written whatever St Paul could have written; the only limit to this being whether the verisimilitude was of a kind which was likely to occur to him. The question which he would ask himself would be, not whether what he wrote was unintelligible, but whether any suspicion would be aroused by its unintelligibility. It may easily happen, as Paley observes, that part of a letter may be unintelligible from want of information respecting allusions contained in it. But this is no confirmation of its truth. A.B. forges letters tending to prove he is the heir to an estate; in these letters he alludes to matters which from his statement of them can only be half understood. This may be some proof of the ingenuity of the forger; it is no proof of the genuineness of the letters.

## No. II

“ NEITHER did we eat any man's bread for nought ; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you : not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us ” (iii, 8, 9).

‘ In a letter, purporting to have been written to another of the Macedonic Churches, we find the following declaration :

“ Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, *no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only* ” (iv, 15).

‘ The conformity between these two passages is strong and plain. They confine the transaction to the same period. The *Epistle to the Philippians* refers to what passed “ in the beginning of the Gospel ”, that is to say, during the first preaching of the gospel on that side of the Ægean Sea. The *Epistle to the Thessalonians* speaks of the Apostle's conduct in that city upon “ his first entrance in unto them ”, which the history informs us was in the course of his first visit to the peninsula of Greece.

‘ As St Paul tells the Philippians, that no church communicated with him as concerning giving and receiving, but they only, he could not, consistently with the truth of this declaration, have received anything from the neighbouring Church of Thessalonica. What thus appears by general implication in an *Epistle* to another Church, when he writes to the Thessalonians themselves, is noticed expressly and particularly : “ Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought ; but wrought night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you ”.

‘ The texts here cited farther also exhibit a mark of conformity with what St Paul is made to say of himself in the *Acts of the Apostles*. The Apostle not only reminds the Thessalonians that he had not been chargeable to any of them, but he states likewise the motive which dictated this reserve : “ Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us ” (iii, 9). This conduct, and what is much more precise, the end which he had in view by it, was the very same as that which the history attributes to St Paul in a discourse, which it represents him to have addressed to the elders of the Church of Ephesus : “ Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have *showed* you all things, how

*that so labouring ye ought to support the weak*" (*Acts*, xx. 34, 35). The sentiment in the *Epistle* and in the speech is in both parts of it so much alike, and yet the words which convey it show so little of imitation or even of resemblance, that the agreement cannot well be explained without supposing the speech and the letter to have really proceeded from the same person.'

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Paley should not have omitted the verse following (*Phil.*, iv, 16), which implies that St Paul received support from the Philippians while at Thessalonica, and is therefore partly inconsistent with his working with his own hands. 'For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessities.'

[No. III is not reprinted, as the subject of it has been already anticipated in the notes on the passage referred to.]

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The defects of Paley's article on the Thessalonians may be summed up as follows: He has no distinctive conception of the nature or origin of early forgeries. He tends to confuse the person of the forger with the real author, and argues erroneously from one to the other. He omits discrepancies. He alters the natural and *prima facie* meaning of the *Acts* and the *Epistles*. He bends their exact words into agreement with general probabilities. He finds a difficulty where there is none, for the sake of introducing an undesigned coincidence. He has worked out in separate details a subject which can only be regarded philosophically as a whole, in which presumptions have to be considered, not singly, but collectively and with reference to the entire circumstances of the early Church.

Paley, like most writers of his age, had no idea of the differences of times and countries. He had never formed a conception of the mind of the Apostolical Age. He is justly chargeable with the error of regarding the writers of the New Testament as men who 'sat down at a desk' to compose a book. He never asked himself the previous question; what existed before the *Acts*?—out of what documents or memorials were they compiled? He begins with the assumption of their integrity, not merely as a whole which was put together by a single editor, but as a whole which had no previous existence in any of its parts. Given his two witnesses, he then proceeds to prove the independence of their testimony. But he forgets that where the history is fragmentary and the letters short,

minute points of agreement will be very rare. If they are numerous he may reasonably suspect them. The doctrine of chances shows that he must have made, not found them. They are not really there, but he has acquired the power of seeing them where they do not exist. Led away by his own ingenious thought of 'undesigned coincidences', he has impressed the notion of them on his own mind and that of the reader as a sort of form, by the help of which the *Acts* and the *Epistles* are to be read. His wonderful power of writing enables him to surround with a flood of light appearances which are often deceptive.

Those who may at any time design to continue his work further should consider whether a valuable argument has not been already weakened by being carried beyond its just limits. Constructive evidences of Christianity, wiredrawn out of small materials, share the fate of constructive history. The real evidence of the genuineness of the *Epistle to the Thessalonians* is scarcely added to by the argument from undesigned coincidences, and not at all weakened by its omission. Far stronger and deeper is that evidence which is derived from the style and character of the *Epistle*, which in almost every verse recalls the manner of the Apostle St Paul, and which in spite of minor discrepancies finds a general support and broad foundation in the agreement of the *Epistle* with the main features of the narrative of the *Acts*.

## On the Chronology of St Paul's Life and Writings

THERE are some questions of Biblical criticism on which many volumes have been written, and which have exercised the minds of hundreds, which, nevertheless, are capable of being reduced within narrow limits. On a slender basis of fact, numberless conjectures have been accumulated, which have acquired in time a sort of traditional value, and from being often repeated are at length believed. In such cases, it is possible to set free the original facts from the theories, and combinations, and points of view, to which they have given rise, and, without pretending to add a new superstructure, at any rate to trace the original foundations. Real uncertainties are better than imaginary certainties, and general facts more trustworthy than minute ones, in those fields of history of which we know little.

One of the Scriptural problems to which the above remarks apply is the chronology of St Paul's life and writings, in which, after endless investigations, hardly any progress has been made. The course of events has been mapped out in thirty different ways (see the table at the end of Wieseler's *Chronologie des Apostolischen Zeitalters*); nor is it likely that all the possible combinations of dates and facts are as yet exhausted. No less than three, if not four, journeys to Jerusalem, recorded in the *Acts*, have been identified with the celebrated visit mentioned in the second chapter of the *Epistle to the Galatians*; eleven different years have been assigned as dates of the Apostle's conversion; the mention of the vision or revelation in *2 Cor.*, xii, 1-5, which had taken place fourteen years before the time at which the Apostle was writing, has been variously referred to his conversion, to the vision in the temple, to some later occasion not elsewhere mentioned; in all these cases the whole

chronology sliding up and down according to the view taken. The critic may well ask himself the question, whether it is worth while to add another guess to those which exist already; whether it is not wiser to rest within the limits of actual statements, especially as the desire to find or make reconciliements will often disturb certainties. The first consideration, in all such inquiries, is the nature of the materials, whether plentiful or scanty, continuous or fragmentary. No ingenuity in the architect can reconstruct a house of which only a few stones remain; nor can the historian, by any effort of imagination, supply the elements of knowledge when really wanting. A sanguine temperament will often work out a system, whole and perfect, and seeming in every part to confirm itself; but such systems are tested by time—they pass away, and have no permanent influence.

To those who are content with a few certainties and many uncertainties, who do not insist on fixing the date of the Apostle's conversion, who are willing to admit that the series of events recorded in the *Acts* is not perfectly continuous, the chronology of St Paul's life is neither a perplexing nor a tedious inquiry. The materials of the inquiry lie in a small compass, being all contained in the *Epistles* and the *Acts of the Apostles*. What may be termed the outer or absolute chronology cannot be determined within two or three years; for even if it be admitted that St Paul perished in the Neronian persecution, A.D. 64, it is impossible to say how long he survived the date of the termination of the *Acts*; nor is there any statement either of Josephus (*Ant.*, xx, 8, 9) or Tacitus (*Annal.*, xii, 54; xiii, 14) which enables us, either directly or by inference, to fix, within three or four years, the date of the deposition of Felix, the brother of Pallas. Other allusions to secular history are still more wide. The time at which Aretas governed in Damascus is wholly unknown to us, and the fact itself recorded only in 2 Cor., xii, 32. (Compare Jos., *Ant.*, xvii, 5.) The edict and the famine which are connected with the name of Claudius (*Acts*, xviii, 2; xi, 28) leave a latitude of thirteen years—that is, of the reign of Claudius, A.D. 41–54; for they cannot be safely identified, either the one with the edict 'De Pellendis Mathematicis', mentioned by Tacitus (*Annal.*, xii, 52) under the year 52, or the other with the famine at Rome in the year 51 (*Annal.*, xii, 43). Lastly, the date of the death of Herod Agrippa, A.D. 44 (*Acts*, xii, 23), although certain, is not precisely coincident with the journey of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, recorded in *Acts*, xi, 30; and the journey itself is an



isolated point in the ministry of the Apostle. Such is the result of many discussions, which will not be without use if they remind us that it is the life of a private person which we are investigating, whose exploits are not to be found in 'Fasti' or 'Annals', whose words and actions have as yet no bearing on the history of mankind.

Leaving these unfruitful inquiries, our business is to fix the order of events in the Apostle's own life, or rather in that portion of his life which is continuously narrated in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and to connect these events with his writings. It is unlikely that the variation in the absolute time of these events is more than two or three years; but this is a question which is of no importance to us, and one which we have no means of determining. Enough of the 'outer' chronology. What we desire to know is reduced within narrow limits—the time and succession of the Apostle's journeys, during about fifteen years of his life, and their relation to his *Epistles*. The comparison will enable us to arrange the writings of the Apostle in a chronological order, and to trace the growth of his thoughts as the Church spread, as the Gentile world opened before him.

Beginning at the end of the narrative of events, it will be convenient partially to retrace our steps in the chronology of the *Epistles*. The last ten chapters (xix–xxviii) of the *Acts of the Apostles* embrace a continuous period of about nine years, the twenty-eighth chapter concluding with the mention of two whole years, during which Paul 'dwelt in his own hired house, preaching the kingdom of God', at Rome. Why the narrative says nothing of his death, which must have happened shortly afterwards, is a question hard to answer. Perhaps the author of the original memoir wrote in the interval; perhaps he was unacquainted with the manner of the Apostle's end. His omission takes away the possibility of assigning a *terminus ad quem* to the nine years of which he has given a consecutive narrative. Two years, deducted from the whole period, bring us back to the arrival of the Apostle at Rome (xxviii, 16) in spring; for he had wintered at Melita (xxviii, 1, 11); having sailed from Cesarea in the autumn of the previous year (xxvii, 2), shortly after his appearance before Festus and Agrippa (xxv, xxvi). Two years more are to be reckoned for the imprisonment of the Apostle at Cesarea, after his cause had been first heard by Felix (xxiv, 27). To Cesarea he had been sent by Claudius Lysias (xxiii, 33), in consequence of the tumult occasioned by his appearance in the temple on his last visit to Jerusalem. Can we determine the time of his arrival at the

latter place? An incidental remark enables us to do so; for he had sailed from Philippi 'after the days of unleavened bread' (*Acts*, xx, 6), in the hope of arriving at Jerusalem on the Feast of Pentecost (ver. 16).

Nearly five years out of the nine, from summer to spring, are already accounted for. It does not occur, however, to the author of the *Acts* to give an exact note of time for the journeys which precede. He only remarks that the Apostle left Ephesus 'after the uproar' to go into Macedonia (xx, 1, 2); that 'he went over those parts, and gave much exhortation'; that he 'abode three months' (xx, 3), that is, wintered (1 *Cor.*, xvi, 6), in Greece, and returned by the way he came. The *First Epistle to the Corinthians* supplies the deficiency (xvi, 8); for there the Apostle says that he intends to remain at Ephesus until Pentecost. Thus precisely a year is occupied between Ephesus and Jerusalem. And at Ephesus it is recorded, in the exhortation to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus, that the Apostle had spent three years (xx, 31), whether inclusive or exclusive of a journey from Ephesus to Jerusalem, and the stay at Antioch which followed, is uncertain. The former alternative has a slight presumption in its favour, from the circumstance that elsewhere (xix, 10) the Apostle's stay at Ephesus is described as lasting two years only. Supposing this hypothesis to be rejected, a conjectural period must be inserted for the interval between the Apostle's first and second visits to Ephesus. During this period, he made a third visit to Jerusalem, spent some time at Antioch, and went over all the country of Phrygia and Galatia (xviii, 22, 23).

Nine or ten years are thus accounted for, to which a year and six months have to be added for the first stay in Greece (*Acts*, xviii, 11). To this period of ten or eleven years and a half (say twelve, to allow a few months after the termination of the *Acts*), all the extant writings of the Apostle are to be referred. And here the continuity of the chronology wholly fails. The sojourn of the Apostle at Corinth had been the termination of a long journey, which commenced at Antioch and extended over the whole of Asia Minor, including Syria, Cilicia, Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, and the cities of Macedonia. But there is no period of time assigned either to the journey, or to the stay at Antioch which preceded it. And this is the case with all the previous history. The earlier portion of the *Acts* is entirely wanting in that chronological minuteness which marks the later chapters, from xviii onwards. The notes of time which occur are too few, or too indefinite, to be of any

real use (vi, 1 ; viii, 1 ; xi, 26, 28 ; xii, 1-3). Many passages, e.g. xii, xiii, 19-30, describe events which are contemporaneous with those which have preceded. From chapters i-xv the narrative seems to fall into two compartments—one before, the other after the appointment of the deacons and the death of Stephen : within these two divisions the arrangement of facts, as in the first three *Gospels*, is rather collateral than continuous.

It is an order, not a chronology, with which the author or compiler of the *Acts* has furnished us in his record of the few remaining circumstances of St Paul's life. Preserving this order, intervals and periods may be expanded or contracted at pleasure. For example, in the chapter immediately preceding the events last referred to (xv, 35, 36), it is said 'Paul and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of God. . . And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city.' Here it is clearly stated that the Apostle started from Antioch on his second apostolic journey ; but who can say how many weeks, months, or even years, may be included in the words 'some days', or 'continued in Antioch', the place which, at this period of the Apostle's course, was the centre of his labours, whence he had originally received his more distant mission ? (*Acts*, xiii, 1 ; xiv, 26). The author of the *Acts* would have spoken clearly had he known ; to recover facts of which he was ignorant is not possible.

The sojourn at Antioch, just now mentioned, had immediately followed the famous visit to Jerusalem recorded in *Acts*, xv, or rather, to speak more correctly, the visit to Jerusalem formed a sort of episode in a stay at Antioch of much longer duration. (Compare *Acts*, xiv, 28 ; xv, 35.) For the Apostle had left Antioch and returned to Antioch, and the object of his mission had a special reference to difficulties which had arisen among the Christians in that city. Antioch is further recognized as his head-quarters in the long journey which precedes ; there the Apostle returns to give an account of God's dealings with the Gentiles in Cyprus, at Perga in Pamphylia, at Antioch in Pisidia, at Iconium, at Derbe, and Lystra. But although many names are mentioned, and the minuteness of the narrative is a strong evidence of its substantial truth, there is no trace of the time which was occupied either in the journey or the stay at Antioch which followed. The period of the Apostle's residence at Antioch may be further extended back to his first arrival there from Tarsus, in company with Barnabas. In these earlier days also, he had visited Jerusalem as the bearer of contribu-

tions from the disciples at Antioch, about the time of Herod Agrippa's death (xi, 30 ; xii, 1). His previous abode had been Tarsus, his native place, whither he had been sent for safety from Jerusalem, on his first return thither (*Acts*, ix, 29, 30), after the sojourn at Damascus and in Arabia (*Gal.*, i, 17), which immediately followed his conversion.

Rome, Cesarea, Ephesus, Corinth, Antioch, Tarsus, Arabia, Damascus, Jerusalem, are the principal seats of the Apostle's life. An interval of a few months is spent on a voyage between Cesarea and Rome ; another interval of about a year, between Cesarea and Ephesus, is occupied in the third apostolical journey ; there is a third interval, of uncertain length, between the sojourn at Corinth and the settlement of the Apostle at Ephesus ; while the long stay at Antioch is broken by two visits to Jerusalem, and two Apostolical journeys. As yet no result has been gained for the chronology but the ten or twelve years, calculated back from the end of the *Acts*, and passed by the Apostle at Rome, Cesarea, Ephesus, Corinth, or in intermediate travels<sup>1</sup>.

We turn to the *Epistles* of St Paul to see whether it is possible to find any allusions to the Apostle's former life in which the missing links are supplied. Three notes of time occur. The first is contained in *Gal.*, i, 18: 'Then *after three years* I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days'. But 'three years' after what? After his conversion or his return to Damascus? Either construction is possible. A similar ambiguity involves the passage which follows (ii, 1): 'Then fourteen years after I went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took with me Titus'. 'Fourteen years' after what? After the greater epoch of his conversion or the previously mentioned visit to Jerusalem? It is not certain. The importance and central position of this meeting in the *Epistle* and of the meeting, commonly called the council, in the fifteenth chapter of the *Acts*, the similarity of place, persons, subject, circumstances, prove beyond a doubt that the two occasions are identical (see at the end of ch. ii note). But the chronological result is only

<sup>1</sup> In 2 *Cor.*, xiii, 1, the Apostle says: 'This is the third time I am coming to you'. There is no other trace of a third journey to Corinth, on the time of which it is therefore idle to speculate. Some have thought that the Apostle is referring to an *intention* only. But the words are express, nor are they contradicted by the term 'a second benefit' in 2 *Cor.*, i, 15, where the Apostle is only speaking of the possibility of his taking a different route—Corinth, Macedonia, Corinth, instead of Macedonia, Corinth, Macedonia, which was his actual course.

this—that St Paul was at Jerusalem fourteen years after his conversion, or fourteen years after some previous visit, which we are unable certainly to identify with any of those recorded in the *Acts*, and that the interval between his conversion and the visit referred to was a period of not less, perhaps more, than three years.

The third note of time occurs in the *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, xi, 2, and relates to a vision or revelation which he had received 'about fourteen years' before (the place is not named), and which was of so remarkable a character, that the Apostle singles it out from the 'abundance of revelations' which had been vouchsafed to him in after life, as a subject, even at that distance of time, 'whereof to glory'. There is no doubt about the position which the *Second Epistle to the Corinthians* occupies in our relative chronology. It was written from Macedonia, on what may be termed (though interrupted by a winter) the last journey to Jerusalem, that is to say, about five years before the Apostle's death. Dating from this point, the period of fourteen years leads us back into an unknown country; to the commencement of the Apostle's stay at Antioch, or the end of that at Tarsus; to a time too late, certainly, for his conversion; for the other period of fourteen years which occurred in the *Epistle to the Galatians*, even supposing it to have commenced with that event, must have ended, and therefore begun, five years earlier. And it has been well observed, that the expression 'a man in Christ', which he applies to himself in the narrative of the *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, shows that he was already a disciple, and not at that time converted. It may be admitted as a probability that the vision of the *Epistle* may be identical with the vision of the Temple, which is also alluded to by the Apostle long afterwards (*Acts*, xxii, 17). If so, the following chronological arrangement will arise of a period of twenty years:

1. Conversion (*Gal.*, i, 16).
5. { Departure from Damascus and first visit to Jerusalem  
(*2 Cor.*, xi, 32; *Gal.*, i, 17, 18).
- { Date of vision (*2 Cor.*, xii, 1-4; *Acts*, xxii, 17-21).
14. Third visit to Jerusalem, commonly called the council (*Gal.*, ii, 1).
20. Date of the *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*. (This date is obtained by adding the three years at Ephesus, one and a half at Corinth, and an unknown period, to the fourteen years in *Gal.*, ii, 1; and by adding three years in Arabia, and an unknown period of two years at Damascus, to the fourteen years in *2 Cor.*, xii, 1.)

The singular mention of the Apostle's escape from Damascus, in the last verses of the previous chapter, may possibly lead him to speak by association of an event of a wholly dissimilar kind, which occurred about the same time in his life. The reader, however, will observe that the theory has several weak points. First, the difference in the description of the two visions:

*Acts*, xxii, 17-21

And when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

2 *Cor.*, xii, 1-4

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory: I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth,) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth,) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Secondly, the assumption that the period of fourteen years, mentioned in *Gal.*, ii, 1, is to be calculated from the conversion of the Apostle, and not from the previous journey to Jerusalem; also that the stay of the Apostle in Damascus and Arabia extended to five years. Thirdly, the unknown intervals between the council and the stay at Ephesus. Lastly, the discrepancies between *Gal.*, i, 18-24, *Acts*, ix, 10-31, xxii, 10-20, touching the first visit to Jerusalem.

Our hope of gaining any precise chronological information from the *Epistles* respecting the earlier years of the Apostle's ministry has failed; the circumstance that those *Epistles* were written at a later period of his life is a sufficient explanation of the reason: we have been looking for what it was not very probable that we should find. The later years of the Apostle's

life are those with which the author of the *Acts* was best acquainted; they are also the years respecting which we gain additional light from the Apostle's own writings. The connexion between them is, on the whole, very near and intimate. Some discrepancies are observable, but they are the discrepancies of independent authorities; there is no trace anywhere that the letters were made up out of the history, or the history out of the letters. The series begins with the *Epistles to the Thessalonians*, identified with the second apostolical journey by the mention of Timothy and the sojourn of the Apostle at Athens, after a previous stay at Thessalonica. Next, according to the most probable opinion, at an interval of four or five years, comes the *Epistle to the Galatians*, which also agrees with the narrative of the *Acts* in its circumstantial detail of the council at Jerusalem; its place is further defined by the reference to the two visits of the Apostle to Galatia (*Acts*, xvi, 6, xviii, 23; *Gal.*, iv, 13). Thirdly, at the distance probably of a few months only, follows the *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, written from Ephesus or its neighbourhood (xvi, 8), and containing the first intimation of that journey to Jerusalem by way of Macedonia and Corinth, of which the exact particulars are narrated in the *Acts*. The journey has begun and is going on in the *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, and in the *Epistle to the Romans*. At the time of writing the former, the Apostle has left Ephesus, and is already in Macedonia (*2 Cor.*, ii, 13; *Acts*, xx, 1); the possibility that he might himself go up with the alms to Jerusalem (*1 Cor.*, xvi, 4) has become a fixed design (*2 Cor.*, i, 16, comp. *Acts*, xix, 21); contributions are coming in (viii, ix); the readiness of Macedonia is to be a motive to Achaia; there seems also to be an allusion to the uproar at Ephesus which immediately preceded, and probably hastened, the Apostle's departure (*2 Cor.*, i, 8 *Acts*, xix, 29, xx, 1, 3). A further stage in the Apostle's progress is marked in the *Epistle to the Romans*; he is now wintering in Greece, probably at Corinth (*Acts*, xx, 3), as he had intended (*1 Cor.*, xvi, 6); of his place of abode, the names of Gaius, and Phebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea, furnish indications (*Rom.*, xvi, 1, 23; *1 Cor.*, i, 14); the contributions of Achaia as well as of Macedonia have been received (*Rom.*, xv, 26); an intimation occurs of another intention which the Apostle had long entertained, of visiting Rome as well as Jerusalem (i, 15), and which is also mentioned in the *Acts* (xix, 21), a coincidence the more remarkable because the actual visit of the Apostle which is narrated in the *Acts* arose, not out of any previous design, but

from the accidental circumstance of his appealing to Cæsar after two years' imprisonment (compare *Acts*, xxiii, 11). A few months later, the Apostle is a captive, 'the prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles', and another series of *Epistles* begins, all of which contain allusions to his imprisonment. That imprisonment is divided between two places, Cesarea and Rome, at both of which the Apostle's friends have free access to him (*Acts*, xxiv, 23, xxviii, 16, 30); at either of which he may therefore have preached the Gospel (*Eph.*, vi, 19; *Col.*, iv, 3, 4), and begotten Onesimus in his bonds. It might have been at Rome, it might have been at Cesarea, that the Apostle was expecting to receive his freedom at the time when he wrote the *Epistle to Philemon* (ver. 22). No note of place or other circumstance enables us to decide whether the twin *Epistles to the Ephesians* and *Colossians*, or the short *Epistle to Philemon*, which is connected by allusions with the latter, belong to the two first or two last years of the Apostle's imprisonment—to his imprisonment at Cesarea, that is, or at Rome. The mention of Cæsar's household, in the *Epistle to the Philippians* (iv, 22), is a sufficient proof that this *Epistle* was written from Rome. All these later *Epistles* closely resemble each other, and can all be shown to have been written during a period of imprisonment, while all the earlier *Epistles* may be also shown, from internal evidence, to belong to a period of the Apostle's life in which he was in the free exercise of his ministry.

Such is the general agreement between the extant *Epistles of St Paul* and the narrative of the *Acts*, and such the double basis upon which they rest who think they trace a growth or development in the Apostle's own teaching and in the circumstances of the churches. There is a time at which the Apostle is looking for the immediate coming of Christ, which is represented by the *First Epistle to the Thessalonians*; there is a time when he is aware that 'the day of the Lord is not yet', but that other events must come first, as he says in the *Second Epistle*; there is a time when 'he has a desire to depart' (*Phil.*, i, 23), though willing also to stay. There is a time at which the disputes between Jewish and Gentile Christians are lost in the greater difference between Jew and Christian (1 *Thess.*, ii, 14, 17); there is a time at which the fanaticism of the Jewish Christians is violently aroused, and every Church is divided between Jew and Gentile, circumcision and uncircumcision; there is a time at which the strife no more crosses the path of the Apostle, or, perhaps, is temporarily silenced by his retirement from the scene. There is a time in which St Paul is



in the vigour and fire of youth, 'speaking boldly, and disputing against the Grecians'; there is a time at which he is worn by years and imprisonment, 'being such an one as Paul the aged'. There is a time at which he says 'If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed' (*Gal.*, i, 9); there is a time when 'Some preach Christ of envy and strife. What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached, and he therein rejoices, yea, and will rejoice' (*Phil.*, i, 15-18).

No use has been made in the previous sketch of the Pastoral *Epistles*. The reason is, that there is no probable time in the Apostle's life to which they can be assigned; it is hard to reconcile the youth of Timothy with the later years of Paul (1 *Tim.*, i, 3; iv, 12), or the sojourn of Timothy at Ephesus with the mention of his name in the last journey to Jerusalem (*Acts*, xx, 4), and in the salutations of the *Epistles to the Philippians*, *Colossians*, and *Philemon*; or the circumstance of Titus being left at Crete (*Titus*, i, 5) with his departure from Rome to Dalmatia, in 2 *Tim.*, iv, 10; or the intended wintering at Nicopolis in Epirus (*Titus*, iii, 12) with the full narrative which is given in the *Acts*, of the last nine years of the Apostle's life. Great stress has also been laid by those who maintain the spuriousness of the three *Epistles* on differences of style. And many have thought that in the settled form of church government which is implied in the *First Epistle to Timothy*, and in the *Epistle to Titus*, and the parallel growth of heresy, they saw an inconsistency with the state and opinions of the first converts in the churches of which St Paul speaks in his other *Epistles*.

That the style of portions of these *Epistles* is very different from that of the earlier ones must be admitted. Yet the difference is not much greater than that which divides the *Epistles to the Thessalonians* from the *Epistles to the Galatians*, *Romans*, *Corinthians*, or both classes from the *Epistles* of the imprisonment. A further analogy is observable between the two last-mentioned groups and the *Epistles to Timothy* and *Titus*, which is favourable or not unfavourable to the genuineness of the latter. It is a striking fact that the *Epistles* of each class which were written as far as we can judge about the same time, or within a year or two of each other, that is to say, the *Epistles to the Galatians*, *Corinthians*, *Romans*, or again, those to the *Ephesians*, *Colossians*, *Philippians*, *Philemon*, have close verbal resemblances to one another; yet as we pass from one class to the other, the verbal resemblances almost entirely disappear. This is true of the Pastoral *Epistles* also, which may be regarded as forming a third

or fourth class in the series of Pauline *Epistles*. They have a strong family likeness, but very little resemblance to the earlier *Epistles*. It is worth considering, whether this similarity is of a kind that a forger would have imitated, or the habitual slightly varying language of the same writer at the same period of his life; whether, too, any other instances can be found of forged writings which stand in the same relation to each other as these *Epistles*.

That a forger could have attained to the excellence of such passages as 1 *Tim.*, i, 15, 16; 2 *Tim.*, iv, 6, 8, which breathe the very life and spirit of the Apostle (observe especially the words 'of whom I am chief'; and the trait of character in the clause 'and not to me only'), is hard to conceive; that he would have imagined 'the falling away of all them of Asia' (2 *Tim.*, i, 15), or the minute circumstances mentioned in 2 *Tim.*, iv, 13 ('the cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus'), is very improbable; that he should have caught the loving and affectionate manner of the Apostle (2 *Tim.*, i, 4), or employed his favourite antitheses (2 *Tim.*, ii, 11-3), requires a degree of observation and nicety of imitation not elsewhere traceable in spurious writings. That the style of the Apostle, devoid as he was of literary art, may have received a different colour at different times and places, as new thoughts filled his mind, and were shaped by him in definite forms of expression, is quite natural. That the state of the Church in the year 60-5 at Ephesus or in Crete was inconsistent with the *First Epistle to Timothy*, or the *Epistle to Titus*, is more than our slender knowledge of the Apostolic Age, in which institutions grew rapidly, and opinions were like meteors, will enable us confidently to affirm. Still, there are other difficulties which cannot be disposed of thus. The Pastoral *Epistles* have no hold on the history; the *First Epistle to Timothy* and the *Epistle to Titus*, about which there are the graver doubts, contain allusions (1 *Tim.*, i, 3; *Titus*, iii, 12) which cannot, without great improbability, be harmonized with the *Acts of the Apostles*. An early or late date will not prevent the collision. It is not likely that St Paul can have founded, settled, and intrusted to a deputy the Church at Ephesus, long before he is recorded to have visited Ephesus in the *Acts of the Apostles*, or that he should have performed a journey into Macedonia during his stay at Ephesus (1 *Tim.*, i, 3), of which no particulars are given in the *Acts of the Apostles* (compare, however, 2 *Cor.*, xiii, 1); or that he can have returned to Greece, Crete, and the coast of Asia Minor after his imprisonment at Rome. Some objections of chronology are escaped by assigning the three *Epistles* to different periods of the Apostle's life; but

new ones grounded on style appear. Those who feel that these *Epistles* cannot be wholly genuine, and are convinced that they are not entirely spurious, may have recourse to the theory of interpolation. The relation which exists between the *Epistle of Jude* and the *Second Epistle of Peter*, is a sufficient proof that such interpolation is possible. But it would be vain for criticism to attempt a separation of the genuine and interpolated elements. Only while objections are raised against them, which receive no satisfactory answer, it is safer not to make use of these *Epistles* for the proof of any fact or the establishment of any doctrine.

## On the Character of St Paul

Οἴδατε δ' ὅτι δι' ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκὸς εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν τὸ πρότερον, καὶ τὸν πειρασμὸν ὑμῶν ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου· οὐκ ἐξουθενήσατε οὐδὲ ἐξεπτύσατε, ἀλλὰ ὡς ἄγγελον θεοῦ ἐδέξασθέ με, ὡς χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν.—*Gal.*, iv, 13, 14.

THE narrative of the Gospel gives no full or perfect likeness of the character of the Apostles. Human beings do not admit of being constructed out of a single feature, nor is imagination able to supply details which are really wanting. St Peter and St John, the two Apostles whose names are most prominent in the *Gospels* and early portion of the *Acts*, both seem to unite two extremes in the same person; the character of St John combining gentleness with vehemence, almost with fierceness; while in St Peter we trace rashness and timidity at once, the spirit of freedom at one period of his life, and of narrowness and exclusiveness at another. He is the first to confess, and the first to deny Christ. Himself the captain of the Apostles, and yet wanting in the qualities necessary to constitute a leader. Such extremes may easily meet in the same person; but we do not possess sufficient knowledge to say how they were really reconciled. Each of the twelve Apostles grew up to the fulness of the stature of the perfect man. Even those who to us are little more than names, had individual features as lively as our own contemporaries. But the mention of their sayings or acts on four or five occasions while they followed the footsteps of the Lord on earth, and then on two or three occasions soon after He was taken from them, then once again at an interval of twelve or fourteen years, is not sufficient to enable us to judge of their whole character. We may distinguish Peter from John, or James from either; but we cannot set them up as a study to be compared with each other.

More features appear of the character of St Paul, yet not sufficient to give a perfect picture. We should lose the individuality which we have, by seeking to idealize and generalize from some

more common type of Christian life. It has not been unusual to describe St Paul as a man of resolute will, of untiring energy, of logical mind, of classic taste. He has been contrasted with the twelve as the educated with the uneducated, the student of Hebrew and Greek learning, brought up in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, with the fishermen of Galilee 'mending their nets' by the lake. Powers of government have been attributed to him such as were required, and in some instances possessed, by the great leaders of the Church in later ages. He is imagined to have spoken with an accuracy hardly to be found in the systems of philosophers. Not of such an one would the Apostle himself 'have gloried'; he would not have understood the praises of his commentators. It was not the wisdom of this world which he spoke, but 'the hidden wisdom of God in a mystery'. All his life long he felt himself to be one 'whose strength was perfected in weakness'; he was aware of the impression of feebleness which his own appearance and discourse made upon his converts; who was sometimes in weakness and fear and trembling before them, 'having the sentence of death in himself', and at other times 'in power and the Holy Ghost and in much assurance'; and so far from having one unchanging purpose or insight, that though determined to know one thing only, 'Jesus Christ and Him crucified', yet in his manner of teaching he wavers between opposite views or precepts in successive verses. He is ever feeling, if haply he may find them, after the hearts of men. He is carried away by sympathy, at times even for his opponents. He is struggling to describe what is in process of revelation to him. 'Rude in speech but not in knowledge', as he himself says. The life of the Greek language had passed away, and it must have been a matter of effort for him to write in a foreign tongue, perhaps even to write at all; yet he puts together words in his own characteristic way which are full of meaning, though often scattered in confusion over the page. He occasionally lights also on the happiest expressions, stamping old phrases in a new mould, and bringing forth the new out of the treasury of the old. Such are some of the individual traits which he has left in his *Epistles*; they are traits far more interesting and more like himself than any general image of heroism, or knowledge, or power, or goodness. Whatever other impression he might have made upon us, could we have seen him face to face, there can be little doubt that he would have left the impression of what was remarkable and uncommon.

There are questions which it is interesting to suggest, even when they can never receive a perfect and satisfactory answer.

One of these questions may be asked respecting St Paul :—‘ What was the relation in which his former life stood to the great fact of his conversion ? ’ He himself, in looking back upon the times in which he persecuted the Church of God, thought of them chiefly as an increasing evidence of the mercy of God, which was afterwards extended to him. It seemed so strange to have been what he had been, and to be what he was. Nor does our own conception of him, in relation to his former self, commonly reach beyond this contrast of the old and new man ; the persecutor and the preacher of the Gospel ; the young man at whose feet the witnesses against Stephen laid down their clothes, and the same Paul disputing against the Grecians, full of visions and revelations of the Lord, on whom in later life came daily the care of all the Churches.

Yet we cannot but admit also the possibility, or rather the probable truth of another point of view. It is not unlikely that the struggle which he describes in the seventh chapter of the *Romans* is the picture of his own heart in the days when he ‘ verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth ’ ; the impression of that earlier state, perhaps the image of the martyr Stephen (*Acts*, xxii, 20), may have remained with him in after years. For men seem to carry about with them the elements of their former lives ; the character or nature which they once were, the circumstance which became a part of them, is not wholly abolished or done away ; it remains, ‘ even in the regenerate ’, as a sort of insoluble mass or incumbrance which prevents their freedom of action ; in very few, or rather in none, can the old habit have perfect flexure to its new use. Everywhere, in the case of our acquaintance, who may have passed through great changes of opinion or conduct, we see from time to time the old nature which is underneath occasionally coming to the surface. Nor is it irreverent to attribute such remembrances of a former self even to inspired persons. If there were any among the contemporaries of St Paul who had known him in youth and in age, they would have seen similarities which escape us in the character of the Apostle at different periods of his life. The zealot against the Gospel might have seemed to them transfigured into the opponent of the law ; they would have found something in common in the Pharisee of the Pharisees, and the man who had a vow on his last journey to Jerusalem ; they would perhaps have observed arguments, or quotations, or modes of speech in his writings which had been familiar to them and him in the school of Gamaliel. And when they heard of his conversion, they might have remarked that to one of his

temperament only could such an event have happened, and would have noted many superficial resemblances which showed him to be the same man, while the great inward change which had overspread the world was hid from their eyes.

The gifts of God to man have ever some reference to natural disposition. He who becomes the servant of God does not thereby cease to be himself. Often the transition is greater in appearance than in reality, from the suddenness of its manifestation. There is a kind of rebellion against self and nature and God, which, through the mercy of God to the soul, seems almost necessarily to lead to reaction. Persons have been worse than their fellow-men in outward appearance, and yet there was within them the spirit of a child waiting to return home to their father's house. A change passes upon them which we may figure to ourselves, not only as the new man taking the place of the old, but as the inner man taking the place of the outer. So complex is human nature, that the very opposite to what we are has often an inexpressible power over us. Contrast is not only a law of association ; it is also a principle of action. Many run from one extreme to another, from licentiousness to the ecstasy of religious feeling, from religious feeling back to licentiousness, not without a 'fearful looking for of judgment'. If we could trace the hidden workings of good and evil, they would appear far less surprising and more natural than as they are seen by the outward eye. Our spiritual nature is without spring or chasm, but it has a certain play or freedom which leads very often to consequences the opposite of what we expect. It seems in some instances as if the same religious education had tended to contrary results ; in one case to a devout life, in another to a reaction against it ; sometimes to one form of faith, at other times to another. Many parents have wept to see the early religious training of their children draw them, by a kind of repulsion, to a communion or mode of opinion which is the extreme opposite of that in which they have been brought up. Let them have peace in the thought that it was not always in their power to fulfil the duty in which they seem to themselves to have failed. These latter reflections have but a remote bearing on the character of St Paul ; but they serve to make us think that all spiritual influences, however antagonistic they may appear, have more in common with each other than they have with the temper of the world ; and that it is easier to pass from one form of faith to another than from leading the life of all men to either. There is more in common between those who anathematize each other than between either and the spirit of toleration which characterizes

the ordinary dealings of man and man, or much more the spirit of Christ, for whom they are alike contending.

Perhaps we shall not be far wrong in concluding, that those who have undergone great religious changes have been of a fervid imaginative cast of mind ; looking for more in this world than it was capable of yielding ; easily touched by the remembrance of the past, or inspired by some ideal of the future. When with this has been combined a zeal for the good of their fellow-men, they have become the heralds and champions of the religious movements of the world. The change has begun within, but has overflowed without them. ' When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren ' is the order of nature and of grace. In secret they brood over their own state ; weary and profitless their soul fainteth within them. The religion they profess is a religion not of life to them, but of death ; they lose their interest in the world, and are cut off from the communion of their fellow-creatures. While they are musing, the fire kindles, and at the last—' they speak with their tongue '. Then pours forth irrepressibly the pent-up stream—' unto all and upon all ' their fellow-men ; the intense flame of inward enthusiasm warms and lights up the world. First they are the evidence to others ; then, again, others are the evidence to them. All religious leaders cannot be reduced to a single type of character ; yet in all, perhaps, two characteristics may be observed ; the first, great self-reflection ; the second, intense sympathy with other men. They are not the creatures of habit or of circumstances, leading a blind life, unconscious of what they are ; their whole effort is to realize their inward nature, and to make it palpable and visible to their fellows. Unlike other men who are confined to the circle of themselves or of their family, their affections are never straitened ; they embrace with their love all men who are like-minded with them, almost all men too who are unlike them, in the hope that they may become like.

Such men have generally appeared at favourable conjunctures of circumstances, when the old was about to vanish away, and the new to appear. The world has yearned towards them, and they towards the world. They have uttered what all men were feeling ; they have interpreted the age to itself. But for the concurrence of circumstances, they might have been stranded on the solitary shore, they might have died without a follower or convert. But when the world has needed them, and God has intended them for the world, they are endued with power from on high ; they use all other men as their instruments, uniting them to themselves.



Often such men have been brought up in the faith which they afterwards oppose, and a part of their power has consisted in their acquaintance with the enemy. They see other men, like themselves formerly, wandering out of the way in the idol's temple, amid a burdensome ceremonial, with prayers and sacrifices unable to free the soul. They lead them by the way themselves came to the home of Christ. Sometimes they represent the new as the truth of the old ; at other times as contrasted with it, as life and death, as good and evil, as Christ and anti-Christ. They relax the force of habit, they melt the pride and fanaticism of the soul. They suggest to others their own doubts, they inspire them with their own hopes, they supply their own motives, they draw men to them with cords of sympathy and bonds of love ; they themselves seem a sufficient stay to support the world. Such was Luther at the Reformation ; such, in a higher sense, was the Apostle St Paul.

There have been heroes in the world, and there have been prophets in the world. The first may be divided into two classes ; either they have been men of strong will and character, or of great power and range of intellect ; in a few instances, combining both. They have been the natural leaders of mankind, compelling others by their acknowledged superiority as rulers and generals ; or in the paths of science and philosophy, drawing the world after them by a yet more inevitable necessity. The prophet belongs to another order of beings : he does not master his thoughts ; they carry him away. He does not see clearly into the laws of this world or the affairs of this world, but has a light beyond, which reveals them partially in their relation to another. Often he seems to be at once both the weakest and the strongest of men ; the first to yield to his own impulses, the mightiest to arouse them in others. Calmness, or reason, or philosophy are not the words which describe the appeals which he makes to the hearts of men. He sways them to and fro rather than governs or controls them. He is a poet, and more than a poet, the inspired teacher of mankind ; but the intellectual gifts which he possesses are independent of knowledge, or learning, or capacity ; what they are much more akin to is the fire and subtlety of genius. He, too, for a time, has ruled kingdoms and even led armies ; ' an Apostle, not of man, nor by men ' ; acting, not by authority or commission of any prince, but by an immediate inspiration from on high, communicating itself to the hearts of men.

Saul of Tarsus is called an Apostle rather than a prophet, because Hebrew prophecy belongs to an age of the world before

Christianity. Now that in the Gospel that which is perfect is come, that which is in part is done away. Yet, in a secondary sense, the Apostle St Paul is also 'among the prophets'. He, too, has 'visions and revelations of the Lord', though he has not written them down 'for our instruction', in which he would fain glory because they are not his own. Even to the outward eye he has the signs of a prophet. There is in him the same emotion, the same sympathy, the same 'strength made perfect in weakness', the same absence of human knowledge, the same subtlety in the use of language, the same singleness in the delivery of his message. He speaks more as a man, and less immediately under the impulse of the Spirit of God; more to individuals, and less to the nation at large; he is less of a poet, and more of a teacher or preacher. But these differences do not interfere with the general resemblance. Like Isaiah, he bids us look to 'the man of sorrows'; like Ezekiel, he arouses men to a truer sense of the ways of God in his dealings with them; like Jeremiah, he mourns over his countrymen; like all the prophets who have ever been, he is lifted above this world, and is 'in the Spirit at the day of the Lord' (*Rev.*, i, 10).

Reflections of this kind are suggested by the absence of materials such as throw any light on the early life of St Paul. All that we know of him before his conversion is summed up in two facts, 'that the witnesses laid down their clothes with a young man whose name was Saul', and that he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the few Rabbinical teachers of Greek learning in the city of Jerusalem. We cannot venture to assign to him either the 'choleric' or the 'melancholic' temperament [Tholuck]. We are unable to determine what were his natural gifts or capacities; or how far, as we often observe to be the case, the gifts which he had were called out by the mission on which he was sent, or the theatre on which he felt himself placed 'a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men'. Far more interesting is it to trace the simple feelings with which he himself regarded his former life. 'Last of all he was seen of me also, who am the least of the Apostles, that am not worthy to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God'. Yet there was a sense also that he was excusable, and that this was the reason why the mercy of God extended itself to him. 'Yet I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief'. And in one passage he dwells on the fact, not only that he had been an Israelite, but more, that after the strictest sect of the Jews' religion he lived a Pharisee, as though that were an evidence to himself, and should be so to

others, that no human power could have changed him ; that he was no half Jew, who had never properly known what the law was, but one who had both known and strictly practised it.

We are apt to judge extraordinary men by our own standard ; that is to say, we often suppose them to possess, in an extraordinary degree, those qualities which we are conscious of in ourselves or others. This is the easiest way of conceiving their characters, but not the truest. They differ in kind rather than in degree. Even to understand them truly seems to require a power analogous to their own. Their natures are more subtle, and yet more simple, than we readily imagine. No one can read the ninth chapter of the *First*, or the eleventh and twelfth chapters of the *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, without feeling how different the Apostle St Paul must have been from good men among ourselves. We marvel how such various traits of character come together in the same individual. He who was 'full of visions and revelations of the Lord', who spake with tongues more than they all, was not 'mad, but uttered the words of truth and soberness'. He who was the most enthusiastic of all men, was also the most prudent ; the Apostle of freedom, and yet the most moderate. He who was the strongest and most enlightened of all men, was also (would he have himself refrained from saying ?) at times the weakest ; on whom there came the care of all the Churches, yet seeming also to lose the power of acting in the absence of human sympathy.

Qualities so like and unlike are hard to reconcile ; perhaps they have never been united in the same degree in any other human being. The contradiction in part arises not only from the Apostle being an extraordinary man, but from his being a man like ourselves in an extraordinary state. Creation was not to him that fixed order of things which it is to us ; rather it was an atmosphere of evil just broken by the light beyond. To us the repose of the scene around contrasts with the turmoil of man's own spirit ; to the Apostle peace was to be sought only from within, half hidden even from the inner man. There was a veil upon the heart itself which had to be removed. He himself seemed to fall asunder at times into two parts, the flesh and the spirit ; and the world to be divided into two hemispheres, the one of the rulers of darkness, the other bright with that inward presence which should one day be revealed. In this twilight he lived. What to us is far off both in time and place, if such an expression may be allowed, to him was near and present, separated by a thin film from the world we see, ever ready to break forth and gather into itself the frame of nature. That sense of

the invisible which to most men it is so difficult to impart, was like a second nature to St Paul. He walked by faith, and not by sight; what was strange to him was the life he now led; which in his own often repeated language was death rather than life, the place of shadows and not of realities. The Greek philosophers spoke of a world of phenomena, of true being, of knowledge and opinion; and we know that what they meant by these distinctions is something different from the tenets of any philosophical school of the present day. But not less different is what St Paul meant by the life hidden with Christ and God, the communion of the Spirit, the possession of the mind of Christ; only that this was not a mere difference of speculation, but of practice also. Could any one say now—'the life' not that I live, but that 'Christ liveth in me'? Such language with St Paul is no mere phraseology, such as is repeated from habit in prayers, but the original consciousness of the Apostle respecting his own state. Self is banished from him, and has no more place in him, as he goes on his way to fulfil the work of Christ. No figure is too strong to express his humiliation in himself, or his exaltation in Christ.

Could we expect this to be otherwise when we think of the manner of his conversion? Could he have looked upon the world with the same eyes that we do, or heard its many voices with the same ears, who had been caught up into the seventh heaven, whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell? (*2 Cor.*, xii, 1-5). Must not his life have seemed to him a revelation, an inspiration, an ecstasy? Once and again he had seen the face of Christ, and heard Him speak from heaven. All that followed in the Apostle's history was the continuation of that first wonder, a stream of light flowing from it, 'planting eyes' in his soul, transfiguring him 'from glory to glory', clothing him with the elect 'in the exceeding glory'.

Yet this glory was not that of the princes of this world, 'who come to naught'; it is another image which he gives us of himself;—not the figure on Mars hill, in the cartoons of Raphael, nor the orator with noble mien and eloquent gesture before Festus and Agrippa; but the image of one lowly and cast down, whose 'bodily presence was weak, and speech contemptible'; of one who must have appeared to the rest of mankind like a visionary, pierced by the thorn in the flesh, 'waiting for the redemption of the body'. The saints of the Middle Ages are in many respects unlike St Paul, and yet many of them bear a far closer resemblance to him than is to be found in Luther and the Reformers. The points of resemblance which we seem to see in them, are the same

withdrawal from the things of earth, the same ecstasy, the same consciousness of the person of Christ. Who would describe Luther by the words 'crucified with Christ'? It is in another manner that the Reformer was called upon to war, with weapons earthly as well as spiritual, with a strong right hand and a mighty arm.

There have been those who, although deformed by nature, have worn the expression of a calm and heavenly beauty; in whom the flashing eye has attested the presence of thought in the poor withered and palsied frame. There have been others again, who have passed the greater part of their lives in extreme bodily suffering, who have, nevertheless, directed states or led armies, the keenness of whose intellect has not been dulled nor their natural force of mind abated. There have been those also on whose faces men have gazed 'as upon the face of an angel', while they pierced or stoned them. Of such an one, perhaps, the Apostle himself might have gloried; not of those whom men term great or noble. He who felt the whole creation groaning and travailing together until now was not like the Greek drinking in the life of nature at every pore. He who through Christ was 'crucified to the world, and the world to him', was not in harmony with nature, nor nature with him. The manly form, the erect step, the fulness of life and beauty, could not have gone along with such a consciousness as this, any more than the taste for literature and art could have consisted with the thought, 'not many wise, not many learned, not many mighty'. Instead of these we have the visage marred more than the sons of men, 'the cross of Christ which was to the Greeks foolishness', the thorn in the flesh, the marks in the body of the Lord Jesus.

Often the Apostle St Paul has been described as a person the furthest removed from enthusiasm; incapable of spiritual illusion; by his natural temperament averse to credulity or superstition. By such considerations as these a celebrated author confesses himself to have been converted to the belief in Christianity. And yet, if it is intended to reduce St Paul to the type of what is termed 'good sense' in the present day, it must be admitted that the view which thus describes him is but partially true. Far nearer the truth is that other quaint notion of a modern writer, 'that St Paul was the finest gentleman that ever lived'; for no man had nobler forms of courtesy or a deeper regard for the feelings of others. But 'good sense' is a term not well adapted to express either the individual or the age and country in which he lived. He who wrought miracles, who had handkerchiefs carried to him from the sick, who spake with tongues

more than they all, who lived amid visions and revelations of the Lord, who did not appeal to the Gospel as a thing long settled, but himself saw the process of revelation actually going on before his eyes, and communicated it to his fellow-men, could never have been such an one as ourselves. Nor can we pretend to estimate whether, in the modern sense of the term, he was capable of weighing evidence, or how far he would have attempted to sever between the workings of his own mind and the Spirit which was imparted to him.

What has given rise to this conception of the Apostle's character has been the circumstance, that with what the world terms mysticism and enthusiasm are united a singular prudence and moderation, and a perfect humanity, searching the feelings and knowing the hearts of all men. 'I became all things to all men that I might win some'; not only, we may believe, as a sort of accommodation, but as the expression of the natural compassion and love which he felt for them. There is no reason to suppose that the Apostle took any interest in the daily life of men, in the great events which were befalling the Roman Empire, or in the temporal fortunes of the Jewish people. But when they came before him as sinners, lying in darkness and the shadow of God's wrath, ignorant of the mystery that was being revealed before their eyes, then his love was quickened for them, then they seemed to him as his kindred and brethren; there was no sacrifice too great for him to make; he was willing to die with Christ, yea, even to be accursed from Him that he might 'save some of them'.

Mysticism, or enthusiasm, or intense benevolence and philanthropy, seem to us, as they commonly are, at variance with worldly prudence and moderation. But in the Apostle these different and contrasted qualities are mingled and harmonized. The mother watching over the life of her child, has all her faculties aroused and stimulated; she knows almost by instinct how to say or do the right thing at the right time; she regards his faults with mingled love and sorrow. So, in the Apostle, we seem to trace a sort of refinement or nicety of feeling, when he is dealing with the souls of men. All his knowledge of mankind shows itself for their sakes; and yet not that knowledge of mankind which comes from without, revealing itself by experience of men and manners, by taking a part in events, by the insensible course of years making us learn from what we have seen and suffered. There is another experience that comes from within, which begins with the knowledge of self, with the consciousness of our own weakness and infirmities; which is

continued in love to others and in works of good to them ; which grows by singleness and simplicity of heart. Love becomes the interpreter of how men think, and feel, and act ; and supplies the place of, or passes into a worldly prudence wiser than the prudence of this world. Such is the worldly prudence of St Paul.

Once more ; there is in the Apostle, not only prudence and knowledge of the human heart, but a kind of subtlety of moderation, which considers every conceivable case, and balances one with another ; in the last resort giving no rule, but allowing all to be superseded by a more general principle. An instance of this subtle moderation is his determination, or rather omission to determine the question of meats and drinks, which he first regards as indifferent, secondly, as depending on men's own conscience, and this again as limited by the consciences of others, and lastly resolves all these finer precepts into the general principle, 'Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God'. The same qualification of one principle by another recurs again in his rules respecting marriage. First, 'do not marry unbelievers', and 'let not the wife depart from her husband'. But if you are married and the unbeliever is willing to remain, then the spirit of the second precept must prevail over the first. Only in an extreme case, where both parties are willing to dissolve the tie, the first principle in turn may again supersede the second. It may be said in the one case, 'your children are holy'; in the other, 'What knowest thou, O wife, if thou shalt save thy husband?' In a similar spirit he withdraws his censure on the incestuous person, lest such an one, criminal as he was, should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. There is a religious aspect of either course of conduct, and either may be right, under given circumstances. So the kingdoms of this world admit of being regarded almost as the kingdom of God, in reference to our duties towards their rulers ; and yet touching the going to law before unbelievers, we are to think rather of that other kingdom in which we shall judge angels.

The Gospel, it has been often remarked, lays down principles rather than rules. The passages in the *Epistles* of St Paul which seem to be exceptions to this statement, are exceptions in appearance rather than reality. They are relative to the circumstances of those whom he is addressing. He who became 'all things to all men', would have been the last to insist on temporary regulations for his converts being made the rule of Christian life in all ages. His manner of Church government is so unlike a rule or law, that we can hardly imagine how the

Apostle, if he could return to earth, would combine the freedom of the Gospel with the requirements of Christianity as an established institution. He is not a bishop administering a regular system, but a person dealing immediately with other persons out of the fulness of his own mind and nature. His writings are like spoken words, temporary, occasional, adapted to other men's thoughts and feelings, yet not without an eternal meaning. In sending his instructions to the Churches he is ever with them, and seems to follow in his mind's eye their working and effect; whither his *Epistles* go he goes in thought, absent, in his own language, 'in the body, but present in spirit'. What he says to the Churches, he seems to make them say: what he directs them to do, they are to do in that common spirit in which they are united with him; if they live he lives; time and distance never snap the cord of sympathy. His government of them is a sort of communion with them; a receiving of their feelings and a pouring forth of his own: he is the heart or pulse which beats through the Christian world.

And with this communion of himself and his converts, this care of daily life, there mingles the vision of 'the great family in heaven and earth', 'the Church which is his body', in which the meaner reality is enfolded or wrapt up, 'sphered in a radiant cloud', even in its low estate. The language of the *Epistles* often exercises an illusion on our minds when thinking of the primitive Church; individuals perhaps there were who truly partook of that light with which the Apostle encircled them; there may have been those in the Churches of Corinth, or Ephesus, or Galatia, who were living on earth the life of heaven. But the ideal which fills the Apostle's mind has not, necessarily, a corresponding fact in the actual state of his converts. The beloved family of the Apostle, the Church of which such 'glorious things are told', is often in tumult and disorder. His love is constantly a source of pain to him: he watches over them 'with a godly jealousy', and finds them 'affecting others rather than himself'. They are always liable to be 'spoiled' by some vanity of philosophy, some remembrance of Judaism, which, like an epidemic, carries off whole Churches at once, and seems to exercise a fatal power over them. He is a father harrowed and agonized in his feelings; he loves more and suffers more than other men; he will not think, he cannot help thinking, of the ingratitude and insolence of his children; he tries to believe, he is persuaded, that all is well; he denounces, he forgives; he defends himself, he is ashamed of defending himself; he is the herald of his own deeds when others neglect or



injure him ; he is ashamed of this too, and retires into himself, to be at peace with Christ and God. So we seem to read the course of the Apostle's thoughts in more than one passage of his writings, beginning with the heavenly ideal, and descending to the painful realities of actual life, especially at the close of the *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*—altogether, perhaps, the most characteristic picture of the Apostle's mind ; and in the last words to the Galatians, 'Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus'.

Great men (those, at least, who present to us the type of earthly greatness) are sometimes said to possess the power of command, but not the power of entering into the feelings of others. They have no fear of their fellows, they are not affected by their opinions or prejudices, but neither are they always capable of immediately impressing them, or of perceiving the impression which their words or actions make upon them. Often they live in a kind of solitude on which other men do not venture to intrude ; putting forth their strength on particular occasions, careless or abstracted about the daily concerns of life. Such was not the greatness of the Apostle St Paul ; not only in the sense in which he says that 'he could do all things through Christ', but in a more earthly and human one, was it true, that his strength was his weakness and his weakness his strength. His dependence on others was also the source of his influence over them. His natural character was the type of that communion of the Spirit which he preached ; the meanness of appearance which he attributes to himself, the image of that contrast which the Gospel presents to human greatness. Glorifying and humiliation ; life and death ; a vision of angels strengthening him, the 'thorn in the flesh' rebuking him ; the greatest tenderness, not without sternness ; sorrows above measure, consolations above measure ; are some of the contradictions which were reconciled in the same man. It is not a long life of ministerial success on which he is looking back a little before his death, where he says, 'I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith'. These words are sadly illustrated by another verse of the same *Epistle*, 'This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me' (2 *Tim.*, i, 15). So when the contrast was at its height, he passed away, rejoicing in persecution also, and 'filling up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake'. Many, if not most, of his followers had forsaken him, and there is no certain memorial of the manner of his death. Let us look once more a little closer at that 'visage marred' in his Master's service, as it appeared

about three years before on a well-known scene. A poor aged man, worn by some bodily or mental disorder, who had been often scourged, and bore on his face the traces of indignity and sorrow in every form—such an one, led out of prison between Roman soldiers, probably at times faltering in his utterance, the creature, as he seemed to spectators, of nervous sensibility; yearning, almost with a sort of fondness, to save the souls of those whom he saw around him<sup>1</sup>—spoke a few eloquent words in the cause of Christian truth, at which kings were awed, telling the tale of his own conversion with such simple pathos, that after ages have hardly heard the like.

Such is the image, not which Christian art has delighted to consecrate, but which the Apostle has left in his own writings of himself; an image of true wisdom, and nobleness, and affection, but of a wisdom unlike the wisdom of this world; of a nobleness which must not be transformed into that of the heroes of the world; an affection which seemed to be as strong and as individual towards all mankind, as other men are capable of feeling towards a single person.

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*'The Thorn in the Flesh'*

'It seems that as he entered into manhood, he had to fight a hard battle with his animal passions. On one side temptation assailed him powerfully, and on the other his ardent love for all that was good and noble held him back from the paths of vice. He was accustomed to rise from his bed at the earliest dawn, and kneeling before the altar, pray there to God for help and strength. He implored that a check might be given to these desires, that some affliction might be sent him to keep him always armed against temptation, and that the spirit might be enabled to master the weakness of the body. Heaven granted his prayer, and sent this sickness to him, which Asser describes as a kind of fit. For many years he suffered excruciating pain from it, so that he often despaired of his own life. One day, whilst hunting in Cornwall, he alighted at the chapel of St Guerir, in the solitude of a rocky valley, where St Neot afterwards took refuge and died. The prince, who from a child loved to visit all sacred places, prostrated himself before the altar in silent prayer to

<sup>1</sup> *Gal.*, ii, 20, iv, 14, vi, 17; *1 Cor.*, xv, 32; *2 Cor.*, i, 9, vi, 12, x, 10, xi, 23-7, xii, 7-10; *Phil.*, ver. 9.

God for mercy. He had long been oppressed by a dread of being unfitted for his royal office by his bodily infirmities, or of becoming an object of contempt in the eyes of men by leprosy and blindness. This fear now inspired him to implore deliverance from such misery ; he was ready to bear any less severe, nay any other trial, so that he might be enabled to fulfil his appointed duties. Not long after his return from that hunting expedition, an answer was vouchsafed to his fervent prayer, and the malady departed from him.

' And now at the moment of his marriage, when the wedding guests were feasting and rejoicing in the banquet-hall, that other trial came for which he had prayed. Anguish and trembling suddenly took hold upon him, and from that time to the date when Asser wrote, and indeed during his whole life, he was never secure from an attack of this disease. There were seasons when it seemed to incapacitate him for the discharge of any duty temporal or spiritual, but an interval of ease, though it lasted only a night, or a day, or even an hour, would always re-establish his powers. In spite of these bodily afflictions, which probably were of an epileptic nature, the inflexible strength of his will enabled him to rise above the heaviest cares that were ever laid on a sovereign'.—Pauli's *Life of Alfred*.

This is a remarkable parallel. The words of Luther should be added: ' Ah ! no, dear Paul, it was not that manner of temptation that troubled thee '.

# On the Quotations from the Old Testament in the Writings of St Paul

THE New Testament 'is ever old, and the Old is ever entwined with the New'. Not only are the types of the Old Testament shadows of good things to come; not only are the narratives of events and lives of persons in Jewish history 'written for our instruction'; not only is there a deep-rooted identity of the Old and New Testament in the revelation of one God of perfect justice and truth; not only is 'the law fulfilled in Christ to all them that believe'; not only are the spiritual Israel the true people of God, and the taking of Jerusalem a figure of the end of the world: a nearer though more superficial connexion is formed by the volume of the Old Testament itself, which, like some closely fitting vesture, enfolds the new as well as the old dispensation in its language and imagery, the words themselves, as well as the thoughts contained in them, becoming instinct with a new life, and seeming to interpenetrate with the Gospel.

This verbal connexion of new and old is not peculiar to Christianity. All nations who have ancient writings have endeavoured to read in them the riddle of the past. The Brahmin, repeating his Vedic hymns, sees them pervaded by a thousand meanings, which have been handed down by tradition: the one of which he is ignorant is that which we perceive to be the true one. Without more reason, and almost with equal disregard or neglect of its natural import, the Jewish Alexandrian and Rabbinical writers analyzed the Old Testament; in a similar spirit Gnostics and Neoplatonists cited lines of Homer or Pindar. Not unlike is the way in which the Fathers cite both the Old and New Testament; and the manner in which the writers of the

New Testament quote from the Old has more in common with this last than with modern critical interpretations of either. That is to say, the quotations are made almost always without reference to the connexion in which they originally occur, and in a different sense from that in which the prophet or psalmist intended them. They are fragments culled out and brought into some new combination ; jewels, and precious stones, and corner-stones disposed after a new pattern, to be the ornaments of another temple. It is their place in the new temple, not their relation to the old, which gives them their effect and meaning.

Such tessellated work was after the manner of the age : it was no invention or introduction of the sacred writers. Closely as it is wrought into the New Testament, it belongs to its externals rather than to its true life. All religions which are possessed of sacred books, and many which are without them, have passed through a like secondary stage, although the relation of the earlier to the later form of the same religions may have been quite different from that in which the Gospel stands to the Old Testament. In heathenism, as well as Christianity, language has played a great part in connecting the old and the new. There seem to be times in which human nature yearns towards the past, though it has lost the power of interpreting it. Overlooking the chasm of a thousand years, it seeks to extract from ancient writings food for daily life. The mystery of a former world lies heavy upon it, hardly less than of the future, and it lightens this burden by attributing to 'them of old time' the thoughts and feelings of contemporaries. It feels the unity of God and man in all ages, and attempts to prove this unity by reading the same thoughts in every word which has been uttered from the beginning. A new spirit takes possession of the words, and imperceptibly alters them into accordance with itself.

The Gnostic and Alexandrian writings furnish a meeting-point between the past and future in which the present is lost sight of, and ideas supersede facts. But something analogous is observable in the New Testament itself ; which may be described also as the confluence of past and future on the ground of the present, the person of Christ and 'the Church which is his body' being the centre in which they meet. Some Divine heat or force welds together the old and new. The scattered rays of prophecy are collected in one focus. Language becomes plastic and refashions itself on a new type. Gradually and naturally, as it were a soul entering into a body that had been prepared for it, the new takes the form of the old. The truth and moral power of the Gospel prevent this new formation from resembling

the fantastic process of Eastern heresy. The writers of the New Testament use the modes of speech of their contemporaries, but they also ennoble and enlighten them. That traces of their age should appear in them is the necessary condition of their speaking to the men of their age. 'The water of life' was not to be strained through the sieve of grammar and logic; nor is it conceivable how a Gospel could have been 'preached to the poor' which was founded on a critical interpretation of the Old Testament.

But although the quotations from the Old Testament in the New conform to the manner of the age, and have a superficial similarity with the use of Homer or Pindar in later classical authors, essential differences lie beneath. First, the connexion is not, as in the case of heathen authors, merely accidental; the Old Testament looks forward to the New, as the New Testament looks backward on the Old. Reading the psalmists or prophets, we feel that they were pilgrims and strangers, hoping for more than was on the earth, whose sadness was not yet turned into joy. There are passages in which the Old Testament goes beyond itself, in which it almost seems to renounce itself; 'lively oracles' of which it might be said, either in Christian or heathen language, 'that it speaks not of itself'; or, that 'its voice reaches to a thousand years'. It is otherwise with heathen literature. There is no future to which Homer or Hesiod looked forward; no moral truth beyond themselves which they dimly see. The life of the world was not to awaken in their song. They were poetry only, out of which came statues of gods and heroes. The deeper reverence for the 'volume of the book' may be in part the reason why the half-understood words of the Old Testament exercise a greater power over the mind. But the mere application of them is also a new creation. They are not dead and withered fragments of the wisdom of ancient times; the force of the new truth which they express reanimates and reilluminates them. Secondly, if we admit that the superficial connexion between the Old and New Testament is arbitrary, or, more properly speaking, after the manner of the age, there is a deeper connexion also which is founded on reason and conscience. The language of the *Psalms* and Prophets is the natural voice of Christian feeling. In the hour of sorrow, or joy, or repentance, or triumph, we turn to the Old Testament quite as readily as to the New. Thirdly, a difference in kind is observable between the use which is made of quotations by the Alexandrian writers and in the New Testament. In the one they are the form of thought; in the other the mode of expression. That is to say,

while in the one they exercise an influence on the thought ; in the other they are controlled by it, and are but a sort of incrustation on it, or ornament of it; in some cases the illustration or allegory through which it is conveyed. The writings of St Paul are not the less one in feeling and spirit, because the language in which he continually clothes his thoughts is either avowedly or unconsciously taken from the Old Testament.

It is remarkable that the Old Testament in many places is built up out of its own materials, in the same way as the New out of the Old. Later *Psalms* repeat the language of earlier ones ; successive prophets use the same words and images, and deliver the same precepts. For example, Jeremiah and the later Isaiah both speak of 'the Lamb led to the slaughter' ; and Jeremiah and Ezekiel alike revoke the old 'proverb in the house of Israel'. The *Book of Deuteronomy*, especially, is full of prophetic elements, either received from or communicated to the later prophets. Instead of the repetition being wearisome or unmeaning, it adds to the depth and power of the words that they are not used for the first time. No happy combination of new language could have imparted to them the weight which they derive from associations of the past. In like manner the portions of the New Testament in which the verbal connexion with the Old is most striking, such as the *Epistle to the Hebrews* and the fifteenth chapter of 1 *Corinthians*, are also those which are most awful and impressive to us. It is a circumstance not always attended to by commentators on *The Apocalypse* (at any rate by English ones), that this wonderful book is a mosaic of Old Testament thoughts and words, the pieces of which are put together on a new and glorious pattern. A glance at the marginal references is sufficient to show in how subtle a manner they are interlaced. The inspired author is not merely narrating a new vision which he had seen and heard, to be added to the former visions of Ezekiel or Daniel ; but he is collecting and bringing together the scattered elements of prophecy and sacred imagery in one last vision or revelation of the day of the Lord. The kingdom of God is not at a distance ; it already exists ; it has gathered to itself the figures and glories of the Old Testament. Many other apocryphal writings exhibit signs of the same imitation they borrow the imagery of the elder prophets. But none of them are inspired with the faith or power which conceives the glorious things that have been said as a living reality.

Perhaps it may be thought paradoxical that the words of the Old Testament should receive a new meaning in the *Epistles*, and also retain their original power and sacredness ; yet in our

own use of quotations a similar inconsistency may be observed. For, not only in ancient but in modern times, a certain waywardness is discernible in the application of the words of others. Quotation, with ourselves, is an ingenious device for expressing our meaning in a pointed or forcible manner ; it implies also an appeal to an authority. And its point frequently consists in a slight, or even a great, deviation from the sense in which the words quoted were uttered by their author. Its aptness lies in being at once old and new ; often in bringing into juxtaposition things so remote, that we should not have imagined they were connected ; sometimes in a word rather than in a sentence, or in the substitution of one word for another ; nor is its force diminished if it lead to a logical inference not strictly warranted. In like manner the quotations of the New Testament are at once new and old. They unite a kind of authority and antiquity with a new interpretation of the passage quoted. Sometimes the application of them is a sort of argument from their exact rhetorical or even grammatical form. Their connexion often hangs upon a word, and there are passages in which the word on which the connexion turns is itself inserted. There are citations too, which are a composition of more than one passage, in which the spirit is taken from one and the words from another. There are other citations in which a similarity of spirit, rather than of language, is caught up and made use of by the Apostle. There are passages which are altered to suit the meaning given to them ; or in which the spirit of the New Testament is substituted for that of the Old ; or the spirit of the Old Testament expands into that of the New. Lastly, there are a few passages which have one sense in the Old Testament, and have an entirely different or opposite one in the New. Almost all gradations occur between exact verbal correspondence with the Greek of the LXX and discrepancy in which resemblance is all but lost ; between the greatest similarity and difference, even opposition, of spirit in the original passage and its application. The first connexion is nearly always lost sight of ; only in *Rom.*, iv, 10 it is referred to generally, and in *Rom.*, xi, 4 imperfectly remembered.

The quotations in the writings of St Paul may be classified under the following heads :

- i. Passages in which the meaning or the words of the Old Testament are altered, or both ; the alterations sometimes arising from a composition of passages ; in other instances from an adaptation of the text quoted to its new context. In one case a verse of the Old Testament is repeated with variations in two places. See *Rom.*, xi, 34 ; *1 Cor.*, ii, 16.



ii. Passages in which the spirit or the language of the Old Testament is exactly retained, or with no greater variation of words than may be supposed to arise out of difference of texts, and no greater diversity of spirit than necessarily arises from the transfer of any passage in the Old Testament into another connexion in the New. To which may be added :

iii. Passages which contain latent or unacknowledged quotations.

iv. Allegorical passages.

i. (1) An instance in which the meaning of the quotation has been altered, and also in which the new meaning given to it is derived from another passage, occurs in *Rom.*, ii, 24 : τὸ γὰρ ὄνομα τοῦ Θεοῦ δι' ὑμᾶς βλασφημεῖται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, where the Apostle is speaking of the scandal caused by the violence and hypocrisy of the Jews. The words are taken from *Is.*, lii, 5 : δι' ὑμᾶς δια παντός τὸ ὄνομά μου βλασφημεῖται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ; where, however, they refer not to the sins of the house of Israel, but to their sufferings at the hand of their enemies. The turn which the Apostle has given the passage is gathered from *Ez.*, xxxvi, 21-3 : καὶ ἐφείσαμην αὐτῶν διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ ἅγιον ὃ ἐβεβήλωσαν οἶκος Ἰσραὴλ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν οὐ εἰσῆλθοσαν ἐκεῖ, κ.τ.λ.

A composition of passages occurs also in *Rom.*, xi, 8, which appears to be a union of *Is.*, vi, 9, 10 and xxix, 10. The twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh verses of the same chapter also furnish a singular instance of combination. (*Is.*, lix, 20, 21 : καὶ αὕτη αὐτοῖς ἢ παρ' ἐμοῦ διαθήκη, to which the clause, ὅταν ἀφέλωμαι τὰς ἀμαρτίας αὐτῶν, is added from *Is.*, xxvii, 9.) The play upon the word ἔθνη (nations = Gentiles) is repeated in *Rom.*, iv, 17 (*Gen.*, xvii, 5), *Gal.*, iii, 8 (*Gen.*, xii, 3), *Rom.*, xv, 11 (*Ps.*, cxvi, 1).

(2) Another instance in which the general tone of a quotation is from one passage, and a few words are added from another, is to be found in *Rom.*, ix, 33 : ἰδοὺ τίθημι ἐν Ζιὼν λίθον προσκόμματος καὶ πέτραν σκανδάλου καὶ ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ κατασχυνοθήσεται. The greater part of this passage occurs in *Is.*, xxviii, 16 : ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐμβάλλω εἰς τὰ θεμέλια Σιών λίθον πολυτελεῖ ἑκλεκτον ἀκρογωνιαῖον ἐντιμον, εἰς τὰ θεμέλια αὐτῆς καὶ ὁ πιστεύων οὐ μὴ κατασχυνοθή. But the words λίθον προσκόμματος are introduced from *Is.*, viii, 14. And the remainder of the passage (καὶ . . . κατασχυνοθήσεται) is really inconsistent with these words, though both parts are harmonized in Him who is in one sense a stumbling-stone and rock of offence ; in another a foundation-stone and chief corner-stone.

(3) A slighter example of alteration occurs 1 *Cor.*, iii, 19, where the Apostle quotes from *Ps.*, xciv, 11 : κύριος γινώσκει τοὺς διαλογισμοὺς τῶν σόφων ὅτι εἰσὶ μάταιοι. Here the words τῶν σόφων are

substituted for τῶν ἀνθρώπων in the LXX, which in this passage agrees with the Hebrew. They are required to connect the quotation in the *Epistle* with the previous verses. A similar instance of the introduction of a word (πᾶς) on which the point of an argument turns, occurs in *Rom.*, x, 11 : λέγει γὰρ ἡ γραφή, πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ κατασχνυθήσεται, where the addition is the more remarkable, as the Apostle had quoted the verse without πᾶς in the preceding passage (ix, 33, Lach.). The insertion seems to be suggested by the words of Joel which follow.

(4) Another instance of addition and adaptation is furnished by *1 Cor.*, xiv, 21 ; ἐν τῷ νόμῳ γέγραπται ὅτι ἐν ἑτερογλώσσοις καὶ ἐν χεῖλεσιν ἐτέρων λαλήσω τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ, καὶ οὐδ' οὕτως εἰσακούσονται μου, λέγει κύριος. This quotation, which is said to be 'written in the law' (comp. *John*, x, 34, xii, 34, xv, 25), is from *Is.*, xxviii, 11, 12, where the words in the LXX are, διὰ φανλισμὸν χειλέων, διὰ γλώσσης ἐτέρας, ὅτι λαλήσουσι τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ, and in the English translation, 'with stammering lips and another tongue will He speak unto this people'. But the last words, οὐδ' οὕτως εἰσακούσονται, are taken from the following verse, where a clause nearly similar occurs in a different connexion : λέγοντες αὐτοῖς, τοῦτο τὸ ἀνάπανμα τῷ πεινῶντι καὶ τοῦτο τὸ σύντριμμα, καὶ οὐκ ἠθέλησαν ἀκούειν, v, 12. The whole is referred by the Apostle to the gift of tongues, which he infers from this passage 'to be a sign to unbelievers'.

(5) An adaptation, which has led to an alteration of words, occurs in *Rom.*, x, 6-9 : ἡ δὲ ἐκ πίστεως δικαιοσύνη οὕτω λέγει · μὴ εἶπης ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου · τίς ἀναθήσεται εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν ; τοῦτ' ἔστι χριστὸν καταγαγεῖν ἢ τίς καταθήσεται εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον ; τοῦτ' ἔστι χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναγαγεῖν. ἀλλὰ τί λέγει ; ἐγγύς σου τὸ ῥῆμά ἐστιν, ἐν τῷ στόματί σου καὶ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου· τοῦτ' ἔστι τὸ ῥῆμα τῆς πίστεως, ὃ κηρύσσομεν· ὅτι ἐὰν ὁμολογήσῃς ἐν τῷ στόματί σου κύριον Ἰησοῦν, καὶ πιστεύσῃς ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου ὅτι ὁ Θεὸς αὐτὸν ἤγειρεν ἐκ νεκρῶν σωθήσῃ. The introductory formula in this passage, μὴ εἶπης ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου, is taken from *Deut.*, viii, 17 ; the substance of the remainder is abridged from *Deut.*, xxx, 11-4 : ὅτι ἡ ἐντολὴ αὕτη ἦν ἐγὼ ἐντέλλομαι σοι σήμερον οὐχ ὑπέρογκός ἐστιν, οὐδὲ μακρὰν ἀπὸ σοῦ ἐστιν · οὐκ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἄνω ἐστὶ, λέγων, τίς ἀναθήσεται ἡμῖν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, καὶ λήψεται ἡμῖν αὐτήν καὶ ἀκούσαντες αὐτήν ποιήσομεν ; οὐδὲ πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης ἐστὶ, λέγων, τίς διαπεράσει ἡμῖν εἰς τὸ πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης, καὶ λάβῃ ἡμῖν αὐτήν, καὶ ἀκουστὴν ἡμῖν ποιήσῃ αὐτήν, καὶ ποιήσομεν ; ἐγγύς σου ἐστὶ τὸ ῥῆμα σφόδρα, ἐν τῷ στόματί σου καὶ ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου καὶ ἐν ταῖς χερσὶ σου ποιεῖν αὐτό. To these verses the Apostle has added what may be termed a running commentary, applying them to Christ. To make the words πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης thus applicable, the Apostle has altered them to εἰς τὴν ἄβυσσον, a change which we should hesitate to attribute to him, but for the other examples which have been

already quoted of similar changes. (Compare also *Rom.*, xi, 8, xii, 19; *Eph.*, iv, 8, quoted from *Ps.*, lxxvii, 18; *Eph.*, v, 14. The latter passage, in which as here the name of Christ is introduced, is probably an adaptation of *Is.*, lx, 1.) He has also omitted *ἐν ταῖς χερσὶ*, which was not suited to his purpose. Considering the frequency of such changes, it would be contrary to the rules of sound criticism to attribute the introduction of the words to a difference of text in the Old Testament.

(6) An example of a new turn given to a passage from the Old Testament occurs in *Rom.*, xi, 2, 3, where the Apostle has put together in one connexion two verses which are disconnected in the original. In the *Book of Kings* (1 *Kings*, ix, 15-8) the words 'I have left to myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal' are a continuation of the instruction to anoint Jehu and Hazael. But, in the application which the Apostle makes of them, they are quoted as the answer of God to the complaint of Elijah. The misplacement seems to have arisen from the words, 'I am left alone', and the allusion to the worshippers of Baal. Compare Justin, *Dial.*, c. 39, n. 2, 3; 46, n. 18.

(7) The words of 1 *Cor.*, xv, 45, *οὕτως καὶ γέγραπται* · Ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος, Ἄδὰμ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν, ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν, afford a remarkable instance of discrepancy, both in expression and meaning, from *Gen.*, ii, 7: *ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν*; to the two clauses of which the Apostle appears to have applied a distinction analogous to that which Philo draws (*De Legum Alleg.*, i, 12; *De Creat. Mun.*, 24, 46) between the earthly and the heavenly man (*Gen.*, ii, 7 and i, 27). The words are apparently inconsistent with the twenty-second verse of the same chapter: 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive'; which, in the sense sometimes given them, are also inconsistent with the forty-seventh verse: 'The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven'. An instructive parallel to both inconsistencies is offered by the application of the expression of *Genesis*, 'the image of God', not only to the regenerate man and to Christ (*Col.*, iii, 10; 2 *Cor.*, iv, 4), but also to the natural man, or to man in general, without any such allusion, as in 1 *Cor.*, xi, 7. Compare *James*, iii, 9.

(8) A curious instance of a subtle and at the same time strained application of a passage occurs in *Gal.*, iii, 16-9, to which (τῷ σπέρματι) attention has been drawn in the notes. Compare *Heb.*, vii, 1; 1 *Tim.*, ii, 13, 14.

(9) Cases occur in which the words of the Old Testament are quoted in contrast to the Gospel; as, for example, the words of

*Lev.*, xviii, 5, ἡ ποιήσας αὐτὰ ἄνθρωπος, ζήσεται ἐν αὐτοῖς, repeated in *Rom.*, x, 5, *Gal.*, iii, 12; so *Deut.*, xxvii, 26, in *Gal.*, iii, 10. The first of the two examples affords an instance of a minor peculiarity, viz. disorder introduced into the grammatical construction by quotations.

ii. A good example of the second class of quotations is the passage from *Hab.*, ii, 4, quoted in *Rom.*, i, 17: ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται; which occurs also in two other places, *Heb.*, x, 38, *Gal.*, iii, 11, which the LXX read: ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεώς μου ζήσεται, and the English version translates from the Hebrew, 'but the just shall live by his faith'. It is remarkable, that in *Rom.*, i, 17, *Gal.*, iii, 11, the verse should be quoted in the same manner, and that slightly different, either from the LXX or the Hebrew; in *Heb.*, x, 38 it agrees precisely with the LXX. Like the other great text of the Apostle, 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness', which is also repeated three times in the New Testament (*Rom.*, iv, 3; *Gal.*, iii, 6; *James*, ii, 23), it offers an example of the way in which the language of the Old Testament is enlarged and universalized in the New; the particular faith of Abraham or of the Israelite becoming the type of faith as opposed to the law. The wider sphere of Messianic prophecy, which extends the promise of the root of Jesse to the Gentiles (*Is.*, xi, 10), is also appropriated as of right by St Paul. Here too the meaning is enlarged, as in the application of the words of Isaiah: 'I was found of them that sought me not' (*Is.*, lxv, 1), *Rom.*, x, 20. It is less characteristic of the Apostle, that the predestinarian language of the Old Testament is in some instances transferred by him to the New, as in *Rom.*, ix, 13 after *Mal.*, i, 2, 3 ('Jacob have I loved; Esau have I hated'), and in *Rom.*, ix, 20 after *Is.*, xxix, 16. Some of the passages which speak of the vanity of human wisdom are taken from the Old Testament (*1 Cor.*, i, 19, 20 after *Is.*, xxix, 16, xlv, 9).

Other examples of the second class of quotations are such places as the following: 'Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, and whose sin is pardoned; blessed is the man to whom the Lord doth not impute sin'—*Rom.*, iv, 7, from *Ps.*, xxxii, 1, 2. 'The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me'—*Rom.*, xv, 3, from *Ps.*, lxix, 9. 'Who hath believed our report?'—*Rom.*, x, 16, from *Is.*, liii, 1. 'For thy sake we are killed all the day long, we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter'—*Ps.*, xliii, 22, quoted in *Rom.*, viii, 36; in which the instinct of the Apostle has caught the common feeling or spirit of the Old and New Testament, though the texts quoted contain no word which is a symbol of his doctrine.

Passages which might be placed under either head are *Rom.*, x, 13: 'Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated', the words of which exactly agree with the LXX, although their original meaning in *Mal.*, i, 2, 3, whence they are taken, has to do, not with the individuals Jacob and Esau, but with the natives of Edom and Israel: the cento of quotations in *Rom.*, iii descriptive of the wickedness of the Psalmist's enemies, or of those who were the subjects of the prophetic denunciations, which are transferred by the Apostle to the world in general (compare Justin, *Dial.*, c. 27, n. 6, where several of the quotations occur in the same order); *Rom.*, xii, 20: 'Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head', the words of which are exactly quoted from the LXX (*Prov.*, xxv, 21, 22), though the meaning given to them is ironical; for which reason the succeeding clause, 'But the Lord shall reward thee', which would have destroyed the irony, is omitted.

iii. What may be termed latent or unacknowledged quotations vary in extent from whole verses down to single words; there are instances in which mere resemblances of form may be traced, with no word the same. A remarkable example of an entire verse which is thus quoted is furnished by the application of *Prov.*, xxv, 21, 22 (*Rom.*, xii, 20, 'Therefore if thine enemy', &c.), already referred to. A few words are traceable in *Eph.*, v, 30, also affording a good instance of what may be termed the spiritualization of the natural or physical language of the Old Testament. *Gen.*, ii, 23, xxix, 14: τοῦτο νῦν ὁστοῦν ἐκ τῶν ὀστέων μου, καὶ σὰρξ ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς μου; so of Christians, μέλη ἔσμεν τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ, ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὀστέων αὐτοῦ. So *1 Cor.*, x, 20, after *Deut.*, xxxii, 17; *Eph.*, i, 22 (compare *1 Cor.*, xv, 27, 28), taken from *Ps.*, viii, 6; and without any change of meaning, *Eph.*, iv, 26, from *Ps.*, iv, 4. In like manner, *Eph.*, ii, 13-7 contains a remembrance of *Is.*, lvii, 19; *Eph.*, vi, 14, 17 of *Is.*, lix, 17. A single word, ὁ ὄφιν ἠπάτησέ με, *Gen.*, iii, 13 (which is also quoted *2 Cor.*, xi, 3), has probably left a trace of itself in the personification of sin, *Rom.*, vii, 11: ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐξηπάτησέ με . . . καὶ ἀπέκτεινε. The verses *2 Cor.*, vi, 9, 11 contain two examples of verbal allusion. The slightest thread is enough to form a connexion. In *2 Cor.*, xiii, 1: ἐπὶ στόματος δυὸ μαρτύρων καὶ τριῶν σταθήσεται πᾶν ῥῆμα, the association which leads the Apostle's mind to the quotation (from *Deut.*, xix, 15: compare *Matt.*, xviii, 16; *John*, viii, 17) seems to be only the word τρεῖς, arising out of the circumstance that he has mentioned just before that he is coming to them for the third time. *1 Cor.*, v, 13 offers

another example of the use of the language of the LXX (*Deut.*, xxii, 24), in which the Apostle clothes a command to the Church. The verse *1 Cor.*, xv, 32: 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die', is taken word for word from *Is.*, xxii, 13; and in the same chapter the words, 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' (vers. 55, 56), with almost verbal exactness, from *Hosea*, xiii, 14.

iv. Once more. In a few passages the Apostle, after the manner of his time, has recourse to allegory. These are: 1. the allegory of the woman who had lost her husband, in *Rom.*, vii (compare *Gal.*, iv, 1-3, which is supported by *Is.*, liv., 1); 2. Of the children of Israel in the wilderness, in *1 Cor.*, x; 3. Of Hagar and Sarah, in *Gal.*, iii; 4. Of the veil on the face of Moses, in *2 Cor.*, iii; 5. Abraham himself, who is a kind of centre of allegory, the actions of whose life, as well as the promises of God to him, are symbols of the coming dispensation; 6. The history of the patriarchs, and cutting short of the house of Israel, in *Rom.*, ix, x. Of these examples, the first, third, and fourth are what we should term illustrations; while the second, fifth, and sixth have not merely an analogous or metaphorical meaning, but a real inward connexion with the life and state of the first believers.

A few general results of an examination of the quotations from the Old Testament in St Paul's *Epistles* may be summed as follows:

1. The number of direct quotations in which reference is made to the original is about 87, of which about 53 are found in the *Epistle to the Romans*, 15 in *1 Corinthians*, 6 in *2 Corinthians*, 10 in *Galatians*, 2 in *Ephesians*, 1 in *1 Timothy*. Of these nearly half show a precise verbal agreement with the LXX; while, of the remaining passages, at least two-thirds exhibit a degree of verbal similarity which can only be accounted for by an acquaintance with the LXX. Minuter traces of the Old Testament language are far more numerous.

2. None of these passages offer any certain proof that the Apostle was acquainted with the Hebrew text<sup>1</sup>. That he must have been so can hardly be doubted; yet it seems improbable that he could have had a familiar knowledge of the original without straying into parallelisms with the Hebrew, in those passages in which it varies from the LXX. His acquaintance with the Hebrew was probably of such a kind as we might acquire of a version of the Scriptures not in the vernacular. No English-

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Rom.*, ix, 7, x, 15, *1 Cor.*, ii, 9 as the best instances on the other side; they do not, however, disprove the truth of the remark.

man incidentally quoting the English version from memory would adapt it to the Greek, though he might very probably adapt the Greek to the English. The inference is, that the Greek and not the Hebrew text must have been to the Apostle what the English version is to ourselves.

3. While many of these quotations are introduced, as we have already seen, without any acknowledgment in the New Testament, a few others, as for example, *Rom.*, xii, 19, *1 Cor.*, xv, 45 are hardly, if at all, discernible in the text of the Old. The familiarity with the Old Testament which has led to the first of these two phenomena is probably also the cause of the second. As the words suggest themselves unconsciously, so the spirit without the words occasionally comes into the Apostle's mind; or the language and spirit of different passages blend in one.

4. There is no evidence that the Apostle remembered the verbal connexion in which any of the passages quoted by him originally occurred. He isolates them wholly from their context; he reasons from them as he might from statements of his own, 'going off upon a word', as it has been called, in one instance almost upon a letter (*Gal.*, iii, 16) drawing inferences which in strict logic can hardly be allowed, often extending the meaning of words beyond their first and natural sense. There is nothing to distinguish his use of quotations from that of his age, except greater power and life; he clings more than his contemporaries to the spirit and less to the letter, his inaccuracy about the latter arising in some instances from his feeling for the spirit.

5. There is no reason to think that the Apostle ever quotes from apocryphal writings, nor could it be gathered from the language of his *Epistles* that he was acquainted with the works of classical authors. Similarities are found with apocryphal writings; but they are all explainable on the supposition of a common source. Three or four verses from Greek poets also occur in the *Acts* and *Epistles*; these, however, are common and proverbial expressions, which the Apostle might very well have known without having been read in the works of Aratus, Epimenides, Euripides, or Menander.

6. Vestiges of Old Testament language are so numerous, as to admit of an argument from their occurrence to the genuineness of the *Epistles*. If the same interpenetration of new and old phraseology occurs in the *Epistle to the Ephesians* that we find in the *Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians*, and the *Galatians*, here is considerable reason for supposing that they are writings of the same author, or at any rate of the same date. A new argument from coincidence arises, for no one would imagine

that it could have occurred to a forger of a later age to imitate the manner in which St Paul used the language of the LXX. The argument is only suggested; it requires careful consideration to enable an estimate to be formed of its exact value. It certainly applies, however, with some force, to the *Epistle to the Ephesians*, in which there are very few traces of direct citation, but many of verbal resemblances.

7. The study of the quotations from the Old Testament draws attention to the knowledge which the Apostle must have had of the Greek Scriptures. It is hardly possible to exaggerate the minuteness of this acquaintance. In the greater number of quotations he is verbally accurate. Hence, we may also infer that it is not from want of memory that he disregards the connection. His writings teem with the phraseology of the *Psalms* and the Prophets. They suggest his thoughts, they are his weapons of controversy, they supply him with words and expressions as well as with a 'form of truth'. The Greek Old Testament Scriptures are not only sacred books to him, they are also his language and literature. What are often termed the Hebraisms of the Apostle are, for the most part, if not always, Hellenisms; that is to say, Hebraisms contracted through the influence of the LXX.

Lastly, It may be asked whether St Paul regarded these texts of Scripture as prophecies or accommodations, as illustrations or arguments, as types or figures of speech, as designed or undesigned coincidences? The answer is, that such distinctions had no place in his mind; to attribute them to him is a logical anachronism. He did not say to himself: This was designed, that undesigned; this is an illustration, that an argument. He adopted what appeared to his own mind a natural form of expression, what he conceived would convey his meaning to others. His own language and that of the psalmists and prophets are bound together by him in various ways:

1.) Often (as we have already seen) whole verses of the Old Testament are latent in the *Epistle*, without note or sign.

2.) In other passages they are preceded by *κάθως γέγραπται*: *τί λέγει ἡ γραφή*; *λέγει ἡ γραφή*: *καθάπερ Μωσῆς λέγει*. David, Isaiah, Elijah, Hosea, are also cited by name.

3.) A stronger formula is found in *Gal.*, iii, 8: *προϊδοῦσα δὲ ἡ γραφή*; and one more emphatic still in *1 Cor.*, x, 11: *ταῦτα δὲ πάντα τυπικῶς συνέβαινον ἐκείνοις, ἐγράφη δὲ πρὸς νοουθεσίαν ἡμῶν, εἰς οὓς τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων κατήντησε*.



## St Paul and the Twelve

THE narrative of the second chapter of the *Epistle to the Galatians* suggests an inquiry, which lies at the foundation of all inquiries into the earliest history of the Church: 'In what relation did St Paul stand to the Apostles at Jerusalem?' To which inquiry three answers may be given: (1) the answer which identifies the preaching of St Paul and the Twelve; or (2), which opposes them; or (3), which is between the two, admitting a degree of unity, yet allowing also for great differences of external circumstances and individual character. The first answer is that which would be gathered from the *Acts of the Apostles*, which offer only the picture of an unbroken harmony; a view to which the Church in after ages naturally inclined, and which may be said to be caricatured in the explanation of Origen and Chrysostom, that the dispute between the Apostles at Antioch was a concerted fiction. Secondly, the answer which would be supplied by the Clementine homilies, in which St Paul sustains the character of Simon Magus, and St Peter is the Apostle of the Gentiles; such an answer as might probably have been drawn from the writings (had they been preserved to us) of Marcion, by whom St Paul in turn was magnified to the exclusion of the Twelve; which falls in also with the conclusions of an extreme school of modern critics, who maintain the *Acts of the Apostles* to have been written in the second century, with a view of concealing the differences in which the Church began. The third answer is that which we believe would be drawn from an impartial examination of the *Epistles* of St Paul himself, the only contemporary documents: 'Independence of each other in their ministry and apostleship; antagonism of the followers, and on one or two occasions of the leaders also; some difference of spirit, together with great personal hostility on the part of the Judaizers to St Paul, but not of St Paul to the Twelve'.

The question to which these three answers have been given implies a further inquiry into the relation of Jew and Gentile, of the preaching of the Gospel of the uncircumcision to that of circumcision. If in the second century these distinctions yet survived, if animosities against St Paul were burning still, if a party without the Church ranged itself under his name, if later controversies have anything in common with that first difference, if in the earliest ecclesiastical history we find a silence respecting the person and an absence of the spirit of St Paul, it is natural to connect these circumstances with the record of the Apostle himself, that on a great occasion the other Apostles 'added nothing to him': and that at Antioch, which was his own sphere, he withstood Peter to the face. In the personal narrative of the *Epistle to the Galatians*, we seem to recognize the germ of what reappears afterwards as the history of the Church. And had no memorial remained, had there been no hint anywhere dropped of divisions between St Paul and the Twelve, no record of Judaizing heresies, we should feel that some account was wanting of the manner in which circumcision became uncircumcision, and the Jew was lost in the Gentile. Probably, we might conjecture, not in all places with equal readiness, nor equally after and before the destruction of Jerusalem or the revolt under Adrian, nor without imparting some elements of the law to the Gospel, nor, in accordance with the general laws of human nature, without a certain violence of party and opinion.

Events of the greatest importance in the annals of mankind are not always seen to be important, until the hour for preserving them is past. There is a time before biography passes into history, when a society has not yet learned to register its acts, and individuals have not awoke to the consciousness of national or ecclesiastical life. In this intermediate period, events the most fruitful in results may lie buried (the unfolding of the germ in the bosom of the earth is not the least part of the growth of the plant); they may also be reproduced in a new form and their spirit misunderstood by the imperfect knowledge of after ages. Two or three centuries elapse; documents are lost or tampered with, or confused; there is no eye of criticism to penetrate their meaning. The historian has 'the veil upon his face' of a later generation; he cannot see through the events, institutions, opinions in the circle of which he lives. Who can tell what went on in a 'large upper room' about the year 40, which may, nevertheless, have had great consequences for the world and the Church? Who, when

Christianity was triumphant in the fourth century, would comprehend the simple ways and thoughts of believers in the first? Nor is there anything more likely to be misunderstood, than the differences between the first teachers of a religion, and the disputes of their respective followers, about a matter of discipline or doctrine which has passed away. The transition may be too gradual to be observed while it is going on. Literature is of a later date; beginning when the Church has already arrived at its full stature, it cannot describe the stages of its infancy and growth. In the extreme distance the objects of earth are no longer distinguishable from the clouds of heaven.

These are the reasons why, in the consideration of our present subject, there is so much room for speculation and for conjecture; why the result of so many books is so small; why there is endless criticism, and very little history. The materials are slender, and the light by which they are seen is too feeble to enable us to combine or construct them. They cannot be left as they are on the page of Scripture (the human mind has no hold upon flat surfaces); least of all, can they be put together on the pattern of ecclesiastical tradition. Church history, like other history, may be made to acquire a deceitful unity; it may gather to itself form and feature; it may convey a harmonious impression, which, from its internal consistency, it is sometimes difficult to resist. The philosophy of history readily weaves the tangle, developing the progress of opinions and connecting together causes and effects; but the unity which is created by it is artificial. Some other combination may be equally possible. Tradition, on the other hand, has a natural unity; but only the unity of idea, which a later age gives to the past. It tells what an after generation thought that a former one ought to have been. It embodies a sort of corporate or national belief in the past. Its continuity is unbroken, and therefore no suspicion arises that the first link is really wanting.

Many causes combine to produce a singular illusion in reference to the Church of the Apostolic Age. There is the temptation to look back to a time when human nature was better than it is, when virtue and brotherly love were not a dream only, when the ideal had a dwelling among men. The times of the Apostles are the golden age of the Church, in which, without 'spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing', it came from the hands of its Divine Author—the New Jerusalem descending from heaven, arrayed in a portion of that glory with which

prophecy clothed it. The old always seems to be better than the new in religion; and the sacredness which we attribute to the first century insensibly overshadows the lives of individuals. Institutions acquire a sort of fixedness from antiquity; feeling their value, we readily believe that they are of Apostolic origin. What is familiar to us becomes distinct; it is impossible to doubt what is daily repeated in our ears. The tendency to error is increased by the circumstance, that in modern as in ancient times we have made the first century the battle-field of our controversies. Instead of asking what was right, or true, or probable, what was the spirit or mind of Christ, we have constantly repeated the question, 'What was the belief, constitution, practice, of the primitive Church?'—a question which we had no materials for answering, and which we had, also, the greatest temptation to answer according to our own previous notion. There is room enough in the unknown space for every denomination of Christians to consecrate a temple and raise an altar. Churches, as well as castles, may easily be built in the air. If we inquire closely into the nature of many familiar conceptions about the constitution of the Apostolic society, we shall find that they consist of a sort of model of perfection invested with some of the externals of Tertullian or of Augustine, and conforming in other respects to the use and practice of our own time.

All history receives a colour from the age in which it is written. This is the case with ecclesiastical history even more than secular; it glows with the faith and feelings of the historian; it reflects his principles or convictions,—it is sometimes embittered by his prejudices. Eusebius, 'the Father of Ecclesiastical History', believing as he did that the constitution of the Church which he saw around him had existed from the first, was not likely to give a consistent account of its origin or growth. Nor was it to be expected that he should trace the history of doctrines, who, within the Church at least, could have admitted of no doctrinal difference or development. It was impossible for him to describe that of which he had no conception. Had he been disposed to write an accurate account of the progress of the Christian faith in the first two centuries, the scantiness of his materials would have prevented him from doing so. The antiquarian spirit had awoke too late to recover the treasures of the past. Those who preceded him had a similar though less definite impression of the first age, of which they knew so little, and wrote in the same way. It would be an anachronism to expect that he should sift critically the few

cases in which the earlier authorities witness against themselves. In point of judgment, he is about on a level with the other 'Father of History'; that is to say, he is not wholly destitute of critical power: yet his criticism is accidental and capricious; most often observable in the case of ecclesiastical writings, which his literary tastes led him to explore. But real historical investigation is unknown to him. No resisting power of inquiry prevents his acceptance of any facts which fell in with the orthodox faith of his age, or seemed to afford a witness to it. Miracles are believed by him, not upon greater, but upon rather less evidence than ordinary events. He catches, like Herodotus, at any chance similarity, such as that between the first Christians and the Therapeutæ of Egypt (ii, c. 17). He feels no difficulty in receiving the statement of Justin Martyr, that Simon Magus was honoured at Rome under the title of the Holy God (*Semo Sancus*); or the testimony of Tertullian, that the Emperor Tiberius referred the worship of Christ to the senate. He sees the whole history of the Church through the medium of that victory over Paganism and heresy which he had witnessed in his own day. He carries the struggle back into the previous centuries, in which he finds almost nothing else but the conflict of the truth with heresy, and the blood of martyrs the seed of the Church. No one can suppose that the heresiarchs were such as he describes them, or that he has truly seized the relation in which they stood to the primitive Church. The language in which he denounces them is a sufficient evidence that he could not have investigated with calmness the character of the 'wolf of Pontus' or the false prophet Montanus and his 'reptile' followers. Though living at a distance of a century and a half, he repeats and adopts the conventional abuse of their contemporary adversaries.

Records of the earliest heretics have passed away; no one of them is fairly known to us from his own writings. Their names have become a by-word among men; at another tribunal we may believe that many judgments passed upon them have been reversed. The true history of the century which followed the withdrawal of the Apostles has also perished, or is preserved only in fragmentary statements. It is a matter of conjecture how the constitution of the Church arose; it is a parallel speculation, out of what simpler elements the earliest liturgies were compiled. But it does not follow that nothing happened in an age of which we know nothing. The least philosophy of history suggests the reflection that in the primitive Church there must have existed all the varieties of practice, belief,

speculation, doctrine, which the different circumstances of the converts, and the different natures of men acting on those circumstances, would be likely to produce. The Church acquired unity in its progress through the world; it was more scattered and undisciplined at first than it afterwards became. Even the Apostles do not work together in the spirit of an order; they and their followers are not an army 'set under authority', of which the leaders say to one man 'come, and he cometh', and to another 'go, and he goeth'. The Church of the Apostles may be compared more truly to 'the wind blowing where it listeth', or even to 'the lightning shining from one part of the heaven to the other'. Paul and Barnabas and Apollos, and even Priscilla and Aquila, have their separate ways of acting; they walk in different paths; they do not attempt to control one another. Whatever caution is observable in their mode of dealing with each other's spheres of labour is a matter of courtesy, not of ecclesiastical discipline. It is not certain, perhaps on the whole improbable, that those who came from James to Antioch (*Gal.*, ii, 12) represented the community at Jerusalem. There is no Church which claims to be the metropolis of other Churches; nor any subordination within the several Churches to a single authority. The words of the *Epistle to the Ephesians* (iv, 11): 'He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers', are hardly reconcilable either with three orders of clergy, or with the distinction of clergy and laity. They describe a state of the Church in which there was less of system and more of impulse than at a later period; in which 'all the Lord's people were prophets', and natural or spiritual gifts became offices 'in the beginning of the Gospel'. Compare *Rom.*, xii, 6; *1 Cor.*, xii, 28, 29.

Leaving these introductory considerations, we will return to the subject out of which they arose—the difference of St Paul and the Twelve, 'the little cloud no bigger than a man's hand', the sign of the coming storm which darkened the face of the Church and the world.

The narrative of this difference is contained in the second chapter of the *Epistle to the Galatians*. The Apostle begins by asserting his Divine commission and independence of human authority; he was an Apostle 'not of man nor by man', and there was no other Gospel but that which he preached. After a few words of rebuke, he touches on such points in his personal history as tended to show that he had no connexion with the Twelve. It was not by their ministry that he was

converted; and, after his conversion, he had seen them only twice; once for so short a time that he was unknown at that period to the Churches of Judea; on the latter of the two occasions, they had 'added nothing to him' in a conference about circumcision. Afterwards, at Antioch, when Peter showed a disposition to retrace his steps at the instigation of certain who came from James, he withstood him to the face, and rebuked his inconsistency, even though his helper Barnabas and all the other Jews were against him. The reason for narrating this is to show, not how nearly the Apostle agreed with the Twelve, but how entirely he maintained his ground, meeting them on terms of freedom and equality.

There are features in this narrative which indicate a hostile, as there are other features which indicate also a friendly, bearing in the two parties who are here spoken of. Among the first may be classed the mention of false brethren, 'who came in to spy out our liberty in Christ Jesus'. Were they Jews or Christians? And how came they to be present, if the Apostles at Jerusalem could have prevented them? In a remarkable passage of the *Acts of the Apostles* (xxi, 20, 21) the believers at Jerusalem are spoken of as a great multitude 'all zealous for the law', which leads to the inference that their profession and way of life were not inconsistent with Jewish customs: living as they were under the eye of the chief priests, this could hardly have been otherwise; there could have been no strong line of demarcation between Jews and Jewish Christians at Jerusalem. The tone of the narrative implies further, that the other Apostles scarcely resisted the false brethren, but left the battle to be fought by St Paul. The second point which tends to the unfavourable inference is, the manner in which the Apostles of Jerusalem are spoken of—'those who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me'; *οἱ δοκοῦντες εἶναι τι*, ver. 6, who are shown by the form of the sentence to be the same as *οἱ δοκοῦντες σὺλοι εἶναι*, in ver. 9. Thirdly, the distinction of the Gospels of the circumcision and uncircumcision, which was not merely one of places, but of teaching also. Fourthly, the use of the words (*ὑπόκρισις*) 'hypocrisy' and (*κατεγνωσμένος*) 'condemned', in reference to Peter's conduct; and, lastly, in ver. 12, the mention of certain who came from James, under whose influence the Apostle supposed Peter to have acted; which raises the suspicion of a regular opposition to St Paul, acting in concert with the heads of the Church at Jerusalem. At the meeting, the other Apostles had been determined by the fact, that a

Church had grown up external to them, which was its own witness.

This is one way in which the record of the second chapter of the *Galatians* may be read. Yet, there are gentler features also, which must not be omitted, and which restore us more nearly to our previous conception of the Apostolic Church. In the first place, there is no appearance here, or anywhere in the *Epistles*, of an open schism between St Paul and the Twelve. Secondly, the differences are not of such a nature as to preclude the Church of Jerusalem from receiving, or the Apostle from giving, the alms of the Gentiles. Thirdly, the expression, *οἱ δοκοῦντες εἶναι τι*, 'who seemed to be somewhat', although ironical, is softened by what follows, *οἱ δοκοῦντες εἶναι στύλοι*, 'who seemed to be pillars', in which the Apostle expresses the greatness and dignity of the Twelve in their separate field of labour. Lastly, the interview ends with an arrangement which shows the goodwill of the Apostle St Paul to his poor fellow-Christians at Jerusalem, and the unwillingness of the Twelve to interfere with a work for which 'they gave glory to God' (*Acts*, xi, 18), or of St Paul himself 'to build upon another man's foundation' (*Rom.*, xv, 20).

But after thus balancing the question on either side (and it is probable that the spirit of the second chapter of the *Galatians* will be differently seized by different minds), we naturally turn over the pages of the other *Epistles* of St Paul to collect the intimations which occur elsewhere on the same subject. Let us endeavour to replace the passage in what may be termed the context of the Apostolical Age. Is it a mere accident, happening once only, that the Twelve and St Paul met and had a partial difference? or is the difference alluded to an indication of a greater and more radical difference in the Church itself, which is partially reflected in the persons of its leaders? We might be disposed to answer 'yes' to the first alternative, were the first two chapters of the *Galatians* all that remained to us; we are compelled to say 'yes' to the second, when we extend our view to other parts of Scripture.

Everywhere in the *Epistles* of St Paul we find traces of an opposition between the Jew and Gentile, the circumcision and the uncircumcision. It is found, not only in the *Epistle to the Galatians*, but in a scarcely less aggravated form in the two *Epistles to the Corinthians*, softened indeed and generalized in the *Epistle to the Romans*, and still distinctly traceable in the *Epistle to the Philippians*; the party of the circumcision appearing to triumph in Asia, at the close of the Apostle's life,



in the *Second Epistle to Timothy*. In all these *Epistles* we have proofs of a reaction to Judaism, but, though they are addressed to Churches chiefly of Gentile origin, never of a reaction to heathenism. Could this have been the case, unless within the Church itself there had been a Jewish party urging upon the members of the Church the performance of a rite repulsive in itself, if not as necessary to salvation, at any rate as a counsel of perfection; seeking to make them, in Jewish language, not merely proselytes of the gate, but proselytes of righteousness? What, if not this, is the reverse side of the *Epistles* of St Paul? that is to say, the motives, object, or basis of teaching of his opponents, who came with 'epistles of commendation' to the Church of Corinth (2 *Cor.*, iii, 1); who profess themselves 'to be Christ's' in a special sense (2 *Cor.*, x, 7); who say they are of Apollos, or Cephas, or Christ (1 *Cor.*, i, 12), or James (*Gal.*, ii, 12); who preach Christ of contention (*Phil.*, i, 15, 17); who deny St Paul's authority (1 *Cor.*, ix, 1, *Gal.*, iv., 16); who slander his life (1 *Cor.*, ix, 3, 7). We meet these persons at every turn. Are they the same, or different? Are they chance opponents? or do they represent to us one spirit, one mission, one determination to root out the Apostle and his doctrine from the Christian Church?

The epistolary form of St Paul's writings, and the tendency to lose sight of their marked characteristics in the more general picture of the *Acts of the Apostles*, have concealed from view the fact that there was a continuous opposition to him, commencing previously to his second missionary journey, and lasting down to the period of the riot at Jerusalem which led to his imprisonment. It is also evident that this hostility is not equally felt towards the Apostles at Jerusalem; for it arrays itself under their authority. Not only in the second chapter of the *Epistle to the Galatians*, but in the *Epistle to the Corinthians* also (2 *Cor.*, xi, 5, xii, 11), St Paul seems to assert himself against the Twelve. He fears that his relation to them will be misconceived; he knows the magic power of Judaism which appeals to the names of some of them. Though the Corinthian as well as the Galatian Church was in some sense a Gentile community, he never seems to be in the least degree apprehensive of a return to 'dumb idols'; what he fears is the enforcement of circumcision, the observance of days and weeks, the loss of the freedom of the Gospel. And the opponents, on whom he pours forth his indignation, are at once heathens and also Judaizing Christians. Still the question recurs, In what relation did these Jewish Christians stand to the Apostles at Jerusalem?

Let us gather up the fragments that remain in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

That in the beginning the elements of a division existed in the Christian society appears from the murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, for the neglect of their widows in the daily ministration, which led to the appointment of the seven deacons. Indeed, they may be said to have pre-existed in the Jewish and Gentile world; even among those who were called by a holier name than that of country, differences of race did not wholly disappear. A first epoch in the history of the division is marked by the death of Stephen, which scattered a portion of the Church, whom the circumstance of their persecution, as well as their dispersion in foreign countries, would tend to alienate from the observance of the Jewish law. A second epoch is distinguished by the preaching of St Paul at Antioch; immediately after which we are informed that the disciples were first called Christians. Then follows the Council, the more exact account of which is supplied by the *Epistle to the Galatians*, to which, however, one point is added in the narrative of the *Acts*—the mention of certain who came from Jerusalem to Antioch, saying, 'Except ye be circumcized, ye cannot be saved'. Passing onwards a little, we arrive at the address of St Paul to the elders of the Church of Ephesus (*Acts*, xx, 29, 30), which seems to allude to the same alienation from himself which had actually taken place in the *Second Epistle to Timothy* (2 *Tim.*, i, 15). At length we come to St Paul's last journey to Jerusalem, and his interview with James, which was the occasion on which, by the advice of James, he took a vow upon him, in hope of calming the apprehensions of the multitude of 'the many thousand Jews who believed and were all zealous for the law', in which passage express reference is made to the decree of the Council. These leading facts are interspersed with slighter notices, which rather arouse than gratify our curiosity. Such are the words: 'of the rest durst no man join himself to them' (*Acts*, v, 13), touching the way of life of the Apostles; 'a great company of the priests were obedient unto the faith' (vi, 7); 'they that were scattered abroad upon the persecution of Stephen, preached the word to Jews only' (viii, 4); the moderate counsels of Gamaliel (v, 34-40); the priority attributed to James in *Acts*, xii, 17 ('Go show these things to James and the brethren'); the mention of the alms brought by Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem in the days of Claudius Cæsar (xi, 29); the mention also in *Acts*, xv, 15, of certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed. Such is the

declaration of St Paul himself at a later period, that he is 'a Pharisee' (*Acts*, xxiii, 6). Nor is it without significance that in the discussion of this question of the admission of the Gentiles, no reference is made to the command of the *Gospels*, 'Go and baptize all nations'; and that nowhere are the other Apostles described as at variance with the Jewish Christians; nor in the later history of the *Acts* as suffering persecution from the Jews, or as sharing in the persecution of St Paul. For twenty years after the death of Herod Agrippa the Church of Jerusalem seems to have had rest; scattered by persecution in its first days, and remaining unmolested at a later period, though increasing in numbers and under the immediate control of the Sanhedrim, it had apparently ceased to incur their enmity or arouse their jealousy.

Many doubts and possibilities arise in our minds respecting the age of the Apostles when we look on the picture 'through a microscope', and dwell on those points which are commonly unnoticed. We are tempted to frame theories and reconstructions, which are better, perhaps, represented by queries. Did those who remained behind in the Church regard the death of the martyr Stephen with the same feelings as those who were scattered abroad, or was he in their eyes only what James the Just appeared to be to the historian Josephus? Were the Apostles at Jerusalem one in heart with the brethren at Antioch? Were the teachers who came from Jerusalem to Antioch saying 'Except ye be circumcized, ye cannot be saved', commissioned by the Twelve? Were the Twelve absolutely at one among themselves? Are the 'commendatory epistles' spoken of in the *Epistle to the Corinthians*, to be ascribed to the Apostles at Jerusalem? Can 'the grievous wolves' whose entrance into the Church of Ephesus the Apostle foresaw be other than the Judaizing teachers? Were 'the multitude' of believing Jews, who were all zealous for the law, and liable to be quickened in their zeal for it by the very sight of St Paul, engaged in the tumult which follows? Lastly, how far does the narrative of the *Acts* convey the lively impression of contemporaries, how far the recollections of another generation? These questions cannot have detailed answers; to raise them, however, is not without use, for they make us regard the facts in many points of view; they afford a help in the prosecution of the main inquiry 'What was the relation of St Paul to the Twelve?'

If we conceive of the Apostles as exercising a strict and definite rule over the multitude of their converts, living heads

of the Church as they might be termed, Peter or James of the circumcision and Paul of the uncircumcision, it would be natural to connect them with the acts of their followers. One would think that, in accordance with the spirit of the concordat, they should have 'delivered over to Satan' the opponents of St Paul, rather than have lived in communion and company with them. To hold out the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas, and yet secretly to support or not to discountenance their enemies, would seem to be treachery to their common Master. Especially when we observe how strongly the Judaizers are characterized by St Paul as 'the false brethren who came in unawares', 'the false Apostles transforming themselves into Apostles of Christ', 'grievous wolves entering in', and with what bitter personal weapons they assailed him (1 *Cor.*, ix, 3-7). Indeed, the contrast between the vehemence with which St Paul treats his Judaizing antagonists, and the gentleness or silence which he preserves towards the Apostles at Jerusalem, is a remarkable circumstance.

It may be questioned whether the whole difficulty does not arise from a false conception of the authority of the Apostles in the early Church. Although the first teachers of the word of Christ, they were not the rulers of the Catholic Church; they were not its bishops but its prophets. The influence which they exercised was personal rather than official, derived doubtless from their 'having seen the Lord', and from their appointment by Him, yet confined also to a comparatively narrow sphere; it was exercised in places in which they were, but hardly extended to places where they were not. The Gospel grew up around them they could not tell how; and the spirit which their preaching first awakened passed out of their control. They seemed no longer to be the prime movers, but rather the spectators of the work of God, which went on before their eyes. The thousands of Jews that believed and were zealous for the law would not lay aside the garb of Judaism at the bidding of James or Peter; the false teachers of Corinth or of Ephesus would not have been less likely to gain followers, had they been excommunicated by the Twelve. The movement which, in twenty years from the death of Christ, had spread so widely over the earth, they did not seek to reduce to rule and compass. It was beyond their reach, extending to communities of the circumstances of which they were hardly informed, and in which, therefore, it was not to be expected that they should interfere between St Paul and his opponents.

The Apostolic name acquired a sacredness in the second

century which was unknown to it in the first. We must not attribute either to the persons or to the writings of the Apostles the authority with which after ages invested them. No Epistle of James and Paul was received by those to whom it was sent, like the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as the Word of God. Nor are they quoted in the same manner with books of the Old Testament before the time of Irenæus. We might have imagined that every Church would have preserved an unmistakable record of its lineage and descent from some one of the Twelve. But so far is this from being the case, that no connexion can be traced certainly, between the Gentile Churches of the second century and that of Jerusalem in the first. Jerusalem was not the metropolis of all Churches, but one among many; acknowledged, indeed, by the Gentile Christians with affection and gratitude, but not prescribing any rule, or exercising authority over them.

The moment we think of the Church, not as an ecclesiastical or political institution, but, as it was in the first age, a spiritual body, that is to say, a body partly moved by the Spirit of God, dependent also on the tempers and sympathies of men swayed to and fro by religious emotion, the perplexity solves itself, and the narrative of Scripture becomes truthful and natural. When the waves are high, we see but a little way over the ocean. The first fervour of religious feeling does not admit a uniform level of Church government. It is not a regular hierarchy, but 'some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, others pastors and teachers', who grow together 'into the body of Christ'. The description of the early Church in the *Epistles* everywhere implies a great freedom of individual action. Apollos and Barnabas are not under the guidance of Paul; those 'who were distinguished among the Apostles before him', could hardly have owned his authority. No attempt is made to bring the different Churches under a common system. We cannot imagine any bond by which they could have been linked together, without an order of clergy or form of Church government common to them all; this is not to be found in the New Testament. It was hard to keep the Church at Corinth at unity with itself; it would have been still harder to have brought it into union with other Churches.

Of this fluctuating state of the Church, which was not yet addicted to any one rule, we find another indication in the freedom, almost levity, with which professing Christians embraced 'traditions of men'. The attitude of the Church of Corinth towards the Apostle was not that of believers in a faith 'once delivered to the saints'. We know not whether Apollos was or

was not a teacher of Alexandrian learning among its members, or what was the exact nature of 'the party of Christ', 1 *Cor.*, i, 12. But that heathen as well as Jewish elements had found their way into the Corinthian community, is intimated by the 'false wisdom', and the sitting at meat in the idol's temple. It is a startling question which is addressed to a Christian Church: 'How say some among you that there is no resurrection?' (1 *Cor.*, xv, 12). It is not less startling that there should have been fornication among them, such as was not even named among the Gentiles. In the Church at Colossæ again something was suspected by the Apostle, probably half Jewish and half heathen in its character, which he designates by the singular expression of a 'voluntary humility and a worshipping of angels'. And mention is made in the Roman Church of those who preached Christ of envy and strife, as well as those who preached Christ of peace and goodwill (*Phil.*, i, 15).

Amid such fluctuation and unsettlement of opinions we can imagine Paul and Apollos, or Paul and Peter, preaching side by side in the Church of Corinth or of Antioch, like Wesley and Whitefield in the last century, or Luther and Calvin at the Reformation, with a sincere reverence for each other, not abstaining from commenting on or condemning each other's doctrine or practice, and yet also forgetting their differences in their common zeal to save the souls of men. Personal regard is quite consistent with differences of religious belief; some of which, with good men, are a kind of form belonging only to their outer nature, most of which, as we hope, exist only on this side of the grave. We can imagine the followers of such men incapable of acting in their noble spirit, with a feebler sense of their high calling, and a stronger one of their points of disagreement; losing the principle for which they were alike contending in 'oppositions of knowledge', in prejudice and personality. And lastly, we may conceive the disciples of Wesley or of Whitefield (for of the Apostles themselves we forbear to move the question) reacting upon their masters and drawing them into the vicious circle of controversy, disuniting them in their lives, though incapable of making a separation between them.

Of such a nature the differences seem to have been which divided St Paul and the Twelve, arising, in some degree, from individual character, but more from their followers and the circumstances of their lives. They were differences which seldom brought them into contact, and once or twice only into collision. It may have been, 'I unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision'; and yet St Paul may have felt a deep respect for

those 'that seemed to be pillars', while they acknowledged with thankfulness the success of his labours. It is not necessary to suppose that the agreement of the Council, the terms of which are differently described in *Galatians* ii and *Acts* xv, was minutely observed for a long period of years. The instinct which animated the Jewish race made it impossible that the Twelve should always be able to control their followers, and unlikely that they themselves should wholly abstain from sympathizing with those who seemed to be joined to them by the ties of nationality. Even at Jerusalem the 'multitude zealous for the law' were not to be swayed by the authority of James, who accordingly exhorts St Paul to 'become to the Jews a Jew', that he might regain their confidence. Many things may have been done by the zeal of professing adherents, of which it was impossible for the Twelve to approve, which at a distance it was impossible for them to repress. A party in the Church of Corinth sought to call itself by their name, in opposition to that of St Paul; they added nothing to St Paul when the false brethren crept in unawares; they, or at least one of their number, sent messengers from Jerusalem to Antioch, at a critical moment in the dispute about circumcision. And yet, both after and before this variance, St Paul had collected alms in the Gentile Churches for 'the poor saints at Jerusalem' (*Acts*, xi, 30); among whom probably were some of his own kinsmen (*Acts*, xxiii, 16); and at a late period of his life, some of his friends and followers in prison are described as 'of the circumcision' (*Col.*, iv, 10, 11).

Regarding the whole number of believers in Judea, in Greece, in Italy, in Egypt, in Asia, as a fluctuating mass, of whom there were not many wise, not many learned, not all governed by the maxims of common prudence, needing many times to have the way of God expounded to them more perfectly, and, from their imperfect knowledge, arrayed against one another, subject to spiritual impulses, and often mingling with the truth Jewish and sometimes heathen notions—we seem to see the Twelve placed on an eminence above them, acting upon them rather than governing them, retired from the scene of St Paul's labours, and therefore hardly coming into conflict with him, either by word or by letter. They led a life such as St James is described as leading by Hegesippus<sup>1</sup>, 'going up into the temple at the

<sup>1</sup>The narrative of Hegesippus quoted by Eusebius is the earliest considerable fragment of Ecclesiastical History (about the year 160). It is as follows:

'But James, the brother of the Lord, who, as there were many of this name, was surnamed the Just by all from the days of our Lord

hour of prayer', revered by a multitude of followers zealous for the law, themselves, like Peter, half-conscious of a higher truth, and yet by their very position debarred from being its ministers. At first 'the doors were shut for fear of the Jews';

until now, received the government of the Church with the Apostles. This Apostle was consecrated from his mother's womb. He drank neither wine nor fermented liquors, and abstained from animal food. A razor never came upon his head, he never anointed with oil, and never used a bath. He alone was allowed to enter the sanctuary. He never wore woollen, but linen garments. He was in the habit of entering the temple alone, and was often found upon his bended knees and interceding for the forgiveness of the people, so that his knees became as hard as camels' in consequence of his habitual supplication and kneeling before God. And, indeed, on account of his exceeding great piety he was called the Just, and Oblias (or Zaddick and Ozleam), which signified justice and protection of the people, as the prophets declare concerning him. Some of the seven sects therefore of the people, mentioned by me above in my Commentaries, asked him what was the door to Jesus? And he answered "that he was the Saviour". From which some said that Jesus is the Christ. But the aforesaid sects did not believe either a resurrection or that he was coming to give to every one according to his works; as many, however, as did believe did so on account of James.

'As there were many, therefore, of the rulers that believed, there arose tumult among the Jews, Scribes, and Pharisees, saying that there was danger that the people would now expect Jesus as the Messiah.

'They came therefore together, and said to James "We entreat thee. restrain the people who are led astray after Jesus as if he were the Christ. We entreat thee to persuade all that are coming to the Feast of the Passover rightly concerning Jesus; for we all have confidence in thee. For we and all the people bear thee testimony that thou art Just, and thou respectest not persons.

"Persuade, therefore, the people not to be led astray by Jesus, for we and all the people have great confidence in thee.

"Stand, therefore, upon a wing of the temple, that thou mayest be conspicuous on high, and thy words may be easily heard by all the people; for all the tribes have come together on account of the Passover, with some of the Gentiles also".

'The aforesaid Scribes and Pharisees, therefore, placed James upon a wing of the temple, and cried out to him: "O thou just man, whom we ought all to believe, since the people are led astray after Jesus that was crucified, declare to us what is the door to Jesus that was crucified". And he answered with a loud voice: "Why do ye ask me respecting Jesus the Son of Man? He is now sitting in the heavens, on the right hand of Great Power, and is about to come on the clouds of heaven".

'And as many were confirmed and glorified in this testimony of James, and said "Hosanna to the son of David", these same Priests and Pharisees said to one another: "We have done badly in affording such testimony to Jesus, but let us go up and cast him down, that they may dread to believe in him".

'And they cried out "Oh, oh, Justus himself is deceived". And they fulfilled that which is written in Isaiah: "Let us take away the just, because he is offensive to us; wherefore they shall eat the fruit of



a short time afterwards they are spoken of as 'continuing daily with one accord in the temple praising God and having favour with all the people' (*Acts*, ii, 47). Then follows a temporary persecution, in which the Apostles are taken by a guard before the Council 'without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned'. They are let go by the advice of Gamaliel, but presently the persecution is renewed with increased fury; after the stoning of Stephen, Saul made 'havock of the Church', and driving out the disciples from Jerusalem, became the indirect cause of the spread of the Gospel to Phœnice and Cyprus and Antioch. Once again, about the year 44, the arm of Herod was put forth to please the Jews, when he imprisoned Peter and slew James the brother of John. But for above twenty years after this event, that is to say, until the death of James the Just, there is no trace of the Church of Jerusalem suffering from persecution; in the outrage on St Paul the other Apostles are not the objects of popular odium. The narrative of Hegesippus, the words of James and the Elders (*Acts*, xxi, 20), the mere fact that 'a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith', or that at a later period there were a great multitude of believers 'all zealous for the law'; the still more general fact of the existence of a Christian Church at Jerusalem, as far as we know, unmolested—all these things tend to show that the first Jewish Christians could not have been outwardly distinguishable from their brethren. To the Jew himself they probably appeared only as a Jewish sect within the pale of the covenant and the promises, like the Pharisees or the Essenes. And at a later, as at an earlier, period, it is likely that they would have been truly described in the words of the *Acts*, as gathering in the temple and 'having favour with all the people'.

But the Apostle St Paul was called upon to labour in a wider

their doings" (*Isaiah*, iii). Going up, therefore, they cast down the just man, saying to one another: "Let us stone James the Just". And they began to stone him, as he did not die immediately when cast down; but turning round, he knelt down, saying "I entreat thee, O Lord God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". Thus they were stoning him, when one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, a son of the Rechabites spoken of by Jeremiah the Prophet, cried out, saying "Cease; what are you doing? Justus is praying for you". And one of them, a fuller, beat out the brains of Justus with the club that he used to beat out clothes.

'Thus he suffered martyrdom, and they buried him on the spot, where his tombstone is still remaining by the temple.

'He became a faithful witness, both to Jews and Greeks, that Jesus is Christ. Immediately after this Vespasian invaded and took Judea'.

—*H. E.*, ii, 21.

sphere ; perhaps also to do a higher work. There was no temple or altar at which he served ; no difference of days, or distinctions of meats and drinks, which he imposed on his Gentile converts. The words ' Behold I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing ' would have aroused a tumult in the courts of Jerusalem. They were the strongest, almost the paradoxical, expression of that which was the idea, the inspiration of his life—the freedom of the Gospel. He cast aside at once those national and political bands, which clung like a second nature to the Jewish Church. Nothing short of a moral principle could embrace the world, or deliver the Jew himself. There have been reformers of mankind who have lived in their appointed sphere, thinking the task sufficient of improving their own lives and working by example only, not seeking to influence opinion or reconstruct the institutions of their Church and country. There have been others whose individual life seemed to themselves to be bound up with the truth ; with whom the love of Christ has been the symbol of a universal charity ; who have sought to throw down the narrower limits of party or creed, by a divine justice, one and the same to all mankind. St Peter and St James are types of the first class, living according to the commands of ' those who sat in Moses's seat ', but not ' doing after their works '. St Paul is a type of the second, finding no rest for his soul until the Gospel has been preached to all mankind ; proclaiming faith without the deeds of the law, not as a technical formula, but because ' God was not the God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles '.

II. The inquiry into the relation in which St Paul stood to the Twelve expands into a further question respecting the Gospel which they preached. ' What was that form or aspect of Christian truth which is termed by St Paul the Gospel of the uncircumcision, as contrasted with that of the circumcision ' (*Gal.*, ii, 7), which he speaks of in other places as ' my Gospel ' ? (*Rom.*, ii, 16, xvi, 25). Or, without insisting on the point of expressions which are somewhat obscure, ' What was the difference between the teaching of St Paul and the Twelve ? ' Was it one of doctrine or of practice, of belief or of spirit ? Viewed as a matter of doctrine or belief the difference was not great. So the Apostle himself seems to allow when denouncing most strongly the Judaizing teachers. All baptized in the name of Christ, with whom the Twelve had walked while He was upon earth, whose witnesses they were ; of whom too St Paul claimed to be a later witness (*1 Cor.*, ix, 1), as ' one born out of due time ' (*1 Cor.*, xv, 8). It was the same Christ whom they preached ; there was

no dispute about this—'false knowledge' had not yet severed from reality the person of Jesus of Nazareth. 'Other foundation could no man lay than that is laid' (1 *Cor.*, iii, 11), as the Apostle says to the Church at Corinth, though he might build many superstructures. It was not 'another Gospel', as he indignantly declares to the Church in Galatia (*Gal.*, i, 7), for there was not, and could not be another. Or, according to another manner of speaking (2 *Cor.*, xi, 4), it was still Jesus, though another Jesus; and the Spirit, though another Spirit. In the Church of Rome, as the Apostle writes to the Philippians (*Phil.*, i, 16), there were those who preached Christ of contention, in which the Apostle nevertheless rejoiced, as an honour to the name of Christ. These last words have been already quoted for another object; they may be referred to once more with the view of showing the toleration of St Paul. They prove that he regarded not only the twelve Apostles, but some, at least, of his Judaizing opponents, as true though erring preachers of the Word of Christ.

Gentile teachers of a later period, whom the Church branded as heretical—as, for example, Marcion, who professed to follow St Paul—renounced the authority of the Old Testament. St Paul himself also renounces the authority of the Law. But he does not snap the chain of Providence or of history; the God of Abraham is with him the God of the Gentiles also; to him, equally with the Twelve, the Old Testament is the source of the New; the Gospel which he received from Christ he read over again in the *Psalms* and in the Prophecies. It had been misunderstood or unknown 'in the times of that ignorance'; it had now come to light. The same God, who in these last days spoke to men by His Son, had at sundry times and in divers manners spoken in years past to the Fathers by the Prophets. Not the Old and New Testament, but the law, with its burden on the conscience, and its questions respecting meats and drinks, and new moons and sabbaths, contrasted with the Gospel.

Once more: besides the name of Christ and the connexion of the Old and New Testament, another point common to St Paul and the Twelve was their expectation of the 'day of the Lord'. Nowhere does the Apostle appear so much 'a Hebrew of the Hebrews' as in speaking of the invisible world. He opposes this world and the next, as the times before and after the coming of the Messiah were divided by the Jews themselves; he sees them peopled with a celestial hierarchy of good and evil angels. He is waiting for the revelation of Antichrist and the manifestation of the Sons of God. He is living like the other Apostles in the latter days; all that has preceded in Jewish

history is leading up to the Advent of Christ. Sudden conversion, miraculous signs, accompany the preaching both of St Paul and the Twelve. 'The Holy Ghost fell upon them as upon us at the beginning' might have been the description of the Church of Corinth, or of Ephesus, no less than of the Church at Jerusalem. And, as St Paul says, in the *Epistle to the Romans*, in reference to the admission of the Gentiles, 'God is no respecter of persons' Peter commences his address to Cornelius with the words, 'Of a truth I perceive God is no respecter of persons'.

Admitting such points of agreement, the differences lie within comparatively narrow limits; they could not have related to anything that we should consider to be a fundamental article of the Christian faith. The disciples or companions of St Paul and the Twelve may have felt a sympathy for or antipathy towards the Alexandrian learning. The mere difference of language may have made the same kind of separation between the Church at Jerusalem and those founded by St Paul, as divides the Old Testament from the later Apocryphal Books. The interval between the three first *Gospels*, or the *Epistle of James* and the *Epistles* of St Paul, is also a measure of the distance between the Apostle of the Gentiles and the Apostles of the Circumcision. An ascetic mode of life may have prevailed more or less among their respective followers. Place alone probably had a great influence. Those who went up to the Temple at the hour of prayer, who lived amid the smoke of the daily sacrifices, could hardly have felt and thought and spoken as the Apostle of the Gentiles, wandering through Greece and Asia, from city to city, in barbarous as well as civilized countries; they at least could not have been expected to say 'Let no man judge you of a New Moon or a Sabbath day'. Remaining like our Lord Himself within the confines of Judea, there were many truths which 'James and the brethren' were not called upon to utter in the same emphatic way as St Paul.

Such are a few conjectures respecting the nature of the difference which separated St Paul from the Twelve. The point that is independent of conjecture is that it related to the obligation on the Gentiles to keep the Mosaic Law. It is characteristic of the earliest times of the Church, that the dispute referred to a matter of practice rather than of doctrine. Long ere the Gospel was drawn out in a system of doctrine, the difference between the spirit of Judaism and Christianity was instinctively felt. Jewish prejudices were sometimes too strong even in the mind of the Christian for the freedom wherewith Christ had made him free. There had been an undergrowth of Christianity in Judaism;

there was an overgrowth of Judaism on Christianity. That all nations were to be baptized in the name of Christ, and that there was to be one fold and one Shepherd, had been determined by an authority from which there was no appeal. But whether this extension of the borders of Israel was to be for the glory of Israel, or whether Israel itself was to be lost among 'the nations', in what sense 'the law was to be fulfilled', or 'the temple destroyed', was still left veiled; and declarations apparently opposite, or the same declarations in opposite senses, might be repeated on different sides. The general principle was admitted in words, but in the application of it there was room for difference of practice. Custom did not at once relax its hold. Jewish pride desired to make the Gentiles proselytes of the gate—to draw them on, as a 'counsel of perfection', to become proselytes of righteousness by undergoing the rite of circumcision. Jewish nationality fondly hoped that the Saviour of the world would first 'restore the kingdom to Israel'.

III. Our inquiry reaches a third stage in what may be termed the twilight of Ecclesiastical history—that century after the withdrawal of the Apostles of which we know so little; the aching void of which we are tempted to fill up with the image of the century which follows. It would carry us too far out of our way to put together all the doubtful indications which we find, within and without the Church, of the character of this unknown time. Many powers were at work, of which the names only have been preserved to after ages. Many questions also arise respecting the genuineness of Patristic writings, and the truth of events narrated in them. The 'romance of heresy' would be the mist of fiction, through which we should endeavour to penetrate to the light. The origin of Episcopal government, which has a sort of antagonism to heresy, would be one of the elements of our uncertainty. The bearing of the Easter controversy would demand an investigation. Whether Ebionitism retained any of the features of a primitive Jewish Christianity would also be a serious inquiry. It would be necessary to mount up to a time when opinions, which were afterwards called heresy, were latent in the Church itself. We should have to form a criterion of the credibility of Irenæus, Clement, Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius. But a subject so wide is matter not for an essay but for a book; it is the history of the Church of the first two centuries. We must therefore narrow our field of vision as much as possible, and content ourselves with collecting a few general facts which have a bearing on our present inquiry.

First among these general facts, is the ignorance of the third

and fourth centuries respecting the first, and earlier half of the second. We cannot err in supposing that those who could add nothing to what is recorded in the New Testament of the life of Christ and His Apostles, had no real knowledge of lesser matters, as, for example, the origin of Episcopacy. They could not understand, they were incapable of preserving the memory of a state of the Church which was unlike their own. The contemporaries of the Apostles have nothing to tell of their lives and fortunes ; the next generation is also silent ; in the third generation the license of conjecture is already rife. No fact worth mentioning can be gathered from the writings of the Apostolical Fathers. Irenæus, who lived about fifty years later, and within a century of St Paul, has not added a single circumstance to what we gather from the New Testament ; he has fallen into the well-known error of supposing that our Lord was fifty years old at the time of his ministry ; he has stated also that Papias was John's hearer, and the associate of Polycarp, though Papias himself, in the preface to his discourses, by no means asserts that he was ' hearer and eyewitness of the holy Apostles ' (Euseb., *H. E.*, iii, 39) ; he has repeated as a discourse of Christ's the fable of Papias respecting the bunches of grapes ; this he would have literally interpreted. Justin, who was somewhat earlier than Irenæus, has given a measure of the knowledge and criticism of his own age in the story of Simon Magus. Tertullian, at the close of the next century, believed that the emperor Tiberius had consulted the Roman senate respecting the worship of our Lord (Euseb., *H. E.*, ii, 2). Eusebius himself verified from the Archives of Edessa the fabulous correspondence of Abgarus and Jesus, and the miraculous narrative which follows (*H. E.*, i, 13). In at least half the instances in which we are able to test his quotations from earlier writers, they exhibit some degree of inaccuracy or confusion. It is hard to believe the statement of Polycrates of Ephesus (about A.D. 180), that ' John, who rested on the bosom of the Lord, was a priest, and bore the sacerdotal plate ' (*H. E.*, iii, 32), or that Philip the Evangelist was one of the Twelve Apostles. But what use can be made of such sandy materials ? It is idle to have recourse to remote reconcilements when the facts themselves are uncertain ; equally so to argue precisely from turns of expression where language is rhetorical.

The second general fact is the unconsciousness of this ignorance, and the readiness with which the vacant space is filled up, and the Church of the second century assimilated to that of the third and fourth. History often conceals that which is discordant to preconceived notions ; silently dropping some facts, exaggerat-

ing others, adding, where needed, new tone and colouring, until the disguise can no longer be detected. By some process of this kind the circumstance into which we are inquiring has been forgotten and reproduced. Nothing has survived relating to the great crisis which Christianity underwent in the age of the Apostles themselves ; it passed away silently in the altered state of the Church and the world. Not only in the strange account of the dispute between the Apostles, given by Origen and others, is what may be termed the 'animus' of concealment discernible, but in fragments of earlier writings, in which the two Apostles appear side by side as co-founders of the Corinthian, as well as of the Roman Church (Caius and Dion, of Corinth, quoted by Euseb., ii, 25), pleading their cause together before Nero ; dying on the same day, their graves being appealed to as witnesses to the tale, probably as early as the first half of the second century. The unconscious motive which gave birth to such fictions was, seemingly, the desire to throw a veil over that occasion on which they withstood one another to the face. And the truth indistinctly shines through this legend of the latter part of the second century, when it is further recorded that St Paul was at the head of the Gentile Church at Rome, Peter of the circumcision.

Bearing in mind these general considerations, which throw a degree of doubt on the early ecclesiastical tradition, and lead us to seek for indications out of the regular course of history, we have to consider, in reference to our present subject, the following statements :

1. That Justin, who is recorded to have written against Marcion, refers to the Twelve in several passages, but nowhere in his genuine writings mentions St Paul. And when speaking of the books read in the Christian assemblies, he names only the *Gospels* and the *Prophets* (*Apol.*, i, 67).

2. That Marcion, who was nearly contemporary with Justin, is said to have appealed to the authority of St Paul only.

(On the other hand, it is true that in numerous quotations from the Old Testament, Justin appears to follow St Paul. It is difficult to account for this singular phenomenon.)

3. That in the account of James the Just, given by Josephus and Hegesippus (about A.D. 170 ; see above), he is represented as a Jew among Jews ; living, according to Hegesippus, the life of a Nazarite ; praying in the Temple until his knees became hard as a camel's, and so entirely a Jew as to be unknown to the people for a Christian ; a description which, though its features may be exaggerated, yet has the trace of a true resemblance to the part which we find him acting in the *Epistle to the Galatians*.

It falls in, too, with the fact of his peaceable continuance as head of the Church at Jerusalem, in the *Acts of the Apostles*; and is not inconsistent with the spirit of the *Epistle* which bears his name. (Comp. Euseb., ii, 23.)

4. That the same Hegesippus regards the heresies as arising out of schism in the Jewish Church. He was himself a Hebrew convert; and after stating that he travelled to Rome, whither he went by way of Corinth, and had familiar conversation with many bishops, he declares 'that in every succession and in every city the doctrine prevails according to what is declared by the law and the prophets and the Lord' (Euseb., iv, 22). This is not the language of a follower of St Paul.

5. That in the Clementine *Homilies*, written about the year 160, though a work generally orthodox, St Paul is covertly introduced under the name of Simon Magus, as the impersonation of Gnostic error, as the enemy who had pretended 'visions and revelations', and who 'withstood' and blamed Peter. No writer doubts the allusion in some of these passages to the *Epistles* of St Paul. Assuming their connexion, we ask, What was the state of mind which led an orthodox Christian, who lived probably at Rome, about the middle of the second century, to affix such a character to St Paul? and what was the motive which induced him to veil his meaning? What, too, could have been the state of the Church in which such a romance grew up? And how could the next generation have read it without perceiving its true aim? Doubtful as may be the precise answer to these questions, we cannot attribute this remarkable work to the wayward fancy of an individual; it is an indication of a real tendency of the first and second centuries, at a time when the flame was almost extinguished, but still slumbered in the mind of the writer of the Clementine *Homilies*. It is observable that at a later date, about the year 210-30, in the form which the work afterwards received under the title of *The Clementine Recognitions*, which have been preserved in a Latin translation, the objectionable passages have mostly vanished.

6. Lastly, that in later writings we find no trace of the mind of St Paul. His influence seems to pass from the world. On such a basis as 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty' it might have been impossible to rear the fabric of a hierarchy. But the thought itself was not present to the next generation. The tide of ecclesiastical feeling set in another direction. It was not merely that after writers fell short of St Paul, or imperfectly interpreted him, but that they formed themselves on a different model. It was not only that the external constitution



of the Church had received a definite form and shape, but that the inward perception of the nature of the Gospel was different. No writer of the latter half of the second century would have spoken as St Paul has done of the law, of the sabbath, of justification by faith only, of the Spirit, of grace, of moderation in things indifferent, of forgiveness. An echo of a part of his teaching is heard in Augustine ; with this exception, the voice of him who withstood Peter to the face at Antioch was silent in the Church until the Reformation. The spirit of the *Epistles to the Romans* and to the *Galatians* has revived in later times. But there is no trace that the writings of the Apostle left any lasting impress within the Church, or perhaps anywhere in the first ages.

Yet the principle of the Apostle triumphed, though at the time of its triumph it may seem to have lost the spirit and power of the Apostle. The struggle which commenced like Athanasius against the world, ended as the struggle of the world against the remnant of the Jewish race. Beginning within the confines of Judea, it spread in a widening circle among the Jewish proselytes, still wider and more faintly marked in the philojudaising Gentile, fading in the distance as Christianity became a universal religion. Two events had a great influence on its progress. First, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the flight to Pella of the Christian community ; secondly, the revolt under Barchocab ; both tending to separate, more and more, both in fact and the opinion of mankind, the Christian from the Jew.

It would be vain to carry our inquiry further, with the view of gleaning a few results respecting the first half of the second century. Remote probabilities and isolated facts are not worth balancing. The consciousness that we know little of the times which followed the Apostles is the best part of our knowledge. And many will deem it well for the purity of the Christian faith, that while Christ Himself is clearly seen by us,—as a light, at the fountain of which a dead Church may receive life, and a living one renew its strength—the origin of ecclesiastical institutions has been hidden from our eyes. In the second and third centuries Christianity was extending its borders, fencing itself with creeds and liturgies, taking possession of the earth with its hierarchy. Whether this great organization was originally everywhere the same, whether it adopted the form chiefly of the Jewish worship and ministry or of the Roman magistracy, or at first of the one and afterwards of the other, cannot be certainly determined. A cloud hangs over the dawn of ecclesiastical history. By some course of events with which we are not acquainted, the Providence of God leading the way, and the thoughts of man following, the

Jewish Synagogue became the Christian Church ; the Passover was superseded by Easter ; the Christian Sunday took the place of the Jewish Sabbath. While the Old Testament retained its authority over Gentile as well as Jewish Christians, the law was done away in Christ, and the Judaizer of the first century became the Ebionitish heretic of the second and third.

## St Paul and Philo

'Canst thou speak Greek?' (*Acts*, xxi, 37). 'Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee' (*Acts*, xxiii, 6), 'brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect way of the law of the Fathers' (*Acts*, xxii, 3).

CHRISTIANITY admits of being regarded either from within or from without. We may begin with our own hearts, with the study of the word of God, with the received views which have grown up within the sphere of the Christian Church; or we may place ourselves without that sphere, and look upon Christianity under the aspect which it presented to the contemporaries of Seneca or Pliny; which it continues to present to the eye of the secular historian. Those who take this latter course are sometimes said to put themselves in a false position, which has no rest or stability, until the heavenly is all brought down to the level of the earthly, and the narrative of Scripture has passed into a merely secular chronicle. The Gospel is thought to lose its sacredness when explained by secondary causes or brought into contact with ordinary events. This feeling has been strengthened by the circumstance that, of the age which immediately preceded Christianity in the land where it arose, so slight a record has been preserved to us. For the first century the Gospel stands in no relation to the contemporary history even of the Jews themselves. There is a circle of light around the forms of Christ and His Apostles; while the world, in reference to our knowledge of it, lies in darkness. Naturally, we make no attempt to supply what may be termed 'the blank leaves between the Old and New Testament', by gathering together a few doubtful fragments; while the Christian era furnishes a new beginning, to go beyond which seems like asking 'what preceded the creation'.

Nevertheless, the really false and artificial position is not that

which unites, but that which separates Christianity from the world in general. Practical evils arise from this separation, which begins with history and ends with daily life. The Apostles acknowledged that they were men of like passions with ourselves : the world, too, was a world of men like ourselves ; swayed by affections, opinions, traditions, requiring ideas to be on a level with human capacities and to be conveyed in an intelligible language. As our Saviour says of the second coming of the Son of man, it may also be said of the first, ' they were marrying and were giving in marriage ' ; their ordinary life was what it had been before ; the smoke of the daily sacrifice was still going up ; they were disputing about purifying with the disciples of John, sitting at the feet of Gamaliel to be instructed in the Greek learning, of which he was reputed a master. They had their thoughts respecting the tribute money and the Roman government. They knew the difference between their own servile condition and the inheritance of their fathers, of which Moses, in the law, and the prophets spoke. They were looking for ' the hope of Israel ', a few, probably, like Anna, ' departing not from the temple night and day ' ; others ready to take the promises by force in a war against mankind. There were zealots and Essenes among them, though not mentioned in the Gospel, who must have had something in common with the disciples of Christ, and yet more probably with those of John the Baptist. There were characters like Nicodemus or Gamaliel, who regarded with sympathy the new teachers, or waited to see the end ; like Caiaphas, who heeded chiefly the political effect on the fortunes of their country. Jewish life was not wanting in individual features ; those which have come down to us in the narrative of the Evangelists being such only as contrast most strikingly with the life and sayings of our Lord and His Apostles. Nor were the Jews in the time of Christ without a literature, which had overgrown the Old Testament. In Judea as well as at Alexandria they were familiar with the version of the LXX. That ' the traditions of the Fathers ' had formed a part of the education of St Paul is proved by his allusions to them in the *Epistles*, no less than by his express statement.

As the ' new man ' is not altogether different from the old, but retains many elements of the same character, so did the Christian world retain many elements of the Jewish and heathen world which preceded it. As in ages that we know, the earthly and the heavenly, the Church and the world, have ever been mingled together, both within and without us, so in the first age with which we are acquainted only from the record of Scrip-

ture itself, 'the wheat and the tares' were growing together; false and true brethren met together in the same Church. Nor must we confine the connexion of cause and effect to mere historical events, such as the fall of Jerusalem or the extension or decay of the Roman Empire; or to the political influences which more immediately affected the infant Communion. There is a sequence of thoughts as well, by which age is bound to age; and that which in one generation is 'sown in corruption' is in the next 'raised in incorruption'; scattered fragments unite into an harmonious whole; what was barren speculation once, becomes a practical rule of life; forms of thought spiritualize themselves; language dead for ages awakens into life.

When, turning away from the heavenly origin of Christianity, we trace the first steps of its earthly progress, we cannot avoid putting the question to ourselves, how it was made intelligible to the minds of Jews, who had been trained in a religion and way of thinking so different from it. The difficulty is analogous to that which our own missionaries experience in attempting to explain to the Chinese or the American Indians the nature of God. Their language has no words to express what is meant, or only words the associations of which confuse or mislead. We sometimes imagine that preaching the Gospel among the heathen only means persuading men who have the same minds with ourselves to be of the same opinions with us; more truly, the work which we have to do is nothing short of creating their minds anew. Now the same difficulty must have pressed upon the first teachers of the Gospel. Where did they find words in which to express themselves? How was the interval spanned which separated not only different nations, but different races of mankind? Whence came the forms of speech and modes of thought which, for nearly eighteen centuries, have been the symbols and landmarks of Christian theology? Some of them are derived from the Old Testament, but many are peculiar to the New; and those which are common to both often receive a new turn of signification in the Christian use of them, which needs explanation. For example, the words *λόγος* (the Word), *πνεῦμα* (the Spirit), the idea of the Son of God, or the son of man, would have been unmeaning to those who were told of them for the first time, and had nothing analogous in their own thought or speech. To have given a Greek in the time of Socrates a notion of what was meant by the Holy Spirit would have been like giving the blind a conception of colours, or the deaf of musical sounds. Other ideas of the Gospel, as grace, faith, mercy, life, death, which occur in the Old Testament, are nevertheless used

there in a sense so partial and so different from that of the New, that an intermediate step has to be supplied before we can understand how they could have taken hold on the minds of men, as the expressions of the truths which were revealed in the Gospel.

As we suffer our minds to dwell, not on the perfected form, but on the beginnings and antecedents and human elements of Christianity, the same difficulty appears in another point of view, in relation to the teachers as well as to the hearers of the Gospel. It is a point of view which is not often suggested to us ; common notions take another direction. As persons who have no education imagine that the authorized English version is the original of the Scriptures, so too scholars are apt to think and write as though the Greek of the New Testament were the original language in which Christianity was first conceived. But our Lord and His Apostles were Galileans, whose familiar speech could never have been Greek. There was, if we may use an expression which sounds almost like a contradiction in terms, a Hebrew Christianity yet earlier than the New Testament, the memorials of which are preserved to us in the translation only. How did this Hebrew or Chaldaic or Syriac Christianity pass into a language so different as the Greek ? What were those predisposing circumstances in the world which made it possible that the ideas of one nation should be adopted by another ? that the words of our Saviour and the Twelve experienced no let or hindrance as they reached the confines of Judea, but passed insensibly to the Gentiles ? that St Paul, too, could have spoken of grace, faith, the Spirit, if not as powers of which his first hearers had an experimental knowledge, at any rate as sounds the meaning of which they understood ?

These two questions are closely connected, and the answer to both may be gathered, to a great extent, from the Jewish Alexandrian philosophy. There the missing link is found supplied ; we see that the Greek and Hebrew mind had already bridged the chasm that separated them, and that before the times of our Lord and His Apostles the Greek language had been forced into the service of Jewish thoughts. Persons have sometimes spoken of modern civilization including in itself two elements, a Greek and a Semitic one ; but the fusion between them is not of modern or Christian origin ; it dates further back, to the period of Alexander's conquests. After the establishment of the Greek kingdom of Alexander's successors, Greek became a familiar language, not only in Asia and Egypt, but also in Judea. The Jew in other countries, who spoke and wrote in Greek, was not cut off from intercourse with his Palestine brethren, and new

ideas and opinions readily passed from one to the other. But Alexandria was the centre of the fusion ; there the Jew and the Greek may be said to have mingled minds ; the books of Moses and the prophets and the dialectic of Plato and Aristotle met together, giving birth to the strangest eclectic philosophy that the world has ever seen. This philosophy was Judaism and Platonism at once ; the belief in a personal God assimilated to the doctrine of ideas. The Jew of Alexandria had lost nothing of the intense devotion to the Law which was to be found among his Palestine brethren ; only coming, as he did, under an opposite influence, from which he could not detach himself, he sought to add to the book of the law the wisdom of the Greek ; or rather, however paradoxical it may seem, fancied he saw in both a deep-rooted identity. During two centuries this composite system had been attaining a kind of consistency, it had acquired a technical language of its own, and had modes of interpreting the Old Testament, which in the age of Philo had already become traditional. Alexandrianism gave the form and thought ; Judaism the life and power. The God, who brought up His people out of the land of Egypt, was still stronger than the ideal image of the same God revealing Himself in Greek philosophy ; while from Greek philosophy the Jew of Alexandria borrowed those distinctions which enabled him to conceive more perfectly the abstraction of the Divine nature.

Philo, the only philosopher of this school whose works have come down to us, except in fragments, fortunately lived at a time which renders them peculiarly valuable for the purpose of our inquiry. According to the tradition of the Rabbis, he is said to have flourished about a hundred years before the destruction of the temple. But his own writings give us the date more precisely ; as, from the *Legatio ad Caium*, in which he describes himself as an old man at the time of writing (*ἡμεῖς οἱ γέροντες τὰ μὲν σώματα χρόνου μήκει πόδιοι*, Mangey, ii, 545), it appears that he went on an embassy to Rome in the hope of gaining the protection of the emperor Caligula for the persecuted Jews of Alexandria, and was at Rome at the time the emperor attempted to place his statue in the temple at Jerusalem (Mangey, ii, 573) ; also between the years 39 A.D., the date of the German victory to which he makes allusion (Mangey, ii, 598), and 41, which was the year of Caligula's death. He refers, moreover, to a circumstance which happened under Claudius (ii, 576), thus showing that the date of the composition of his work, though seemingly not long after, is not absolutely contemporary. His other writings—with the exception of the *Contra Flaccum*, which seems to describe the same

state of continuous persecution among the Alexandrian Jews, and may have been written about the same time—are probably earlier than the *Legatio ad Caium*.

Thus we see that in reading Philo we are on the edge of Christianity. Philo might have seen and spoken with our Lord, and possibly did so in the visit to the temple which he mentions (Mangey, ii, 646). Were it not for the distance between Alexandria and Judea, we should say that he must have breathed the same air, and been educated in the same belief and ways of thought, as the first disciples. He would have been just what Apollon of Alexandria was before his conversion, 'an eloquent man, learned in the Scriptures'. Nor is there any reason to doubt that the speculations of Alexandria and a knowledge of the Greek language had been transplanted to Judea. The traditions of Judaism expressly speak of Greek learning being cultivated in some of the Rabbinical schools. The coincidences between Philo and St Paul and St John are another evidence that such must have been the case. For how did these coincidences arise? Either by Philo copying from St Paul, which is refuted by dates; or (to omit the case of St Paul and St John copying from Philo, as not worth considering) by the circumstance of their living in a common atmosphere and using a common language. The Greek of the New Testament, when compared with that of the LXX, appears of itself to afford a proof of a long continued cultivation and development of the language among Jews of Palestine; and the comparatively distant, though not less real connexion of the writings of Philo and the New Testament also tends to show the widely spread diffusion of the same habit of thought<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> In the following sketch I have to acknowledge many obligations to Gfrörer's work, *Philo und die Jüdisch-Alexandrinische Theologie*, which was the first, and is still the fullest and most complete, inquiry into the present subject. In some respects he appears to me unsatisfactory. 1st. He has exaggerated the resemblances between Philo and the New Testament, making them, I think, more real and less verbal than they are in fact. 2ndly. From the plan of his work there arises an impression which is disadvantageous to the New Testament, as he brings together in one the coincidences scattered through many volumes, and which, as we read them in Philo himself, have less of prominence and importance. 3rdly. He loses sight of the difference of spirit in the New Testament and Philo; as Philo himself remarks on 'the concentrated style' of the Old Testament, it may be observed also of the New that the absence of rhetoric strikingly distinguishes the writers of the New Testament from Philo, as well as from most Greek writers of their age. 4thly. He often speaks as though Philo had a system of philosophy independent of the Mosaic writings. Is he not rather a theologian than a philosopher? Like modern theologians who have fallen under



Philo is bound up with his age and country, of the literary character of which his works are the chief monument. The key to them is the character of that age, viewed in connexion with which they are a curious chapter in the history of the human mind; apart from it they wear only the appearance of learned trifling. No real mental phenomenon is thus unmeaning; the eccentric fancies of an individual are commonly worthless; but a phase of thought which has overspread the world, though equally 'the fabric of a vision', is always interesting and important. The age of the Alexandrian philosophy has a deceitful resemblance with our own, and yet in many respects is more different from us than the classical times of Greece and Rome. It has forms of logic and rhetoric, and abundance of abstract terms, in which all ideas are moulded and balanced; yet combined with this logical and rhetorical accuracy, there is an entire absence of speculation or of common-sense. Nothing is understood truly; everything becomes a dream of words; facts, the only source of real knowledge, are neglected. It is difficult to us to comprehend, but it is nevertheless true, that to have explained a few verses of the law or the prophets in their natural sense was beyond the power of the teachers of Alexandria. They could reason upon them, they could paraphrase them, they could allegorize them, but they could not interpret them; they could not fix their minds on the text itself; they were not simple enough to get at the original meaning. Besides this over-logical and over-rhetorical character, another peculiarity of the age is antiquarianism; it is encumbered with the opinions of the past. Nature had once overpowered and carried captive the mind of man; books now did so. The same devotion, which had formerly dwelt with awe on the terrors of the world without, now turned with mystic reverence to the letter of ancient writings. The earlier Greek philosophy was without antecedents; it came fresh from the soul of the philosopher, casting his eyes downward

the influence of systems of philosophy in the interpretation of Scripture, he applied the Neoplatonism of his day to the interpretation of the Mosaic writings, which form the true circle in which his system is contained.

I have also to acknowledge that I have derived assistance from the elaborate article of Dähne on Philo in Ersch & Grüber's *Encyclopædia*, and from the account of Philo in Ewald's recently published volume.

The older work of Bryant is likewise curious and interesting, because he traces the resemblance between Philo and the New Testament, in the belief that Philo borrowed from the Apostles. Hence he will be considered by many as an unsuspected witness to the reality of these resemblances.

on the earth beneath his feet, and upward to the blue sky. It was a new birth ; its connexion even with mythology was unconscious. But the secondary age of which we are speaking, learned and not original, having a form of speculation without the power thereof, ever recurring to the past, yet utterly devoid of true criticism or of historical insight, was embarrassed with the ideas of a prior world which it could neither accept nor reject, having too its own further ground, from which it was equally impossible to recede. There was no other way but to carry past philosophies in its train, uniting them all with each other and with itself, as fancy or association might suggest.

Philosophy has been sometimes regarded as the free effort of the human mind towards the attainment of truth by abstract ideas. Nothing could less truly describe the character of the Alexandrian school, which was the creation of circumstances, predestined from its birth to be what it was. It had no capacity of resisting new thoughts, from whatever source they were intruded. The therapeute of Alexandria could no more disengage himself from the worship of ideas than the Greek of Homer's time from the Greek mythology. Some plastic power reproduced in his mind the impressions which he received. No one asked is this reasonable, is this consistent, is there any proof of this ? Every influence mingled and was reflected. The age was over-educated for its natural force. It was an age of imitation, the literature of which displayed no true feeling or creative power, and had no grasp of history or of life. Never perhaps has there existed another age, with so much apparent cultivation, so utterly a stranger to the first principles of knowledge.

This philosophy received a peculiar character from its connexion with Judaism. As in later times the Christian Fathers, when they passed beyond the immediate circle of Christianity, awoke to the fact that God had not left Himself without a witness, even in the writings of Greek philosophers ; so too the Jew of Alexandria, first coming into contact with the stores of heathen wisdom, 'the good, the beautiful, and the true', could not fail of receiving a more than transient impression from them. But in such a mind the difficulty arose,—Whence had these men such wisdom ? The received answer with Philo was that they had it from Moses himself. Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, were implicitly contained in the Pentateuch ; nay, they are even blamed for not acknowledging the source whence they derived their wisdom. Moses himself 'at an early age attained the very summits of philosophy' (Philo, *De Creat. Mun.*, c. 2), or, in the language of Scripture, was 'learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians'.

In the same spirit that the heathen Neoplatonist invented travels of Plato and Pythagoras in Egypt or India, as he obtruded upon them oriental conceptions, did the Jew of Alexandria assert that the connexion which his own wayward fancy had invented between Plato and Moses was based upon an historical fact.

A great interval seems to separate the Platonic ideas from 'the Lord God who brought up the children of Israel out of the house of Egypt'. In Plato the ideas come first; they are prior to all phenomena, and any attempt to describe them as residing in an infinite mind reaches beyond his conception of them. But the Alexandrian philosophy had made this further step; its ideas were already embodied in a person; and, on the other hand, the conception of God, which was held by the Israelite himself, was not absolutely the same with that which had prevailed in the earlier period of Jewish history. Change of time and place had exercised an influence on the Jewish faith; it had become more a philosophy and less a mode of life. The scenes of the history of the Jews, witnessed by so many local monuments, were afar off. They were dwelling in a foreign country, and using a foreign language; they had adopted the Greek version of the Scriptures; many of them were leading a peculiar and ascetic life. The temple and the temple sacrifices were in another land, seen through distance, solemn religious ideas, rather than outward and visible facts. The Jew of Alexandria, 'homo desideriorum', still sought for something more than this, and confessed that in Egypt at least 'he was a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth'.

The great instrument whereby Greek philosophy was brought into harmony with the Jewish Scriptures was allegorical interpretation. When the belief in the Greek mythology began to wax dim, two means were taken to give the semblance of reality to the dreams of the past. First, they were allegorized; secondly, they were rationalized. From the second of these methods, supposing it could have been applied to the Hebrew Scriptures, the mind of the Israelite would have turned away with disgust. But the first of them was just suited to his fancy; even his reverence for the letter of Scripture tended to foster rather than to discourage it. For what unknown mysteries might he not expect to find there? What wonder if God spake not to His servant Moses as one man speaks to another? It was not to be expected that the divine language should be easy and intelligible; rather it might be imagined that a labyrinth of truths would lurk behind every numeral or particle. The whole system of Philo may be described as rhetoric turned logic; ignorant of the true

nature of language, presuming on its accuracy, allowing nothing for its uncertainty and irregularity, he infers endless consequences from trivial expressions. 'He says this, he does not say that'; therefore some false and far-fetched deduction is to be drawn. 'His expressions are the most perfect that can be conceived, yet how do they fall short of his thought!' 'Everywhere there are marks of design, in the structure of sentences no less than in the creation of the world'. 'It cannot be supposed that an inspired writer would use one word instead of another without good reason'. The worst extravagances of mystical interpretation among the Fathers, combined with the most tedious platitudes of a modern sermon, will convey an idea of the manner in which Philo 'improves' Scripture.

A few more characteristics of his system will serve as an introduction to the tenets of the system itself.

First, he is absolutely devoid of any historical sense of truth. He has no perception of the characters about whom he is speaking, or the scenes in which they lived. The features which he attributes to them are generally taken from some chance expression or incidental circumstance. There is no attempt to group them in one, or analyze their connexion with each other; he is incapable of comprehending them as men of like passions with ourselves. To him they are types and symbols of which he reads in the Book of the Law. It would not be true to say that his interpretations uniformly supersede the historical meaning; but, on the other hand, he is wholly indifferent to it. Secondly, he may be said to adapt the words of Scripture to his own moral ideas. Where any narrative in the Book of the Law seems to him unworthy of the writer, or discordant with his own belief—he turns aside into the flowery paths of allegory. He would sooner a thousand times renounce the meaning of the text, than admit in the earlier chapters of *Genesis* a visible appearance of God. Often he has recourse to pious frauds; the words 'Noah was drunken' he explains as equivalent to 'he used the wine' (*Quæstiones in Genesim*, ii, 68; compare *Legum Allegoriæ*, ii, 16); and he further goes on to praise the Patriarch for 'being naked in his own house', and not out of doors. Of such expressions as 'God repented' he says nearly as we should do, that they are accommodations: 'Every expression of this sort is connected with learning and the utility of instruction, rather than with the nature of truth' (*Quæst. in Gen.*, ii, 54). Thirdly, he, in general, pays no regard to the connexion of a passage; each clause, and sometimes each word, is considered by itself, so that even if we were to admit the principle of his interpretations,

the whole narrative is hardly ever consistent with itself ; commonly a new connexion is elicited by the adaptation of the types to one another, just as we can imagine a person with a wrong key, yet by the help of enthusiasm and a flexible system of symbols, interpreting the hieroglyphics, or the Sinaitic inscriptions. Fourthly, in his interpretations he adopts fixed signs : as sheep for the affections, holes for the senses ; a field is explained to mean a struggle, Egypt is the seat of the passions ; Cain means folly and also possession ; Sarah is the mother of opinion, Hagar encyclical knowledge ; Adam is the mind, Eve the outward sense, and the like. The uniformity with which several of these signs are used is one proof among many that Philo was not the first inventor of them, but that they were conventional among his countrymen. Fifthly, it may be observed that his almost entire ignorance of Hebrew leads him to build solely on the Greek text, in the explanation of which he often seeks to gather a profound meaning from mere awkwardness of translation. Thus, for instance, he says that the word *προσέθηκε*, in the account of the birth of Abel, implies a previous *ἀφαίρεσις* (Mangey, i, 163) ; and that *θανάτω θανατούμεθα*, in the narrative of the fall (i, 65), must refer to two kinds of death, for how, he asks, can a man die except by death ? Sixthly, he perpetually raises unmeaning questions, which he disposes of by still more unmeaning answers ; e.g. ' Why Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves into girdles ? Because the fruit of the fig is very sweet, and its leaves hard ; that is to say, pleasure is slippery and smooth in appearance, but in reality hard '. ' Why did the deluge take place in the 600th year of the life of Noah, and in the seventh month, and on the twenty-seventh day of the month ? ' and endless similar inquiries, with a ' firstly ', ' secondly ', ' thirdly ', reaching sometimes to a ' seventhly ' or ' eighthly ' (*Quæst. in Gen.*, i, 18, 30, 40, 41 ; ii, 16). But nowhere is Philo's extravagance so glaring as in his tricks with numbers. For every number or proportion which occurs he has a reason. The mention of a six, or a twelve, or, above all, a seven, calls up a train of thought in his mind, which commonly extends over several pages, and is with difficulty brought to a termination. (*Comp. Quæst. in Gen.*, i, 83, 91 ; ii, 5, 12, 14 ; iii, 38, 39.) Arithmetic exercises the same influence over him which astrology continued to exercise a thousand years later.

The system of Philo is at once mystical and logical. Mysticism is the end, logic is the means, if, indeed, that can be termed logic which is absolutely devoid of the first principles of reasoning. Or rather, perhaps, logic is only the method which mysticism

pursues ('though this be madness, yet there's method in it'). Philo is a kind of prophet, as well as a rhetorician. He himself regarded the allegorical interpretation as a sort of secondary inspiration with which he was gifted; he had often felt its power in composition, when, as he tells us, new ideas came into his mind, he knew not how or whence. 'He was empty and became full; thoughts rained into his soul from above; he was in a trance, and had a flow of interpretation, and an enjoyment of light' (i, 441; compare also i, 144). Those who partook of the same gift were *ιεροί, καθαροί, μύσται* (i, 147); he exhausts in their praises all the terms which the heathen applied to the initiated. A select few only were thus inspired; unlike 'to the poor the Gospel is preached', *τῶν ἀγγελίων οὐδεὶς*, says Philo, *τῆς ἀληθοῦς ζωῆς κεκοινῶνῆκε* (no common man hath part in the true life). But the allegorical interpretation was also a dialectical and traditional art. As the Patristical explanations of Scripture were under a kind of authority, as in our own interpretations of the *Book of Revelation* a certain uniformity may be observed notwithstanding the many discrepancies of detail, so the allegory of Philo was not without a settled principle. He himself speaks of *τοὺς τῆς ἀλληγορίας κανόνας* (the canons of allegory). Its first symbols, such as the sun for reason, or the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, were such as the common-sense of all men, or the text itself, naturally suggested. In after times they were neither natural nor arbitrary, but fixed by use and the authority of eminent teachers. The interpretation of them, like the interpretation of tongues in the New Testament, was a religious service. Philo speaks of the Essenes in Palestine, and the Therapeutæ in the neighbourhood of the lake Mœris (ii, 458, 475), as meeting together on the Sabbath day, and above all on the Sabbath of Sabbaths, to interpret the law in its hidden sense. The Therapeutæ had 'compilations of ancient men', out of which they taught the allegorical method, and hymns which formed a part of the worship. Philo's own writings are a sufficient indication that new discoveries were not excluded. He reads the Book of the Law like a hieroglyph containing endless symbols hard to be understood, in which one sign has many meanings, and many signs are applied to the same truth.

Yet, as we wander in this labyrinth of folly, another aspect of his works must not be altogether forgotten. It is true that there is no puerility which may not be extracted from them; no exaggeration of fact or language which may not be found in Philo's pages. Even in his two historical treatises, it is hard to place confidence in his statements. And still he leaves the

impression upon us of a great and good man. His whole life is a perseverance in philosophy, from which he is only called away to plead the cause of his suffering countrymen; his precepts everywhere breathe the spirit of the purest, almost of an ascetic morality; and in many respects he may be favourably contrasted with Plato. Unlike the Athenian philosopher, he everywhere preserves the sense of the feebleness of the human intellect in the pursuit of truth; and he has far juster notions of the relation of man to God, and of social and family life. In point of literary merit it would be idle to compare them; the golden age of Greece has nothing in common with 'the dregs' of Alexandria. Yet Philo, notwithstanding his intensely rhetorical tendency, is far from having lost all traces even of true dignity of style. His great object was certainly a noble one—to enlighten his own nation, and in some degree the Gentile world, respecting the nature of the Jewish religion, read as it could only be read in Alexandria, by the light of Greek learning, and adapted to the moral ideas of his own age. If discarding the method we regard only the end, Philo will stand high among ethical teachers.

The system of Philo may, in one point of view, be considered as his method of interpreting the Mosaic Scriptures. For without this he has no system. All his thoughts are incrustated on the divine word; it would be a violence to arrange them independently. It seemed to him that God had only revealed Himself to the Jewish people; and accordingly the glosses and patchwork of Greek philosophy which he introduces into the text are not additions of his own, but its natural meaning. Or, to state the same thing in a way which is more paradoxical, and yet better expresses his view, the Mosaical law was the natural and original form of the Platonic and Alexandrian philosophy.

His writings include nearly a complete series of commentaries on the Book of the Law. No other books form the subject of any of his separate works. Many are not even mentioned by him; the few that are mentioned supplying but a small number of quotations, not perhaps more than one in twenty, compared with the books of Moses. It is not certain that Philo excluded any of our received books from the Canon of Scripture; but neither is there any proof that the idea of the Canon was known to him at all. In repeating the famous narrative of the LXX (ii, 139), he confines the miracle to the Pentateuch. The prophets are commonly quoted by him in a singular manner, with the introduction, *εἰπέ τις τῶν παλαιοῦν προφητῶν, οἱ τις τῶν φοιτητῶν Μωϋσεως*. Their words are chiefly used in illustration, and not made the basis of allegorical interpretations. Taking these circumstances

together, it seems probable that in the view of Philo the law stood on a different footing from other writings of the Old Testament, though it does not follow that he drew any explicit distinction between them.

It is in the Pentateuch, and especially in the history of the creation, and the lives of the patriarchs, that his mystic fancy delights to revel. A short analysis of his treatise *De Mundi Creatione*, including as it does most of his peculiarities, will give the reader a more lively idea of his method of proceeding than any further description. His commentary on the first chapter may be summed up as follows :

1. 2. He begins with the praises of Moses, whose thoughts are indeed beyond all praise ; who had gone to the very end of philosophy, and knew well that there must be a δραστήριον ὄργανον (an active instrument), that is God, and a παθητικὸν ὄργανον (a passive instrument), without life or motion, answering to intellect and matter, which latter it were absurd to suppose without beginning. He says that God made the world in six days, not because He had need of time, but because six is a perfect number, capable of being divided by two, by three, and by six, and is male and female, and odd and even (ἀρτισπέρυττος). And before God created it He made an intellectual world (κόσμος νοητός) to be the paradigm and idea of it, which is none other but the reason of God (ἀρχέτυπον παράδειγμα, ἰδέα τῶν ἰδεῶν, ὁ Θεοῦ λόγος). This he did, as one of old said (Plato, *Tim.*, 29), 'because He was good, which goodness of His He imparts to all things as they are able to bear it'.

Still confining himself to the intellectual world, Philo goes on to remark that the words in the beginning (ἐν ἀρχῇ) must be explained not of time, for time had not yet come into existence, but of number and order ('non in tempore sed cum tempore finxit Deus mundum'—Augustine). He describes the form of the heaven and empty space which God made after the pattern of His own mind ; the chiefest things in which were light and air, the images of the reason of God, and of the spirit of God. Thus the creation of the intellectual world had an end. To mark its isolation from the rest, the word used in the fifth verse of the 1st chapter of *Genesis* is not 'the first day' (πρώτη), but 'one day' (μία).

He next discourses of the heaven which is the visible boundary of the world (οὐρανὸς ὅρος ὀρατός), of the 'sea and dry land', and of the fruits of the earth, which latter, he observes, grew up in a moment, and yet were intended by Providence to be eternal. He remarks on the apparent inconsistency of the plants springing



up before the sun, which he thinks was done to show the creative power of God, who was capable of acting no less without than with the intervention of second causes. He then speaks of the creation of the sun on the fourth day, which was not of choice, but of necessity, seeing the number four is possessed of so many and such wonderful properties.

Fishes, birds, and beasts were next created in a continuous series, and at the last God made man in His own image; not that God is in the form of man, but that the mind is to man what God is to the world. He says let 'us' make man, not as of one but as of many. Why is the plural used? Philo is uncertain how to explain this, but thinks that it may arise from the fact, that God was creating a being of mixed nature, in whom He Himself implanted the good, and employed angels to assist in adding the evil. Next, the question arises: Why did God create man last? Four answers are given to this inquiry: 1st, because God, having given man reason, desired to provide a theatre for his intelligence, and also, 2ndly, to furnish him with the means of supplying his natural wants (for in the state of innocence the earth produced all things necessary for the good of man, and may do so again if men cease from their wickedness); 3rdly, by reason of the order of His work, which required that He should place man, the highest of corruptible things, at the end, as He has placed heaven, the highest of incorruptible things, at the beginning; 4thly, man was created last to be the master of the rest; he is the pilot, the herdsman, the driver of the inferior animals.

(From a comparison of the commentary on the next chapter, it appears that Philo is here speaking, not of the actual but of the ideal man. Finding in chap. ii a recommencement of the history of the creation of man, he knew no way to account for it except by this distinction.)

When the heavens and the earth were completed, God hallowed the seventh day. Here Philo branches forth into the praises of the number seven, in a digression which occupies many pages. He first divides seven into two kinds, *ἔκτος τῆς δέκαδος* and *περιεχόμενον ἐν τῇ δέκαδι* (outside ten and within ten), meaning, by the first of the two, arithmetical progression of seven numbers, with intervals of twos or threes, containing the image of cube and square, of essence and superficies. Again, he takes the simple number seven, and shows all the modes in which its units are combined, and how their harmonies are the first principles of music and geometry. Seven is like God, 'neither begetting nor begotten' (*οὔτε γεννῶν οὔτε γεννώμενος*); like Victory, whom poets fable to have had no

mother ; like Minerva, springing at once out of the head of Divinity. It agrees with nature, and, if multiplied by four, answers to the time of the moon (28). Solon and Hippocrates tell of the seven ages of man. It is a cube and a plane figure at once. All nature is in love with it. There are 7 planets, 7 zones, 7 Pleiades, 7 senses, 7 parts of the human body, 7 secretions, 7 motions, 7 months' children, 7 strings to the lyre, 7 vowels, etc. Great as it is, it is appropriately named ἀπὸ τοῦ σεβασμοῦ and σεμνοῦ (ἑπτα = septem).

At ver. 4 of chap. ii he dwells on the form of the sentence, 'These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created in the day that the Lord God made the earth, and the heavens, and every plant of the field *before* it was in the earth, and every herb of the field *before* it grew'. This, he says, refers to the intellectual world, which was completed *before* the actual world came into existence. Next he enlarges upon the 6th verse : 'then went up a mist (in the LXX, fountain) from the earth', in reference to which he remarks upon the wonderful sagacity of Moses, who distinguished the ocean, the fourth element, from fresh water, which, like the catamenia in women, existed in the bosom of the earth.

Next man was formed ; not he of whom we spoke before, who was in the image of God, and belonged only to the intellectual world, but visible to sight, and with distinction of sex. He was formed in the best manner, doubtless for many reasons : First, because the earth of which he was made was recently separated from water ; secondly, because it was clay ; thirdly, because God is good. He was created in the youth of all things, inferior to the ideal man, but far superior to anything which we can now show, for the copies have been becoming weaker, the attraction of the magnet fainter, by being imparted. He came not into a world of solitude, but to a great city full of corporeal and incorporeal essences. He is both mortal and immortal, made up of the four elements, and at once terrestrial, aquatic, volatile, celestial. Neither have his posterity altogether lost their pre-eminence, for they still rule over the brute creation, which God, as soon as he was created, asked him to name ; not because He could be ignorant Himself, but that He might hear him exercising his reason in its most pure and perfect state.

Thus far he was in the image of God alone upon the earth. Woman was the beginning of his guilt. He saw the double and half of himself (διττὰ τμήματα of Plato's *Symposium*), and was led by the impulse of desire to unite himself therewith. This was the commencement of bodily pleasure. Before this, God had

planted a garden in Paradise of trees bearing immortal fruit. Not that there really *could* have been such a place ; but Paradise means the reason, and the myriad plants are opinions, and the trees of good and evil are prudence and piety ; and the serpent is the symbol of pleasure, sent by God to seduce the woman (who is in fact *αἰσθησις*, 'sense', the feminine part of our nature), who in her turn seduced the reason.

Philo proceeds : ' Now these things are not mythical inventions, such as delight the herd of poets and of sophists, but they are types inviting to allegory in accordance with their secret meaning '. He then follows out the various symbols in detail. God sent a curse upon man and upon all creation. He might have destroyed them, but of His infinite mercy He allowed them to remain.

Philo concludes by a summary of five things which he says Moses incidentally teaches in his history of Creation. (I) That there is a God, against atheists. (II) That He is one God, against those who transfer to heaven the meanest form of human governments, an ochlocracy. (III) That the world was created. (IV) That this created world was one like its Creator. (V) That there is a Providence. Happy is he who knows this !

In this brief analysis of a considerable work, it has been impossible to do justice to its rhetorical, or, in a few passages, to its poetical character. It gives, however, a fair notion of many of Philo's peculiarities, such as the extraordinary importance which he attaches to principles of number, and the manner in which he builds startling theories on hypercritical remarks on the language, and on miserable etymologies. It illustrates, further, the mode in which he presses heathen writers into the service of the books of Moses. Necessity, or rather some numerical law, is always in the background : the remembrance of Plato, and even of the categories of Aristotle, is never far off. The passage in which he speaks of the use of the plural in the creation of man, and not, as he expressly remarks, of the inanimate creation, is remarkable as indicating a close connexion between his view and the Gnostic or Oriental doctrine, that God made evil with the assistance of an inferior angel or demiurge. Lastly, the distinction which he attempts to establish between a myth and a type is worthy of attention, as, however arbitrary his method of proceeding may appear, it indicates his unshaken belief that he had discovered the true objective meaning of the Book of the Law.

The commentary which commences with the narrative of the creation, is carried through the rest of the book of *Genesis*, and

extends also to the books of *Exodus* and *Leviticus*. Many of the thoughts contained in the first part of this commentary occur, with some differences, in the three extant books of *Quæstiones et Solutiones in Genesin*, which have been preserved in the Armenian, and are translated by Aucher into Latin; this, in the opinion of Ewald, is the earliest of Philo's writings. The later portions are full of an eclectic moral philosophy, with which he delights to overlay the characters of Scripture. Philo is especially full on the lives of the Patriarchs, whom he regards as τρόποι ψυχῆς, and ἔμψυχοι νόμοι. Thus Abraham is the type of the good man, ἐκ διδασκαλίας; Isaac, ἐκ φύσεως; Jacob, ἐξ ἀσκήσεως. Sarah is τρόπος τῆς ἀρετῆς γενικῆς; Leah, τῆς ἀρετῆς μισουμένης; Joseph is the πολιτικός (Mangey, ii, 9). Of the earlier ones, Adam is the ἄνθρωπος γηγενής, or χοϊκός; Cain is the type of covetousness; Enos of hope; Enoch of repentance (this explanation apparently arises out of a misconception of the word μετέθηκε in the LXX, see Mangey, ii, 3, 4); Noah of righteousness (Mangey, ii, 3, 5, 9, 36, 408-16). Nor is it merely the names or general characters of the Patriarchs in which he finds materials for symbolism. The commonest statements respecting them, or the simplest events of their lives, receive a similar explanation. Take the following as an illustration (Mangey, i, 466; ii, 11, 12): Philo is commenting on the narrative of Abraham going forth from Ur of the Chaldees to dwell in Haran. Ur, he says, signifies astrology; Haran signifies holes, that is, the senses: if we put both together, the meaning of God's command will be, 'Leave thy Chaldean astrology'; cease contemplating the world around thee, and contemplate thyself. Thy senses will teach thee a new lesson, that they are nothing without the soul. Immediately after this, he remarks that God appeared to Abraham: ὁ θεὸς ὤφθη τῷ σοφί; not, he remarks, ὁ σοφὸς εἶδε θεόν, for no man can know God except so far as God reveals Himself to him. In this he finds a proof of the truth of his explanation, as also in the circumstance that at this time God changed the name Abram, which he interprets 'sublime father', occupied with Chaldean astronomy, into Abraham, which means, he tells us, 'elect father of sound': 'elect' referring to his goodness; 'sound' meaning speech or language, the father of which is mind (i, 103, 139, 140). The last pilgrimage from Haran to Palestine he explains to mean the progress from sense to the true and perfect knowledge of God.

Another example may be selected from the book *De Somniis*, in which Philo takes occasion to explain the verses, *Gen.*, xxviii, 10, 11: Ἰακώβ ἐπορεύθη εἰς Χαρρὰν καὶ ὑπήντησε τόπῳ καὶ ἐκοιμήθη ἐκεῖ, ἔδω

γὰρ ὁ ἥλιος (Mangey, i, 638). The explanation is as follows: while the ascetic, ὁ ἀσκήτης, lived in the senses, he met the divine word (who, as the fulness of all spiritual power committed to him by God, is symbolized by place). 'For the sun went down', *i.e.*, in other words the light of human reason had set, or, according to another interpretation, the word appeared when the light of the divine presence had set. It is scarcely necessary to dwell on the perversity and inconsistency of this explanation, which seems to have arisen from Philo preserving a fixed meaning, which we find recurring in other places for the same words: for Haran the senses, for τόπος either God or the λόγος, for ἥλιος the light of divine or human reason. The problem was, how these three counters could be connected with each other.

One more example may be added, which exhibits the tendency of Philo to digress upon a word. It is taken from the book entitled *Quod potiori deterior insidiari solet*, the text of which is the death of Abel. It begins with the words 'Cain said unto Abel, his brother: "Let us go into the field."' And it came to pass that Cain rose up against his brother and slew him'. What Cain proposes to do is this: having by invitation led Abel on to a dispute, to convince him by main force, using plausible and probable sophisms; for the field to which he invites him to come, we may call a symbol of rivalry and contention. For 'field' is now substituted 'plain'; and a sudden transition is made to Joseph, with his coat of many colours, going to visit his brethren who are tending their sheep in the plain. That he has a coat of many colours, signifies that he is an interpreter of labyrinth-like learning, and he goes to unlearn this wisdom to men who are tending their sheep, that is, controlling their irrational affections in a place of conflict. So wholly unconnected, and even at variance, with the moral of the text, is that moral which Philo attempts to elicit from it.

The inquiry which we have thus far pursued tends to throw a favourable light on the mystical interpretation of the early Christian Fathers. For the utmost that can be said against them is, that they were on a level with their age, and did not shake off the scholastic trammels in which they had been brought up. The allegorical method was as natural in their day as the devotional or critical in our own. It had existed four centuries before them; it seemed to be the only means of making use of the Old Testament Scriptures. If from time to time they are found making extravagant suppositions to support a favourite theory, playing with words, numbers, or colours, reading the Old Testament backwards, that they may

absolutely identify it with the New, we may compare them first with Philo, secondly with ourselves. (1) They occasionally allegorize numbers; he, it may be said, never misses the opportunity: they in a few instances supersede the historical meaning; he can scarcely be said to allow the historical meaning to stand at all. The difference, though one of degree, is yet so great as to be also a difference in kind. That the Fathers were great critics will not be maintained; but they were almost as far as any modern historian from the dreamy, inconsecutive apprehension of historical facts which we find in Philo, who is as entirely devoid of the historical sense as an Indian philosopher. In another point of view, Philo may be regarded as a witness in their favour, inasmuch as his writings show the extraordinary power which in that age the allegorical system exercised in the world. It seems as if mankind, after being raised above things of sense by the progress of the human mind, relapsed again into the world of sense; and, instead of gathering the true lesson from them, sought to find in individual objects the conductors to an invisible world. From this influence, the Fathers, in a great degree, freed themselves; in the interpretation of Scripture they are not only on a level with their age, but above their age. They must be measured not by their credulity or deficiency in knowledge—this could hardly in their circumstances have been otherwise; but by the moral purity of their writings and the intensity of their efforts, amid some extravagancies, to sanctify and ennoble human nature.

(2) It will make us more lenient, both towards Philo and the Fathers, to remember, that the method which they employ has not ceased to be practised by ourselves. It cannot be said that we have left off interpreting Scripture, by what we have brought to the text, not by what we have found there; or that we have not assumed double senses, types, allegories, either to avoid difficulties, or to adapt the Old Testament to the New, and, in general, the meaning of Scripture to the opinions of our own time; or that in portions of Scripture, such as the *Book of Daniel* and *The Apocalypse*, we have not run into excesses about numbers, colours, and animals, as great as those of Philo in the *Book of Genesis*; or that we have not argued from separate verses of Scripture detached from their connexion; or that we have not invented a system where there was no system, and asked for reasons where there were no reasons; or that we have not perverted analogies in the application of Scripture; or that we have not blended Aristotelian logic or Platonic fancies with the words of our Lord or St Paul; or that we have not trans-

figured the characters of Scripture until they have become ideas rather than living persons ; or that we have not sought to connect heathen mythology or philosophy, stories of Deucalion Iphigenia, Bacchus, Orpheus, with the narrative or doctrines of Scripture ; or that we have not at times unduly confined human knowledge within the circle of Scriptural truth ; or that we have not misused classical learning in illustration of Scripture, introducing allusions and refinements of language where they had no place ; or that we have not substituted rhetorical praises of Scripture for a true apprehension of its meaning ; or that we have not done violence to Scripture where plain words seemed to be at variance with the practice of our own day : or that we have not sermonized over the text instead of explaining it ; or that we have not put traditional interpretations in the place of real ones, repeating probabilities until they grew into certainties ; or that we have not erected the volume of the book itself into a sort of divinity, asserting our ever varying apprehension of its meaning to be the Unchangeable Image ; lastly, that we have not degraded science or history into mere instruments for eliciting out of Scripture our own belief, when we ought to have recognized their true dignity and independent authority in the sight of God and man.

Instead of analyzing in detail any further portions of Philo's works, it will be more convenient to group our extracts around those subjects, or leading ideas, which Philo and the New Testament have in common. We must guard the reader against supposing that Philo and St Paul or St John are more like than is really the case, owing to the accident of all the resemblances being collected together in a short space. Surprising as these coincidences are, they are, in the writings of Philo, scattered through many volumes amidst endless platitudes. Nor can we be sure that he himself would have recognized or acknowledged the connected system which has been collected from his works. Writers like Philo always waver in their statements. There is no whole or framework which contains the parts of their philosophy, no scientific unity of idea which commands and subordinates the details. The tendency to mysticism and the habit of rhetorical exaggeration render consistency impossible.

§ 1. The centre of our interest in the Alexandrian philosophy, is the doctrine of the *λογος* (Word). This, however, immediately flows from the prior doctrine of the nature and being of God ; to understand the former, we must begin, therefore, with the latter.

In different parts of the Old Testament there are great

differences in the manner of God's revelation of Himself. In the earlier portions He is described as walking in the garden in the cool of the day, as talking to Abraham, as wrestling with Jacob, as appearing to Moses in the burning bush, or to Moses and the elders on Mount Sinai: but we should be far from expecting similar appearances in the days of David or of Hezekiah. More and more, in the course of Jewish history, God had been to the Israelites a 'God hiding Himself', as of old, in the pillar of the cloud, or in the recesses of the most holy place, so in later times seen or spoken with only by His prophets, through whom the divine will was communicated to His people. A religious feeling attached itself to the temple, breaking out in acts of rude violence at the very suspicion of its profanation; and yet this was not inconsistent with the conviction which had more and more wrought itself into the mind of the people, that God dwelt not in temples made with hands. 'Behold, even the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him'<sup>1</sup>. In whatever manner it was to be reconciled with the earlier history of the Jewish people, the truth 'that no man had seen God at any time' was not first taught by the Gospel.

There was another circumstance which indirectly tended to remove God further from the view of the Israelites. The glory of Israel had departed—the Lord Jehovah no longer went forth with their armies. He was known of them in wrath rather than in mercy. Was He then the author of the evils of their race? The Platonist of Alexandria would not think this. God was not the author of evil, for He was good. How then did evil arise? It seemed to remove evil from Him to suppose that it was executed by His inferior ministers. 'He sent evil angels among them'. Thus was God, whose presence in the world had once been its life and light, more and more removed from it, that He might be free even from the shadow of a suspicion of evil.

It was the Greek philosophy, even more than the altered national belief, or the change in the circumstances of the people, that contributed to give Philo his peculiar view of the Divine nature. While he retains the Hebrew titles of King of kings and Lord of lords, he adds others which remind us of Aristotle and Plato. God is the τὸ ὄν, νοητὴ φύσις, ὁ νοῦς τῶν ὄντων; the *summum*

<sup>1</sup> Compare Philo: 'Let no such impiety enter our minds (as that God literally planted Paradise), . . . for even the whole world would not be a worthy place or habitation for Him, since He is a place to Himself, and He Himself is sufficient for Himself, filling up and surrounding everything else' etc.—*Leg. Alleg.*, i, 14.



*genus* (γενικώτατον), the efficient cause, the unit, better than wisdom itself, or good itself. Many of his figures of speech are borrowed from Plato. God, he says, is the driver of the chariot, the pilot of the ship, the shepherd of the flock; over souls, and bodies, and thoughts, and words, and angels, and earth, and air, and heaven, and things seen, and powers unseen, the Ruler of all things, the Father of the world. He is omnipotent and omniscient, εἰς καὶ τὸ πᾶν, ἄλλοις ἅπασιν ἀρχὴ τοῦ ποιεῖν.

But the leading idea which, more than any other, seems to have taken possession of the mind of Philo and his contemporaries is, that the Divine Being is incomprehensible and invisible. There is nothing which he repeats so often as this; nothing for the sake of which he is so ready to pervert the meaning of Scripture. As the Eleatic philosopher of being, so of God, Philo will admit of no predicates; for which reason he says that ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ Θεὸς σός (I am the Lord thy God) is an incorrect expression (i, 582). To the prophets and Moses he supposed the true nature of God to be equally unintelligible as to himself. In the same way that the Platonist doctrine of the *ιδέαι* involves a chasm between *φαινόμενα* and *ὄντα* (χωριστὰ τὰ εἶδη), so did the Neoplatonist conception of the Divinity which was the embodiment of those *ιδέαι* absolutely withdraw and separate Him from the world. Or as Philo said in Aristotelian phrase, τὸ ὄν ἢ ὄν οὐχὶ τῶν πρὸς τι (i, 582).

Such doctrines, whether in religion or philosophy, cannot be consistently carried out. If we have no knowledge of things in themselves, what proof have we that they exist? If we have no knowledge of the Divine nature, it is useless to tell us that there is a God. Hence, in all ages, philosophy, and yet more religion, have availed themselves of the inconsistency in the human mind which allows men to believe truths not wholly reconcilable with each other. The mystic has no difficulty in dwelling on an object of faith, which is no object; the intensity of religious feeling converting a merely negative notion into a positive one. Others have introduced the fiction of a lower and a higher consciousness, the former limited by the human faculties, the latter independent of them. It is, of course, impossible to get rid of the real difficulty by any verbal distinction. Philo has his own method of smoothing the discrepancy, which is as follows: In His true nature God is incomprehensible, and yet there is a certain sense also in which He is cognizable by contemplation and by the observation of His works (i, 107). The latter is the lower way, which extracts a knowledge of God from the sight of trees and flowers, sun and stars; the other, which is the more

excellent, is the way of intellectual communion or Divine imagination, as it may be termed (*θεὸν θεῶ φαντασιῶσαι*), imparted by God Himself, who, when we contemplate Him, is contemplating Himself in us (ii, 415). This higher knowledge of God is the knowledge of a pure unity, as of a form without shadow, such as the sun sheds upon the earth at midday. Thus, even in this sort of knowledge, little is known of the Divine Being but that He exists.

The same difficulty met Philo and the Alexandrians from what may be termed the objective side, in representing the relation of God to the world. If God is unconnected with the world, how does He act upon it? To answer this difficulty, Philo introduces the fiction of *δυνάμεις*. These may be described in the words of the poet as the

Thrones, dominations, principedoms, virtues, powers,

whereby, as in some Asiatic court, the King of kings is surrounded, his *ὄπαδοί, δορυφόροι, ὑπηρέται, πρόπομποι*. They are efficient causes, the bands of the world; sometimes appearing as persons, as in the visit of the angels to Abraham; also the ideas and *summa genera* of things, as well as the powers by which they are created. The highest of them are called *δυνάμεις χαριστικάι* and *κολαστικάι*; or, in another passage, *ποιητικάι* and *βασιλικάι* (*De Vit. Mosis*, iii, 8); others are the *δύναμις προνοητικῆ, νομοθετικῆ, ἔλεως* (i. 431, 560; ii, 150).

These *δυνάμεις* occupy the same place in Philo's system, as the doctrine of emanations in the Oriental philosophy. They are interposed between God and the world, and yet designed also to connect Him with it. We ourselves, so far as we attribute any substance or reality to God's general laws apart from Himself, have recourse to a similar figure. These *δυνάμεις* may be said to wear a double face; one looking toward the Greek philosophy, and the other to the Old Testament Scriptures. In the first aspect they are but a new name for the Platonic *ιδέαι* (ii, 261), while they themselves serve as intermediate links, now that the chasm to be bridged is thrown further back and placed not between the *ιδέαι* and phenomena, but between God and the world. In another point of view they are the *ἄγγελοι* of the Old Testament; the beings who appeared to Abraham and Lot, themselves persons, and yet modes of Divine existence. Philo says of them, that to spirits they are spirits, but angels or men to men (i, 655). They might be described in the language of the Old Testament as the angels of the Divine presence. They abide in the Word (i, 4).

When God has been removed from the sphere of human intelligence, it may seem absurd to dwell on His moral nature. Yet Philo, forgetful of his transcendentalism, returns in praise and thanksgiving to the natural instincts of the heart. 'His goodness and gentle power is the harmony of all things' (ii, 155). 'To whom', he says, 'shall we give thanks but to God, and by what means but through the things that we have received?' 'In making rain to fall upon the earth, what does He, but make manifest the riches of His goodness?' It is on this side of the Divine nature that Philo delights to dwell. 'Good', he says, 'comes directly from Him, and evil only indirectly'. 'Not only does He judge first and show mercy afterwards, but He shows mercy first, and judges afterwards: for with Him mercy is older than justice'. 'The fulness of His power He never exerts towards any creature'. So again with an antithesis of the prepositions which reminds us of some passages in St Paul's writings as well as of Aristotle, he says, there are two ways in which God works. Some things are only *ὑπ' αὐτοῦ* (by Him); others are *ὑπ' αὐτοῦ*, and *δι' αὐτοῦ* (by Him and through Him) as well (i, 51). Of the former sort is evil, of the latter good; an idea nearly answering to the modern expression, God is the Author of good, but the Permitter of evil.

Three texts of Scripture sum up Philo's view of the nature of the Divine Being. First, 'No man hath seen God at any time'; the thought of his age and nation seeking to harmonize the reverence for the Lord Jehovah with the Greek philosophy, which, however, Philo carries out consistently to the consequence that no man hath seen or known, or can conceive or tell anything of God; and then falls into the inconsistency of making Him the subject of human feelings and emotions. Secondly, 'The pure in heart see God'; not, however, in the sense of our Saviour in the Sermon on the Mount; for the purity spoken of is an ascetic or mystic rather than a human purity, such as was possessed by contemplative sects like the Essenes and Therapeutæ. Thirdly, 'God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth He any man'. To execute evil, therefore, He employs inferior ministers, such as the angels, just as to make Himself known to man at all He employs the agency of the *λόγος*<sup>1</sup>.

§ 2. The *λόγος* has been already spoken of as the centre of the Alexandrian theology. The necessity which led to its

<sup>1</sup> I have to acknowledge that some of the materials of this and the following sections are borrowed from Gfrörer.

introduction may be gathered from the previous section. Man had removed God so far from the world, that there seemed to be no God—nothing to which the human heart could turn, or on which human thought could dwell. The interval was filled up, the system of the world harmonized, the human soul and understanding united with God by the *λόγος*.

Aristotle raises a question which he does not profess to answer: 'Which of the Platonic ideas connected the rest of the ideas with sensible things?' There was a parallel question in the Alexandrian theology, which, although it had far outgrown this, and become, to use a modern expression, the great question of that day, may yet be traced up to a similar dialectical difficulty: 'What has man to do with God, or God with the world?' To this question the *λόγος* supplied the answer.

It is true though wearisome to repeat, yet a thought that should be vividly present to us at every step of this inquiry, that the age of which we are speaking was an age of ideas; an age not balanced by experience, or steadied by practical life; an age as completely overpowered and mastered by abstractions as earlier centuries had been by nature or by mythology. The form had changed; but the one was as much a fiction as the other. The Alexandrian age differs from the mythical, not in its critical spirit, which was the spirit of verbal criticism only, but in its higher conception of morality, its nearer approach to the true idea of God and revelation, and its renunciation of the sensible world. It was mythical and not mythical, poetical and rhetorical at once. Its imagery may be compared to a cast of some soft material, capable of being worked into any form by the hand. It may be described as a colourless mythology.

Ages which are under the power of ideas are also under the power of words. Like the names of the gods in mythology, words played a great part in the Alexandrian system. The Greek philosophy supplied the conception of a Divine *νους*; but what was more important, the Greek language supplied the word *λόγος* with its happy ambiguity of reason and speech, 'outward and inward word', itself a mediator between two worlds. How natural an expression was this of the relation between the outward and visible and the inward and spiritual, to men who had not either the consciousness of fixed laws of nature or the strong sense of human individuality like ourselves! The Alexandrian recognized as readily as a modern German philosopher, that thought and language are two aspects of the same thing.

The extreme readiness with which ideas, such as *λόγος*, *σοφία* *πνεῦμα*, were transmuted into persons, is of itself characteristic of a mythological age. The Greek in Homer's time personified fire, water, and the other elements: and in a doubtful and wavering manner, which may be termed half-personification, sought to embody also abstract ideas, such as strife, fear, and love. The Greek under the Ptolemies personified *νοῦς*, *λόγος*, *πνεῦμα*. In this latter process there were many stages and transitions. It was a sort of inversion of the mythological one, passing not from realities to figures of speech, but from figures of speech to realities. Gradually the abstract term began to stand out, helped by the fortunate accident of a word, and, in the case of the *λόγος*, by its identification with the vision of God in the Pentateuch.

The earliest form of the *λόγος* (word) is the *ἄγγελος* or *εἰκὼν Θεοῦ*, such as was immediately suggested by the language of the Old Testament. For the word *ἄγγελος* itself Philo finds a verbal connexion; we may suppose, he says, that the *ἄγγελος* is so called *ὅτι τὰ μέλλοντα γενήσεσθαι διηγγέλλετο* (*De Vit. Mos.*, i, 13). Another germ of the same thought is the conception of wisdom in the *Book of Proverbs* which in *Ecclesiasticus* is just ceasing to be a figure of speech, and becoming a reality; it was retained in the later Alexandrianism as a sort of feminine *λόγος* (see *infra*). Both these expressions had come into use in Palestine itself, and were known in the schools of the Rabbis. But the original notion in either of its forms, whether the more concrete and allied to sense, or more abstract and ideal, was soon overlaid by the notions of Greek philosophy, which quickly resolved them into each other. Thus the *ἄγγελος* became a *λόγος*, and the *λόγοι* in turn became *ἄγγελοι*. The associations of either were endless; many were supplied by the word itself, still more by Plato and Aristotle; while every passage in the Old Testament in which mention occurred of any type or figure which could by any possibility be connected with it was transferred to the *λόγος*.

First came the great distinction of Philo between *λόγος ἐνδιάθετος* and *λόγος προφορικός* (ii, 154), which is a metaphor taken from the relation between human thought and language. As the thought of a man is to the speech of a man, so is the *λόγος ἐνδιάθετος* to the *λόγος προφορικός*. This, however, is not the only play of words which Philo bases on the different significations of the word *λόγος*. Thus *λόγος* is used for *νόμος*; the Word of God is also the Law of God; *ποιεῖ ὁ ἀστέιος τὸν νόμον, ποιεῖ καὶ τὸν λόγον* (i, 456). Another meaning of *λόγος* assists that philosophy of number which Philo loves; in the sense of ratio of numbers the *λόγος*

bears an important part in the *κόσμος*. As the Eleatic philosopher, wherever the words *ὄν, ἐστί, εἶναι* occurred, seemed to see a confirmation of his favourite theory; so the Alexandrian, whatever might be the sense in which the word *λόγος* was employed, eagerly adapted it to his purpose, and found the evidence of the universality of the idea in the ever-recurring use of the word. Or, to look nearer home for an illustration, as commentators on the Old Testament, wherever they met with the word spirit, have identified it with the third person of the Trinity; or as the early Fathers, in the accidental mention of bread and wine in the Prophets, saw a type and figure of the Eucharist.

The associations derived from Plato and the Greek philosophy so often blend with those of the Old Testament, as to make it difficult to separate them. In a few only the genuine language of Plato is retained. Thus, the *λόγος* is *ιδέα ιδεῶν, εἶδος εἰδῶν*, the habitation of the *ιδέαι*, in which they seem to reside. So, again, according to that explanation of the *ιδέαι* which made them *γέννη*, the *λόγος* is said to be *γενικώτατον*, the *summum genus* which comprehended all things in itself. In like manner the *λόγος* is also termed *τομεύς*, that is, the divider of the genus into its species (i, 504). Here, however, a secondary thought enters in, which gives a curious insight into the network by which the Old Testament and Plato are woven together; the *λόγος* is not only the divider of the genus into its species, but of the sacrifice into its parts (i, 491). In the New Testament similar language occurs, though in a different sense; 'the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword' (*τομώτερος ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν μάχαιραν*) (*Heb.*, iv, 12).

As Plato divided the world into *νοητά* and *αἰσθητά*, Philo makes a corresponding division of the *λόγος*. It is not quite clear whether he designed this to be the same with the one above mentioned of the *λόγος ἐνδιάθετος* and *προφορικὸς*. Where language is the soul of philosophy, we can scarcely suppose a variation of the word without a change of the idea; if indeed it be not the truer view that the word is the idea. In modern phraseology the first of the two pairs of opposites seems to express the more subjective, the other the more objective, aspect of the distinction; the *λόγος ἐνδιάθετος* and *προφορικὸς* standing in the same relation to each other as human speech and human thought, the soul and body of thought; while the twofold *λόγος*, which answers to *νοητά* and *αἰσθητά*, is but an adaptation of the Platonic distinction (ii, 154).

A curious blending of Greek philosophy and of Jewish and Christian notions occurs in the account of the *λόγος μεσίτης*. All

things, says Philo, are in pairs, right and left, good and evil, Israel and the Egyptian hosts; and between these two the *λόγος* stands as a mean, neither begotten as man, nor unbegotten as God; standing by God as a pledge that the whole race will not utterly rebel, and by man that he may have a good hope that God will not overlook the work of His hands. Have we not here the Pythagorean *συστοίχια*, the Aristotelian doctrine of a mean, and the Mediator of the New Testament, jumbled together in one? (i, 509).

Another transition is formed from the Alexandrian to the Jewish aspect of the *λόγος* by the idea of *νόμος*; also an ambiguous term, at which the fancy caught, which was common to the Greek and Jewish world. As the *λόγος* is the first emanation and energy of the Divine Being, whereby the world was created, so also is it the law or bond of the world, *ἀπὸ τῶν μέσων ἐπὶ τὰ πέρατα συνάγων τὰ μέρη πάντα καὶ σφίγγων* (i, 562). In all the workings of God in nature the *λόγος* is the intermediate link. Neither is it only the law of the physical, but of the political world, and orders the changes of states. In the spirit of Sulpicius' letter to Cicero, Philo says 'Look at Pontus, Macedonia, Carthage; their vicissitudes are not chance, but Providence. The Divine Word brings round its operations in a circle which the vulgar call fortune; it is ever running about the world to establish the perfect form of government—universal democracy' (*De Immut. Dei*, c. 36). *Νόμος*, equally with *λόγος*, had become a power, almost a person; a conception of both, which naturally led to their identification with each other. Thus Philo says, in a passage which at once reminds us of Plato and of St Paul: 'Every bad man is a slave' *ἄσσοι μετὰ νόμου ζῶσιν ἐλεύθεροι. Νόμος δὲ ἀψευδὴς ὁ ὀρθὸς λόγος, οὐχ ὑπὸ τοῦ δέινος ἢ τοῦ δέινος θνητοῦ φθαρτὸς ἐν καρτιδίῳ ἢ στήλαις ἀψυχὸς ἀψύχοις, ἀλλ' ὑπ' ἀθανάτου φύσεως ἀφθαρτος ἐν ἀθανάτῳ διανοία τυπωθεὶς* (ii, 452). Do we not trace here the beginning of that wider and more expansive notion of the law which we find in the *Epistles*; a law above a law, not written on tables of stone, such as those had who, 'not having the law, were a law unto themselves?'

A still more remarkable parallel with St Paul is found in Philo's explanation of the law of Leviticus, xvi, 36, according to which the house was not pronounced unclean until seen by the high priest. Philo, after his usual manner of setting aside the text where its meaning seems inappropriate, says that the literal interpretation of this cannot be accepted: for the priest's coming to the house would make it clean and not unclean. Here, therefore, as elsewhere, the priest is the *λόγος*, and the

meaning is, that before the λόγος enters into the soul it is innocent in all things: *ἔως ὃ θεῖος λόγος εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν καθάπερ τινὰ ἐστὶαν οὐκ ἀφίκεται πάντα αὐτῆς τὰ ἔργα ἀνυπαίτια* (i, 292-99).

We have here a dimmer expression of St Paul's often repeated thought: 'Sin is not imputed where there is no law'; 'I was alive without the law once'; 'the law entered in that sin might abound'. But the parallel is also carried further. For as in many passages of Scripture we have the law spoken of with scarcely any reference to the Mosaic law for the workings of the human soul under the sense of sin, or, as we should say, for the conscience, Philo has also his λόγος ἐλεγχος—ὁ ἐκάστη ψυχῇ συνοικῶν καὶ συμπεφεκῶς ἐλεγχος, κατήγορος ὁμοῦ καὶ δικαστῆς ὁ αὐτὸς ὢν (ii, 195). When convicted by our own conscience, he says we should pray God to save us by chastisement, and send His λόγος ἐλεγχος into our minds. So the angel who appears to Balaam is the type of the ἐλεγχος attacking the soul disposed to sin. This ἐλεγχος is likewise the παράκλητος, the intercessor and instructor also (ii, 247).

The parallels with the New Testament are not yet exhausted. For example, the λόγος is the living stream (i, 560), the river of God in Paradise, the bread that came down from heaven (*Leg. Alleg.*, ii, 59)<sup>1</sup>, the garden of Eden itself, the sword that turned every way. It is, however, in the personifications of the λόγος that the most striking parallelisms are found; the word seeming to draw to itself all the passages in which manifestations of angels, or of the Divine presence occur in the Old Testament.

Our own idea of personality does not admit of degrees. To us it is not natural to think of either man or angel as more or less a person. Nor, again, is it easy to imagine, except in poetry, an outward form of personality, such as is assigned to the Homeric heroes in the world below. Neither is it possible to us to conceive two persons in one. Such distinct ideas of personality did not, however, exist for the age of which we are speaking. In the same manner that any one deity in the heathen pantheon might have many statues and images, without thereby implying the notion that these statues were mere

<sup>1</sup> The soul is taught by the prophet Moses, who tells it: 'This is the bread, the food which God has given for the soul, explaining that God has brought it His own word and reason; for this bread which He has given us to eat is this word of His' (*Leg. Alleg.*, ii, 60). Again, c. 61: 'Let God enjoin the soul, saying to it, that "man shall not live by bread alone", speaking in a figure, "but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God"',



representations of him—in the same way that by some anomaly of the human mind saints are worshipped in many places at once with hardly a thought of attributing omnipresence or pluripresence to them; so to the Alexandrian in Philo's time the *λόγος* might be many persons, and exist in many persons, and have many shadows and images of himself without thereby losing his original personality. On this view only can Philo be made intelligible. When we raise the question whether the *λόγος* was a person, it must be allowed that the word 'person' has a definiteness and unity which belong not to that age, but to a subsequent one, and is therefore used in a somewhat different sense from that in which we ordinarily employ it. And we may further distinguish what may be termed this growing idea of personality from the personal appearances of angels or the Divine Being in the Old Testament, which are also attributed to the *λόγος*. On the other hand, it must be admitted that when Philo speaks of the *λόγος* as *ἀρχάγγελος* (*Quis rer. div. hæc.*, § 42), or *δεύτερος Θεός* (*Frag.*, ii, 625), he had at least an indistinct conception of a person. The word *λόγος* itself, both in its superficial meaning of human speech, and in its deeper intention of 'the Word by which the worlds were made', naturally suggested the idea of personality.

A critical question more difficult of solution is the origin of the personification. An earlier form of the *λόγος*, as has been already mentioned, is the *σοφία* of the book of *Ecclesiasticus*. Wisdom and the Word of God are there described as real powers, almost as persons. It has been doubted, however, whether we are to look here for the personality of the *λόγος*. Gfrörer is of opinion that the personal notion is originally Jewish, and that the Platonism was an after addition. In the absence of much positive evidence, the following seems to me the most probable conjecture on this subject.

It can scarcely be doubted that to the Jew everywhere, whether at Alexandria or in Palestine, the aspect of the religion of his fathers had much changed. To neither could the law in its original meaning have been wholly intelligible. To both probably, whether under the influence of Egypt or of Chaldea, the visible appearance of God in the altered state of the world seemed strange and discordant. That this was the case appears to be proved by the observation of Gfrörer that passages in which such appearances occur in the LXX have been altered by the translator. The dread of mentioning the name of God was a native superstition, older than the Christian era. Both therefore, the Jew of Alexandria and of Palestine alike, might be

said to be prepared for the doctrine of the λόγος, that is, to feel the need of an intermediate being, who might take the place of the God who had guided his people Israel. The Alexandrian, coming more under the influence of the Greek philosophy, sought and found it in the Platonic νοῦς; while the Jewish Rabbi, confining himself to the Hebrew Scriptures, exalted the angels into the place of mediators, and found in the law the answer to his own difficulty. The λόγος itself implied the idea of personality, so far as this can be separated from individual form and character, while on the other hand it derived a kind of outward figure or embodiment from the angels, or the patriarchs, or the high priest. From these latter it gained a new personality, while it was itself the pantheistic link by which they were connected together, εἰς ἐν πᾶσι. And although from the few facts bearing upon the question we are obliged to argue *a priori*, there is no reason, notwithstanding the absence of positive evidence, to doubt that the personality was partly supplied by both; so far as it is involved in the idea of mind, mainly by Greek philosophy; so far as it seems to connect the idea of an outward form or embodiment, by the Old Testament itself. The λόγος may have been identified with the angel of his presence, or the angel of his presence identified with the λόγος; the conception of Philo includes both.

There is scarcely an angelic or divine appearance in the law which Philo does not attribute to the λόγος. He is the instrument by which the worlds were made, 'the word of the Cause' by which also Moses, the perfect soul, is raised to God himself<sup>1</sup>; he is the guide of the Patriarchs, the angel who appeared to Hagar, the avenging angel who destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, the God who appeared to Jacob in *Gen.*, xxviii, 11, 19, the Divine form who changed the name of Jacob to Israel, the angel of the Lord in the burning bush, the cloud at the Red Sea, the angel who appeared to Balaam, the guide of the Israelites in the wilderness. Individuals are also types of him. Melchizedek is 'the reason' to which we offer the first fruits; Aaron and Moses are also symbols of Him; Bezaleel is a τρόπος ψυχῆς, who makes the shadows of things even as Moses makes the realities; the sons of Jacob are one man's sons, ἕνα πατέρα ἐπιγεγραμμένοι, that is, the ἄνθρωπος Θεοῦ, the λόγος. Both these last passages may be illustrated by another passage in Philo's account of the creation, in which he says that God made the image first—a seal, an idea,

<sup>1</sup> 'The shadow of God is His word, which He used like an instrument when He was making the world'.—*Leg. Alleg.*, ii, 31; compare also *De Sacrific. Cain.*, iii, 3.

a genus, immortal, without sex ; afterwards He made the species Adam (διττὰ ἀνθρώπων γένη· ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶν οὐράνιος ἄνθρωπος, ὁ δὲ γήϊνος).

The Platonic image of the copy and the reality is constantly recurring in Philo ; that of the ἄνθρωπος θεοῦ is more important for the purpose of our present inquiry (i, 411). In some sense the λόγος is man as well as God—he is God and also man. He is the Son of God, who is the Father of all ; the eldest born of being (πρεσβύτατος τοῦ ὄντος λόγος), who puts on the world as it were a garment (ii, 562) ; the second God (ii, 625) ; the image of God (i, 6, 454), by whom men swear in their imperfect state<sup>1</sup>, for he is the God of us imperfect beings (i, 128, 656) ; above the angels (i, 561) ; the incorporeal light that is with God Himself (i, 414) ; who is eternal (i, 330, 332) ; and nearest to God without any interval or separation (i, 561) ; the shepherd who has the care of the flock (i, 308) ; the angel who is, as it were, the physician who heals evil (i, 122). What may be termed the humanity of the λόγος is not the humanity of one who was in all points tempted as we are ; it arises out of his being the image of God, in which man also is made. Philo sometimes identifies, sometimes distinguishes, divine and human reason. There are two temples, he says : the first the world, of which the λόγος is the high priest ; the second, the rational soul, of which the high priest is the true man (i, 653). Being neither begotten as man, nor unbegotten as God, he is able to mediate between God and man. Words which imply human virtue are also applied to him, such as would not be applied to God Himself. He is the *ικέτης* in Moses, who intercedes for the people (i, 653) ; the *παράκλητος*, who is with the high priest when he goes in to intercede for the people (ii, 591) ; the *ιερός λόγος*, who, in *Num.*, xvi, 48, stands between the living and the dead (i, 501) ; the cloud that divided the Egyptians and Israelites ; above all, the *ἀρχιερεύς* (i, 270, 562), who mediates between God and man ; who is not to be defiled by touching the corpse of his father, *i.e.* the Spirit, or his mother, *i.e.* the sense ; who is married to a virgin, even the pure sense, and wears for his priestly garment the world and the elements.

Two accessory ideas remain to be considered, *σοφία* and *πνεῦμα*. The first is in most respects identical with λόγος. Like the λόγος, it is the creative power and inner principle of the soul, and has the same predicates attributed to it. A difference in its use arises from its feminine termination, which renders its employment more appropriate where a feminine, such as *πήγη*, *μήτηρ*, *θυγάτηρ*,

<sup>1</sup> The reason Philo gives for this is remarkable. 'For no man swears by himself, for he is unable to determine about his own nature'. And it is impiety to swear by God (cf. *Matth.*, v, 33-7).

is the symbol under which it is expressed. Further, the second meaning of *λόγος* conveys a conception of energy or action, which is wanting in *σοφία*; the word *λόγος* is at once a simpler, as well as more philosophical expression of Divine energy. Hence *σοφία* which also occurs less frequently, is not so completely personified as *λόγος*; always retaining in some degree the nature of an abstract term, for which reason it is in some passages opposed to *λόγος*, as inward to outward. One place in which Philo uses it for the rock in the wilderness, which is also the manna, affords a remarkable parallel to St Paul: *ἡ ἀκρότομος πέτρα ἡ σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστὶν ἣν ἄκραν καὶ πρωτίστην ἔτεμεν ὁ Θεὸς ἀπὸ τῶν ἑαυτοῦ δυνάμεων* (i, 82, 213).

The other modification of the *λόγος* is the *πνεῦμα*, on the double meaning of which latter Philo himself remarks. Altogether it has four principal uses: (1) The wind; (2) The breath of the soul; (3) The wisdom that is from above; (4) Prophetic power. It is a synonym of *λόγος*, except so far as the word itself suggests different associations. Thus it is used more naturally wherever the communion of men with one another, or with God, or the inspiration of man, is spoken of. So Philo says that the Spirit cannot endure among divisions; and those who are under its influence are borne upward as by wind, and hence are said to be *ἀνακαλούμενοι*.

The parallelisms between Philo and the New Testament, which have already presented themselves, may be summed up as follows:

1. The invisibility of God—*John*, i, 18.
2. The ministration of angels in giving the law—*Gal.*, iii, 19;  
*Heb.*, ii, 2.
3. The 'Word', as the instrument of creation.
  - as prefigured by the manna.
  - as the living stream.
  - as a sword (*τομεύς*).
  - as the image of God.
  - as the high priest.
  - as the cloud at the Red Sea.
  - (under the name *σοφία*) as the rock in the wilderness.
  - as the first-begotten son of God.
  - as begotten before the world, which is God's second Son (compare *πρωτόκοκος πάσης κτίσεως*).
  - as the man of God.
  - as a second God.
  - as the Paraclete and Intercessor.

as the Mediator.

as Melchizedek.

like the νόμος in St Paul's *Epistles*, under the title of ἐλεγχος, the convincer of sin.

as the heavenly man, who is opposed to the earthly.

These parallelisms between Philo and the New Testament have different degrees of resemblance. Thus, for example, the λόγος as μεσίτης is mixed up, as we have seen, with Pythagorean follies; that of the οὐράνιος and γήϊνος ἄνθρωπος is not exactly the same with St Paul's first and second Adam. But whatever may be the difference in their meaning, the fact that such expressions exist alike in two writings separated from each other by an interval of twenty or thirty years cannot be attributed to accident; while, on the other hand, neither of the two presents the slightest trace of having borrowed from the other. The only supposition that remains is, that they belonged to the mode of thinking of the age, whatever inflections or adaptations of meaning they may have received.

§ 3. A question which is in some degree connected with Philo's conception of the λόγος remains to be considered; viz. how far he partook of these Messianic hopes which occupied the minds of the Jews of Palestine in the time of our Saviour and His Apostles. The answer is, that very little trace of them can be found in his writings. He has no desire to return to Jerusalem and build up the house of David. Like the Jews in later ages he acquiesces in the dispersion of his countrymen among the Gentiles. The kingdom for which he looks is a heavenly, or rather an ideal, one. He knows nothing of the prophecies in the sense in which they are interpreted in the New Testament. It is a philosophical more than a national pride which he takes in the Jewish institutions. He belongs not to the school of those who called no man master on earth, 'whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices'; for even amid persecutions he is a loyal subject of 'the powers that be'. There are places in which philosophy makes him a sort of Cosmopolite. The book of the law, not the Jewish nation, forms the circle within which his hopes and aspirations are contained.

One passage forms an exception to this statement (*De Exsecrat.*, ii, 435), in which Philo, enlarging on the *Book of Deuteronomy*, ch. xxviii, describes the restoration of the Jews to liberty at a given signal, 'their sudden and universal change to virtue causing a panic among their masters; for they will let

them go, because they are ashamed to rule over those who are better than themselves. . . . When they have received this liberty, those who a short time before were scattered about in Greece and other countries, rising up with one impulse, and coming some from one quarter, some from another, hasten to a place which is pointed out to them, being guided on their way by some vision, more Divine than is compatible with its being of the nature of man, which is manifest to those who are saved, but invisible to every one else'. Philo goes on to mention the three intercessors or 'comforters' of the Jewish nation in their reconciliation with God; (1) the goodness of God; (2) the holiness of the departed Patriarchs, who pray for their descendants; (3) the improvement of the nation itself.

It has been doubted whether in this passage the Divine vision is the same with the *λόγος*. The *λόγος* had just been mentioned in the previous sentence. 'If', it is said, 'they receive their chastisement in a humble and contrite spirit . . . they will meet with acceptance from their merciful Saviour, God, who bestows on the race of mankind His especial and exceedingly great gift, namely, relationship to His own Word, after which as its archetype the human mind was formed'. It is hardly consistent with the laws of language to suppose that what in one paragraph Philo has called 'the word', he speaks of in the next as 'the vision'. It is more natural to see in the latter a manifestation of the word only. The tendency which Philo shows to connect the *λόγος* with the apparitions of the Divine presence, such as that of the angels to the Patriarchs, and with several Messianic passages (i, 414), makes it probable that he intended such a reference here. At any rate, he would not have excluded the *λόγος* from the authorship of any good. His system is too Pantheistic to allow of his distinguishing the Messiah, or the apparitions which heralded His advent, from the Word.

§ 4. Philo's conception of the creation is different from that which we gather from the Old Testament. The world, he says, is not without beginning; but his idea of *γένεσις* is the working of God upon matter which pre-existed. Creation is with him rather the ordering and arrangement of the world than the actual bringing of it into being. Yet he, too, uses the same expression as St Paul (*τὰ μὴ ὄντα εἰς τὸ εἶναι καλεῖν*, ii, 367), 'to call the things that are not into being', though in a different sense. There was no subject in which Greek and Oriental modes of thought so naturally, almost necessarily, came into conflict with Jewish; Philo sought to remove the incongruity by Pythagorean

triads of numbers, which, however strange it may seem, were more agreeable and intelligible to that age than the simplicity of the Mosaic narrative.

The world he conceives of as perfect, the work of God, having an order, harmony, and sympathy of parts, being a plurality in unity, full of pairs; wherein all things have need of one another, and love one another. It is the temple of God, not built for the sake of man, but man a part of it; the great city of which all men are citizens. To deny this excellence of creation, or to assert that it can ever be dissolved or regenerated, were impiety (ii, 508). So far is Philo from St Paul's view, that 'the whole creation is groaning and travailing together until now'. Creation he regards as a *γένεσις* towards an end which is necessarily good. The vastness of the thought in the Old Testament is overlaid by his Greek education, and reduced to Aristotelian rule and precision. It is moreover idealized. In many passages of Philo we almost trace the thought of a philosopher of our own day<sup>1</sup>: 'The world is a petrified intelligence'.

The heavens he sometimes conceives as one with the earth; at other times as distinct from it. The air is a sort of heaven; it is the habitation of incorporeal souls. The stars are pure souls incapable of evil, heavenly powers which guide and foretell human events on earth. Everywhere between earth and highest heaven, which is beyond the moon, there are ethereal beings; some standing around the throne of God, others coming down to earth to do His bidding; some unseen, others from love to mankind taking human bodies. They are described as *λόγοι*, as the mediators between God and man, as angels, as human beings exalted from earth to heaven, as ministering spirits who give to drink of the water of life. Those of them who are spoken of as the sons of God in *Genesis*, he considers to have been men who became angels, and returned to their human condition.

He holds the Platonic doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul, though in a different way (ii, 604). The wise man—Abraham, Jacob, Moses—confesses that while on earth he is a stranger in the Egypt of sense. In its origin, the human soul is an *ἀπόσπασμα* or *ἀπαύγασμα* *θεῖον*, or, to speak more religiously, *ὑπερδωτέρον εἰπεῖν τοῖς κατὰ Μωϋσῆν φιλοσοφοῦσιν εἰκόνας θείας ἐκμαγεῖον ἐμφερές* (i, 208). Sometimes the ether is represented as the source of the soul (i, 119); in other passages *λόγοι*, or ideas bearing the image of God and the stamp of the Divine Spirit. This participation

<sup>1</sup> Schelling.

in the Divine Spirit makes man free, and therefore capable of virtue, without which freedom is impossible<sup>1</sup>.

It is not a matter of surprise that Philo's psychology, like the other parts of his philosophy, should be inconsistent with itself, or that he should make an ineffectual attempt to unite two psychological systems. The soul, he says, becomes a *δύας* by the addition of the body, and returns to God as a *μονάς* (i, 179). It is also called *τριμερής*, and made to consist of three parts, *ἐπιθυμία*, *θυμὸς*, *νοῦς* (i, 57); or, according to another division, of *αἰσθησις*, *λόγος*, *νοῦς*. In the passage last referred to it may be observed that *λόγος* stands for speech, which is the house of the mind, as the *λόγος* is the house of God (ii, 243, 350). A Pythagorean fancy further leads him, while maintaining the unity of the rational soul, to divide the irrational into seven parts, answering to the seven senses—sight, taste, touch, hearing, smelling, generation, and speech. The perfect number seven, as he delights to remark, according to which the world was created, comes down to us (i, 28, 45, 223).

But besides these Greek modes of thought, there is also another point of view, which is Jewish, in which Philo regards the soul as opposed to the body. The body is the source of evil; the Egyptian house, in which, as in a living tomb, the soul is forced to dwell: *δεδεμένη σώματι φθαρτῷ, ἐντετυμβευμένη, νεκροφοροῦσα* (ii, 367, 387). In vain does Divine wisdom take up its abode in the body: *διὰ δὲ τὸ εἶναι αὐτοὺς σάρκας οὐ καταμένει*. Marriage, and the education of children, and the provision for daily life, and meanness, and avarice, and occupation are apt to wither wisdom, ere it can come into bloom. Yet does nothing so impede this growth of the soul as the fleshly nature. This is the foundation of ignorance and want of understanding on which the others are built (i, 266). In the language almost of the New Testament, he describes the life of the bad as *τὰ φίλα τῇ σαρκὶ ἐργάζεσθαι καὶ μεθοδεύειν*. There is an original sin in the flesh, and in man as a created being, against which the Spirit of God is ever striving. There is a strife in the camp, says Moses; that is, the Spirit within us cries out. Not that the bodily substance of the flesh is to be regarded as the source of evil, but the flesh comprehends in itself the ideal evil will, ever seeking to satisfy the lusts of the flesh.

<sup>1</sup> Quod potiori deter. ins., c. 24: 'Nothing which belongs to the Divinity can be cut off from it so as to be separated from it; but it is only extended. On which account the being which has had imparted to it a share of the perfection which is in the universe, when it arrives at a proper comprehension of the world, is extended in width simultaneously with the boundaries of the universe'.



Hence Philo is led to make a new division of the soul into two parts: the one in alliance with the flesh, the other separate from it. There are two kinds of men, he says—those who live in the flesh, and those who live in the Spirit. And there is an outer soul, *ψυχὴ σαρκική*, the essence of which is blood, corresponding to the first of these two classes; and an inner soul, *ψυχὴ λογική*, which answers to the latter, into which God puts His Spirit. That is the true soul; the soul of souls, as it were—the apple of the eye (ii, 241, 356). In like manner he seems disposed to confine immortality to the souls of the good.

The chief parallels with the *Epistles* which occur in the preceding section may be summed up as follows:

The idea of Creation, *τὰ μὴ ὄντα εἰς τὸ εἶναι καλεῖν*.

His conception of the human soul as an *ἀπαύγασμα θεῖον*, *εἶκονος θεῶν ἐκμαγείον ἐμφορές*.

The body, as the tomb of the soul, which is said to be *ἐντετυμβενμένη, νεκροφοροῦσα*.

The strife of the soul and the body;

The flesh conceived of as the seat of sin.

The ideal soul inspired by God.

The innumerable company of angels and aerial beings.

The distinction of the *ψυχὴ σαρκική* and *λογική*, taken from the good and bad man, like St Paul's *φρόνημα σαρκός* and *φρόνημα πνεύματος*.

§ 5. The end of human life, according to Philo, is to follow God, and become like Him, and the mean to this is virtue. Philo, however, sometimes proposes the mean, without reference to God, as in itself the end. It is the seed which is also the fruit. It consists in bringing *αἰσθητά* under *νοητά*, and is the same with wisdom.

But how is man to attain to virtue? He is corrupt, and may justly be punished by God. Like St Paul, Philo just touches on the sin of Adam, as the source of misery and death to his descendants (ii, 440). His answer to the question which has been asked is, in general, the same with that of the New Testament. God gives men grace to enable them to serve Him. The *λόγος* is the source of every good. Even virtue without the care or grace of God is of no avail (i, 203, 662). 'He says that he sets his tabernacle, the place of his oracle, in the midst of our impurity, that we may have wherewithal to cleanse ourselves and wash away all the filth and pollution of our miserable and ignoble life' (i, 488, on *Lev.*, xvi, 16). The *λόγος* is the food (i, 120) and also the temple of the wise soul. By its power, by whom all things

were created, God will also raise the just man, and advance him to be near Himself in heaven (i, 165).

Philo entwines with his theological theory the ethics of Greek philosophy. There are three ways upwards, *διδασχῆ*, *φύσις*, *ἄσκησις*, of which he finds types in the three patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Of these the lowest is the way of *ἄσκησις*; he who practises this is described as in a perpetual state of strife and struggle, the image of which is Jacob on his pillow of stones, of which also the Homeric heroes are a figure, as described in the line *ἄλλοτε μὲν ζῶουσ' ἐτερήμεροι ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε τεθῶσιν*. Next to him stands the *διδασκός*, of whom Abraham is the type; and yet, strange to say, the *διδασχῆ* consists in nothing but the ordinary elements of Greek education; viz. grammar, music, geometry, rhetoric, and dialectic. Before Sarah, who, according to Philo's allegorical method, is virtue, can bear a son to Abraham, who is the representative of *νοῦς*, he must betake himself to Hagar, that is, the slavery of knowledge. The soul must have its food of milk and plain sustenance first, afterwards its strong meat; *νηπιῖς ἐστὶ γάλα τροφή, τελείους δὲ τὰ ἐκ πύρων πέμματα* (i, 302). So near a parallel to St Paul as this image affords, which occurs three or four times in Philo, is not supplied by the whole writings of Plato.

But the highest way is the way of nature, of which Isaac is the type. Here nothing but the word *φύσις* affords a vestige of the Greek philosopher. The way of nature is the way of God, attained only by withdrawing from the flesh. It might be described almost in the language which St James applies to the 'wisdom that is from above'. First, it is peaceable, and is accompanied by a joy which God communicates from His own attributes—the joy of resignation, which looks with pleasure on the whole world. Secondly, it is pure, and reveals the sight of God to the pure in heart: *ιδεῖν οὐκ ἀδύνατον, εἴη δ' ἂν μόνῃ τῷ καθαριστάτῳ καὶ ὀξυνωπεστάτῳ γένοι, ᾧ τὰ ἴδια ἐπιδεικνύμενος ὁ τῶν ὕλων πατήρ ἔργα, μεγίστην πασῶν χαρίζεται δωρεάν* (compare *John*, v, 20). He who has it becomes a steward of the mysteries of God, *μυστῆς τῶν θείων τελετῶν* (ii, 427) (compare St Paul, *οἰκόνομος τῶν θείων μυστηρίων*). Lastly, it consists in the contemplation of God, *ὥσπερ διὰ κατόπτρου* (ii, 198), an image which occurs again and again in Philo, and is repeated more than once in St Paul: 'For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face'.

Many other striking parallels with the description of the Christian life are found in Philo. Such are the expressions: *διψᾶν καὶ πεινᾶν καλοκάγαθίας, διψᾶν εὐνομίας, δουλεῖν θεῷ, εὐαρεστεῖν θεῷ, γνωρίζεσθαι θεῷ*, by which Philo denotes the relation of the perfect

man to God. Another mode of expression with which he is familiar, is that of the 'true riches'—οἷς ἀληθινὸς πλοῦτος ἐν οὐρανῷ κατάκειται διὰ σοφίας καὶ ὁσιότητος ἀσκηθεῖς, τούτοις καὶ ὁ τῶν χρημάτων ἐπὶ γῆς περιουσιάζει, . . . οἷς δὲ ὁ κληρὸς οὐκ ἔστιν οὐράνιος δι' ἀσεβείαν ἢ ἀδικίαν οὐδὲ τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς ἀγαθῶν εὐδοεῖν πέφυκεν ἢ κτήσις (ii, 425). 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth . . . and all these things shall be added unto'. A more general parallel with our Saviour's sermon on the mount is furnished by the figure of the way of life, which there be 'few who find': ἄτριπτος ὁ ἀρετῆς χάρος· ὀλίγοι γὰρ βαλινούσιν αὐτὸν, τέτριπται δ' ὁ κακίας (i, 84).

To the four cardinal virtues of Plato and the Stoics, which he delights to recognize in the four rivers of Paradise and elsewhere, Philo adds what we may term three Christian graces. These are: hope, which is the seed of life, of which Enos is the type (i, 218); repentance, which is prefigured by Enoch, ὅτι μετέθηκεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεὸς (ii, 4, such is the strange turn which Philo gives to *Gen.*, v, 24); righteousness, which is typified by Noah, the last of the ancient evil race, and the preserver of the new. In addition to these, there occurs a second triad, of πίστις, χαρὰ, and ὄρασις θεοῦ (ii, 412), which is yet higher than the preceding, and of which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are the examples (ii, 2, 3, 5, 8). Faith, according to Philo's conception, is trust in God. It is that which says to the soul in the name of God: 'Do thou stand here with me'. It is the adhesive force which binds us to God: τίς οὖν ἡ κόλλα; εὐσέβεια δὴπου καὶ πίστις· ἀρμόζουσιν γὰρ καὶ ἐνοῦσιν αἱ ἀρεταὶ ἀφθάρτων φύσει διανοίαν· καὶ γὰρ Ἀβραάμ πιστεύσας ἐγγίξεν θεῷ λέγεται (i, 456). In another passage he comments on the words: 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness'. What could make his faith so praiseworthy? Has not the evil also faith in God? To which we reply: If you look not at the surface, but at the substance of things, you will know that it is infinitely hard to trust God alone; to loose the bands of ambition, lucre, power, friendship, and other earthly goods; to set thyself wholly free from the creature, and trust to God, who is alone to be trusted: μόνῳ πιστεῦσαι θεῷ τῷ πρὸς ἀληθείαν μόνῳ πίστῳ (i, 485, 486).

The faith of Philo has not the depth or associations of that of St Paul; it bears a nearer resemblance to faith in the sense of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. That is, it is not faith, the negative of the law, faith that makes men free, but the faith of one 'who endures as seeing Him who is invisible'. Almost in the language of *Heb.*, ix, he describes Abraham as seeking a better country which God would show him, and finding his reward in regarding the things that are not as though they were: ἀρηθεῖσα καὶ

κρεμασθεῖσα ἡ διάνοια ἐλπίδος χρηστῆς, καὶ ἀνευδοιάστα νομίσασα ἤδη παρῆναι τὰ μὴ παρόντα διὰ τὴν τοῦ ὑποσχομένου βεβαιωτάτην πίστιν, ἀγαθὸν τέλειον ἄθλον εὔρηται. In another passage he speaks of faith as the only true and living good, the consolation of life, the substance of good hope : πλήρωμα χρηστῶν ἐλπίδων, ἀφορία μὲν κακῶν, ἀγαθῶν δὲ φορὰ, κακοδαιμονίας ἀπόγνωσις, εὐσεβείας γνῶσις, ψυχῆς ἐν ἅπασι βελτίωσις ἐπερηρισμένης τί τῶν πάντων αἰτίῳ καὶ δυναμένῳ μὲν πάντα, βουλομένῳ δὲ τὰ ἄριστα. ' This is the strait and smooth way, in which, if a man walks, he stumbles not, in which he avoids the slippery path of bodily and external things. He who trusts these latter has no faith in God, he who has no faith in these has faith in God ' (ii, 39).

In other passages the more general term εὐσέβεια takes the place of πίστις. Εὐσέβεια and φιλανθρωπία are often mentioned together. Thus, almost in the words of the Gospel, he declares that there are two great commandments—piety and holiness towards God, and love and justice towards men. Under these, innumerable lesser details are comprehended. ἔστι δὲ τῶν κατὰ μέρος ἀμυθῆτων λόγων καὶ δογμάτων δύο τὰ ἀνωτάτω κεφάλαια, τό τε πρὸς θεὸν δι' εὐσεβείας καὶ ὁσιότητος, καὶ τὸ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους διὰ φιλανθρωπίας καὶ δικαιοσύνης (ii, 391). But the highest form of virtue is love to God, which Philo describes as the last stage of mystic initiation. They who possess this gift are inspired, ὑπ' ἔρωτος ἀρπασθέντες οὐρανοῦ καθάπερ οἱ βακχευόμενοι καὶ κορυβαντιῶντες ἐνθουσιάζουσιν μέχρις ἂν τὸ ποθοῦμενον ἴδωσιν (ii, 473); they are free, and participate as friends in the power of the king—they are gods themselves, as Moses has ventured to call them.

Philo, like the Apostle Paul, describes faith, hope, and love as the fairest graces of a religious soul. In Philo as well as in St Paul, in different senses and under different points of view, faith and love seem either of them to occupy the first place, while hope lies more in the background, and is the germ of the other two. In both, faith is almost sight; love has nearly the same position in Philo as in the *Gospel* and *Epistles* of *St John*. Hope, as with the early Christian it was closely connected with the sorrowfulness of his life in this world, so in Philo seems to arise out of the degenerate state of the Jewish race, from which the righteous could by hope only escape.

Philo regards the law in a different manner from the Scribes and Pharisees at Jerusalem. He speaks of certain who laid aside the letter, and considered only the spirit of the sacred writings, who, like St Paul, would have said: ' Let no man judge you of a new moon or of a sabbath ' ; and of such he disapproves. Yet he too, in a spirit which partakes both of Greek philosophy

and Hebrew prophecy, utters warnings against lip service and superstition; the whole of the sacrificial language of the Old Testament receives from him a spiritual or ideal meaning. Thus he calls *πίστις κάλλιστον καὶ ἄμωμον ἱερεῖον*; in the same spirit he says that the holiest and most acceptable sacrifice is a soul purified by virtue and age; 'from holy men the least gifts find acceptance with God, and even if they bring nothing else, in bringing themselves, who most perfectly fulfil the law of goodness, they bring the best sacrifice,—It is not of the sacrifice, but of the virtue, that God takes account' (ii, 151, 253, 254). On such a theory it would be unnecessary that sacrifices should be offered at all. Nevertheless, by reason of the frailty of men, God, he says, was pleased to give them a temple made with hands, which is one only temple, even as God is one, and to this He compelled men to assemble as a test of their piety. This temple is the image of the world, as the passover is of a change of life, and the rite of circumcision of purity of heart (ii, 222, 223); or as the Jewish people are the priests and prophets of the whole human race (ii, 15).

With this idealizing tendency he seems to have united the more popular belief of ransom and sacrifice. Thus he speaks of the Levites as the ransom of the children of Israel, and says, on *Lev.*, iii, 12, that what the sacred writer probably intends to teach, is, that every good man is the ransom of the bad (*De Sacrif. Cain et Abel*, c. 37). In like manner his interpretation of the offering up of Isaac implies that he believed in the efficacy of sacrifice in its most literal sense (ii, 27-9).

Points of parallelism in the preceding section are as follows :

1. The view that righteousness is the gift of God to man, not of debt, but of grace.
2. Faith, hope, and love. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? The greatest of them is love.
3. The two great commandments in the law.
4. The metaphorical use of sacrifice and of circumcision.
5. Particular expressions: 'stewards of the divine mysteries', 'the true riches', 'hungering and thirsting after righteousness'.

§ 6. We have completed a sketch of the principal points of Philo's system, if indeed that can be called a system, the connexion of which is chiefly made by the continuity of the Mosaic writings. On those writings were incrusting the fancies of the Alexandrian philosophy. They soon worked themselves

into the fabric, which they covered with grotesque and monstrous fictions. More precisely considered, the writings of Philo are not a system in the sense in which the writings of Plato and Aristotle form a system, but a method of applying the Greek philosophy to the Jewish Scriptures.

This method, however, was not the fancy of an individual; it was the method of a school. The age which compares the present with the past, seeks to adapt ancient monuments to itself. In a place of learning, like Alexandria, swarming with teachers and rhetoricians, the natural tendency of the human mind was not likely to be without an expression. Plato himself had found the allegorical interpretation an instrument of implanting his lessons too convenient to be neglected. The instant that the bright thought occurred to some Euhemerus that all these things were an allegory, an idea which many of the fictions of Greek mythology readily suggested, it might be indefinitely expanded and applied. The 'ill weed grew apace' in a congenial soil; it was suited to that stage of human culture. But for the disposition to receive it, such an interpretation of the law of Moses would have seemed as singular to the Alexandrian, as a similar allegorical explanation of Blackstone's *Commentaries* to ourselves. Like other methods of knowledge, it was relative to the age which gave birth to it. It is curious to trace the manner in which the same tendency is restricted among ourselves. If a person were to apply the allegorical method to the Prophets generally, he would be thought fanciful,—to the *Books of Kings* or *Chronicles* absolutely insane; while in the treatment of the *Book of Revelation*, it would seem to have a natural application. The simplicity of the Alexandrians admitted every use of it; nor did they see any absurdity in the grammatical studies of Abraham, or the Greek instructors of Moses (ii, 8).

The effects of such a predisposing belief may be traced still in modern commentaries and paraphrases. The mystical interpretation of Scripture, though more common with the Fathers and schoolmen than among Protestant divines, has found supporters in our own days. It is regarded by many as 'tending to edification'. Is this conceivable, unless it had been based on some principle of human nature? Could a method of interpretation which, though destitute of objective truth, has survived 2000 years, have been due only to the genius of Origen or of Philo?

We might reply 'impossible' on such *a priori* grounds only. No system like that of Philo could have sprung, fully equipped,

out of the brain of an individual; it would have been an unmeaning absurdity, unless many generations of teachers and hearers had preceded. No system which was the idiosyncrasy of a philosopher, could have retained so tenacious a hold on the human mind. Reason and feeling must have married in some natural conjunction, the links of which have never been entirely untwisted. There is no need, however, to rest the position that Philo was the representative of his age on mere *à priori* arguments. More direct proofs are the following:

First, the 'undesigned' coincidences between Philo and the New Testament can be explained on no other hypothesis than the wide diffusion of the Alexandrian modes of thought. Was it by chance only that Philo and St John struck upon the same conception of the *λόγος*, or that the Alexandrian philosophy transferred to the *λόγος* the manifestations of God in the Old Testament which we commonly refer to Christ? Was it by chance that the same figures of speech are applied to the *λόγος*, which we receive in the New Testament from the lips of our Lord and His Apostles, such as the manna, the living water, the rock that flowed in the wilderness? It may be doubted whether they are used in the same sense by both, but there can be no doubt that they are a part of the language and mode of thinking of the age.

Secondly, it may be observed, that in several passages of his work Philo refers to the allegorical interpretation as already of ancient date. In some places he gives several explanations of the same verse, showing that he was not himself its first interpreter. In speaking of the Therapeutæ and Essenes (to whom he seems to stand in nearly the same relation as Basil or Chrysostom to St Antony and the Christian hermits), he gives a description of their preaching, and speaks of the allegorical method as peculiar to them. He says that they are scattered in many parts of the world: 'for it must needs be, that Greece and the stranger should have part in the perfect good' (ii. 474, 477). He also uses the expression *οἱ τῆς ἀλληγορίας κανόνες* (as though an art of allegorizing existed just as much as an art of rhetoric), and everywhere presupposes the idea of his method as well known.

Thirdly, there are traces of the same application of the Old Testament much older than Philo. The 'Word of God' in the Mosaic narrative of the Creation, and the 'Spirit of God' which moved on the face of the deep, are the first germs out of which the Alexandrian *λόγος* afterwards developed itself. 'Ideas must be given through something'; it was natural to men to describe

the operations of God in the world in symbols and figures of speech derived from Scripture. These figures were spiritualized and personified; the 'God who brought up Israel out of Egypt' became more and more abstract, and the language which had been applied to Him was transferred to the hypostatized *λόγος*, and also to the written word. But in the Old Testament the personification, whether of wisdom or of the word of God, is only poetical. In Philo and the Alexandrian writers, on the other hand, poetry has already been converted into philosophy. Words have become facts, and the great truth of the unity of God has passed into an invisible essence, which no man has seen or can see. All the gradations of this transition can no longer be traced; there are sufficient intimations, however, to prove its reality. Gfrörer's remark has been already quoted, that in several passages in which apparitions of the Divine Being occur in the books of Moses, alterations have been made by the translator. The book of Jesus, the son of Sirach, probably a work of Palestine origin and of the second century before Christ, written upon the model of older writings of the same class, the fragments of Aristeeus and Aristobulus, also of the second century, portions of the Sibylline oracles, which are supposed to be the work of an Alexandrian Jew, and the *Book of Wisdom*, which is also probably of Alexandrian origin, contain the same idealism, the same conception of Wisdom or of the Word of God, and the commencement of the same allegorical method. The writings just mentioned were all older than Philo: and if we turn to those who followed him,

Fourthly, the remains of the Alexandrian Fathers, not more than a century and a half after Philo, bear the impress of the same school. It would be absurd to suppose that the whole system sprang up afresh in the mind of Clement or of Origen. Whence could they have derived it? Or how happened it in their writings to be much more freely and commonly applied to the Old Testament than to the New? No other answer can be given to these questions but that they were the natural heirs of the traditional method of Alexandria.

Philo, then, was neither the first author of the system, nor did it end with him, though he represents probably its highest development. There preceded him writers who, by a series of steps, led up to the entrance of the mystical temple. The Christian Fathers who followed him had a higher aim, which freed them from many of his puerilities. The power of the Gospel imparted to them, even in a literary point of view, a great superiority over their Jewish or Gentile contemporaries.



Still they were his natural successors. Alexandrianism gave the form to their thoughts; hence they also derived a mystical and rhetorical character. The spirit with them had taken the place of the letter, and the hieroglyphic written on the walls was read by the light of a new truth. But they remained wandering in the labyrinth, though the roof had been taken off, and the sun was shining in the heavens.

§ 7. It is a great proof of the importance of Philo's works for the illustration of Christianity, that some early Christian writers show an inclination to claim him as a Christian. Eusebius, for example, believes Philo to have had intercourse with St Peter at Rome, and has no doubt that in describing the Therapeutæ, he has in view the first heralds of the Gospel, and the original practices handed down from the Apostles. Photius preserves a statement that he was a Christian who relapsed. To us Philo is unmistakably a Jew. What is there in his writings that has produced this opposite impression on the Fathers and on ourselves?

1. They found in his writings what was unintelligible to them, unless identified with Christ and the Gospel; the conceptions of 'the Word', 'the Holy Spirit', 'grace', 'faith'; of 'the Spiritual', or rather 'the Ideal, Israel'.

2. They found these ideas drawn from the Old Testament by the same method of interpretation they were themselves in the habit of employing.

3. They found the same, or nearly the same, language with that of Philo in Christian writers.

4. His writings appeared to them orthodox in their tone; that is to say, they inclined to the mystical and spiritual.

5. The influences that produced Philo were still unconsciously acting upon them.

6. That they should have seen Christianity in Philo, was far less strange than that Philo should have traced Greek philosophy in Judaism, and Judaism in Greek philosophy.

A Jewish philosopher<sup>1</sup> was asked when he would become a Christian: he replied 'When Christians cease to be Jews'. In the spirit of this reply it might be said: *ἢ Παῦλος φιλωνίζει ἢ Φίλων χριστιανός ἐστι*, either Philo is a Christian, or St Paul learned Christianity from Philo. And it must be admitted that Philo cannot but exercise a great influence on our conception of the Gospel. As we read his works, the truth flashes upon us that

<sup>1</sup> Mendelssohn.

the language of the New Testament is not isolated from the language of the world in general: the spirit rather than the letter is new, the whole not the parts, the life more than the form. There is a great interval between Philo and the Gospel when looked at under a practical or moral aspect. But they approach far nearer when Christianity is drawn out as a system, and theological statements are substituted for the simple language of our Saviour and His Apostles.

In the preceding pages, the chief similarities in the writings of Philo and St Paul have been brought together; the differences between them remain to be considered.

I. Philo was strictly a Jew. It was his reverence for the law which led him to evade the law, and then to regard this evasion as its original intention. The law, though perverted to such a degree that no trace of its meaning was suffered to remain, he conceived to be of everlasting obligation. It was not 'destroyed' but 'fulfilled' by Greek philosophy. Though living on the edge of a volcano which was to open and swallow up his race, he had no conception that the Jewish way of life could ever cease, or the daily sacrifice fail to be offered. At the moment the law was departing, it seemed to him to contain everlasting treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The zealot or Pharisee at Jerusalem could not have clung with greater tenacity than Philo to the hope and privileges of the Jewish race.

II. Philo's system has been already described as the interpretation of the law by Greek philosophy. Hence in many places he uses the language of morality rather than of religion, and often mixes up both in a sort of rhetorical medley. Ideas are brought together in a way that sounds tasteless and strange to modern ears. Logic, ethics, psychology are ascribed to Moses, who is made to mean what he ought to have meant in the second century before Christ. Aristotle, Plato, the Sceptic, the Pythagorean, the Stoic, are Philo's real masters, from whom he derives his forms of thought, his tricks with numbers, his methodical arrangement, his staid and rhetorical diction, and many of his moral notions. Of this classical or heathen element there is no trace in the New Testament. If there be ground for thinking that St Paul had attained considerable Greek culture, there is no trace in him of a classical or heathen spirit. There is no sentence of any philosopher recorded in his *Epistles*; no doctrine of which we are able to say that it derives its origin from Plato rather than from Aristotle, from the Stoic more than from the Epicurean. While the writings of Philo are a

coat of many colours, a patchwork in which the individuality of the writer is well nigh lost, in St Paul there is nothing composite or eclectic, nothing that is derived from others in such a manner as, in any degree, to interfere with the harmony and unity of his own character. In his hymns of praise, in his revelation of the human heart, in his conception of the universality of the Gospel, he breaks away from the conventionalities of his age, bursting the bonds of Greek rhetoric as well as of Greek or Rabbinical dialectic.

III. Less prominent than Greek philosophy, but still discernible in Philo, is the influence of that widely spread and undefined spirit which may be termed Orientalism. It is the spirit which puts knowledge in the place of truth, which confounds moral with physical purity, which seeks to attain the perfection of the soul in abstraction and separation from matter. It is the spirit which attempts to account for evil, by removing it to a distance from God; letting it drop by a series of descents from heaven to earth. It is the spirit which regards religion as an initiation into mystery. How little of all this we find in the New Testament! Of the abhorrence of matter, that deeply rooted tenet of the East, absolutely nothing. The purity of which St Paul speaks, is not and cannot be mistaken for the putting away of the filth of the flesh. Though he often introduces the thought of angels and spirits, yet he nowhere regards them as links in the chain let down from the Author of all good to the evils and miseries of mankind. And if he sometimes speaks of mere earthly and human relations as mysteries, in a sense in which we can scarcely realize them to be so, or uses associations and figures of speech which had a force and meaning to his own age which they have lost to ourselves, yet the spiritual reality is never far off—under this mystical or allegorical language is the 'life hidden with Christ and God'.

IV. There may often occur a similarity of language between two writers, although their first and leading thought is different. Two systems of philosophy may be described; the one as practical the other as speculative, the one ideal and the other real; they may have an analogy in the details, while their first principles are different; just as there may be an analogy between the animal and vegetable worlds, while the idea of the one is quite distinct from that of the other. Such a difference and similarity there is between Philo and the New Testament—a difference not so much in the parts as in the whole, a similarity not in the whole but in the parts. Philonism

may be truly characterized as mystical and ideal, while the New Testament is moral and spiritual; the one a system of knowledge, the other a rule of life. Yet the terms wisdom, knowledge, prudence, faith, charity, as well as many others, may be common to both, and be applied by both, in senses which have a relation to each other, yet are really different. The wisdom and knowledge of Philo mean chiefly allegorical explanations of the Scriptures; the wisdom and knowledge of the New Testament are inseparable from life and action, and denote the perfect moderation of Christian life and character. A similar difference is traceable in the use of the Old Testament Scripture. The allegory which to the one is but a thin fiction that overspreads the Greek philosophy, to the other is the instrument of preaching a moral or religious lesson. What is everything to the one, is but secondary and subordinate in the other. What is the greater part of Philo, is but rare and occasional in St Paul.

V. Another aspect in which the religion of Philo differs from the Gospel, is that the one is the religion of the few, the other of the many. The refined mysticism which Philo taught as the essence of religion, is impossible for the poor. That the slave, ignorant as the brutes, was equally with himself an object of solicitude to the God of Moses, would have been incredible to the great Jewish teacher of Alexandria. Neither had he any idea of a scheme of Providence reaching to all men everywhere. Once or twice he holds up the Gentile as a reproof to the Jew; nothing was less natural to his thoughts than that the Gentiles were the true Israel. His Gospel is not that of humanity, but of philosophers and of ascetics. Instead of converting the world, he would have men retreat from the world. There is no trace in him of that faith which made St Paul go forth as a conqueror. In another way also the narrowness of Philo may be contrasted with the first Christian teaching. The object of the Gospel is real, present, substantial—an object such as men may see with their eyes, to which they may put forth their hands; and the truths which are taught are 'very near' to human nature,—truths which meet its wants and soothe its sorrows. But in Philo the object is shadowy, distant, indistinct; whether an idea or a fact we scarcely know—one which is in no degree commensurate with the wants of mankind in general or even with those of a particular individual. As we approach, it vanishes away; in the presence of the temple services, and of the daily sacrifice, it could scarcely have sprung up; if we analyze and criticize, it will dissolve in our hands;

taken without criticism, it cannot exert much influence over the mind and conduct.

VI. The *Gospels* and the *Epistles* of St Paul have a real continuity with the Old Testament; they echo the voice of prophecy; they breathe the spirit of suffering and resignation which we find also in *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah*; they teach the same moral lesson in a more universal language. The inner mind of the Old Testament is—the New. Not, as some suppose, that the ceremonial law had any other relation to Christianity, but one of contrast. ‘Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, then said I, Lo I come’. But as, in the history of Greek thought, laws and customs are prior to that higher idea of law which philosophy imparts, so, in the Hebrew Scriptures, the law of Moses comes first; afterwards that undergrowth of Christian morality which is given by prophecy. Now Philo has no connexion with the prophets, and no real connexion with the law. To the former he seldom refers, while to the latter he assigns, as we have seen, a purely arbitrary meaning. With the single exception of the great truth of the unity of God, it cannot be said that he derives his ideas from the Old Testament. He does not catch the real preparations and anticipations of a higher mode of thought in the books of Moses themselves. He is unable to see the light shining more and more unto the perfect day in the Psalmist and the Prophets. The world is fifteen hundred years older than in the days of the giving of the law; philosophy and political freedom have come into being; the culture of one race is working upon the culture of another. These external influences Philo and the Alexandrians receive and amalgamate with the Mosaic Scriptures. But of the development of the Jewish religion, in itself, they have no perception. Nor are they conscious of the incongruity of the elements which they bring together from different ages and countries.

§ 8. These general differences may be illustrated further by a short comparison of the particular subjects which are common to Philo and the New Testament: (a) For example, the words *λόγος* and *πνεῦμα* occur in both, and in both have a relation to each other. Neither can it be said, that the *λόγος* in Philo is a merely physical notion; or denied, that most of the predicates attributed to Christ are applied also to the *λόγος*. The great difference is, that the idea in the one case proceeds from a real person, ‘whom our eyes have seen, and our hands have handled, the Word of Life’; in the other case, the idea of the *λόγος* just

ends with a person, or rather leaves us in doubt at last whether it is not a quality only or mode of operation in the Divine Being. It begins with being unintelligible. It is not the 'open' but the 'closed secret' of Divine Providence. The *λόγος*, in the Alexandrian sense, occurs in the New Testament only at the commencement of the *Gospel of St John*; it has a single definite application to the person of Christ. It is like an expression borrowed from another system, the language of which was widely spread, and for once transferred to Him; no further doctrinal use is made of the term. In Philo the whole system centres, not in a person, nor in a fact, nor in a moral truth, but in the term *λόγος*. Everywhere, both in the book of nature and the book of the law, the *λόγος* only is seen. If in Scripture the same predicates are applied to Christ as in Philo to the *λόγος*, it is not that they were transferred from one to the other, but that the same words naturally suggested themselves in both cases to the Jewish mind to express an analogous idea. Christ is called *μειστής* or *ἀρχιερεύς*; not because these designations had previously been appropriated to the *λόγος*, but because the disciple now believed the same attributes to belong to Christ which the Alexandrian philosophy had attached to the *λόγος*. The *λόγος* of Philo is not an historical Christ; he is diffused over creation, and has hardly any connexion with Messianic hopes.

The difference between Philo's conception of the *πνεῦμα* and that of the New Testament may be summed up as follows: 1. In Philo it occurs less frequently, and has a less important place. 2. It is more of an abstraction, being scarcely distinguishable from a quality in the human mind, or an attribute of the Divine Being. 3. It is blended with a physical notion of the wind. It has hardly a separate existence at all, but is a sort of modification of the *λόγος*.

(β) Analogous differences are traceable in the moral and spiritual character of the doctrines of Philo when compared with the Gospel. We have seen that it would not be true to say that Philo knew nothing of the Christian *λόγος* or *πνεῦμα*. Neither would it be true to say that he knew nothing of the doctrines of grace. Like St Paul, he would have acknowledged that God was the Giver of all good; like St Paul, he believed that the good suffered for the evil, 'even as Christ, the just for the unjust'. He could have said 'When ye have done all, count yourselves to be unprofitable servants'. Such a doctrine would have been by no means new to him. But it is rather theoretical than practical; it flows with him out of a consideration of the Divine nature; it is a part of his theosophy, not a rule of life. The

language of a school pervades all his writings; the teacher never allows his reader to forget that he is the rhetorician also. Plain duties he involves in dreamy platitudes; no word comes from or goes to the heart of man. And as his view of religion and morality is wanting in depth and reality, so also it is wanting in breadth. It does not embrace all mankind, or all time. It could never have attained to the sublimity of St Paul: 'In Jesus Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free'; though often assuming in the Israelite the ideal of humanity (*De Victim.*, c. 3).

(γ) Philo, in his conception of faith, falls equally short of St Paul. Both in Philo and St Paul faith is trust in God, and belief in His promises. But in St Paul it is more than this, a faith such as may remove mountains, a confidence that 'all things' are ours, 'whether life or death, or things present or things to come'. It is the instrument of union with Christ, and, through Him, of communion with all mankind. The faith of Philo is bound up in the curtains of the tabernacle; it is the faith which believes that God will keep His covenant with the sons of Abraham, not that 'God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham'; the faith of St Paul is absolute and infinite; it breaks down the wall of partition which divides the Jew from the Gentile, and earth from heaven.

(δ) Once more: it is fair to estimate the difference between Philo and the Gospel by the result. The one may have guided a few more solitaries or Essenes to the rocks of the Nile or the settlements of the Dead Sea; the other has changed the world. The one is a dead literature, lingering amid the progress of mankind; the other has been a principle of life to the intellect as well as the heart. While the one has ceased to exist, or only exists in its influence on Christianity itself, the other has survived, without decay, the changes in government and the revolutions in thought of 1800 years.

From the above statements, as we pass from the *Epistles* of St Paul to other parts of the New Testament, a slight deduction has to be made. Philo may be allowed to stand in a nearer relation to the *Gospel of St John*, and to the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, than to any of the writings of St Paul. There is truth in saying that St John wrote to supply a better Gnosis, and that in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* a higher use is made of the Alexandrian ideas, and the figures of the Mosaic dispensation. That is to say, the form of both is an expression of the same tendency which we trace in the Eastern or Alexandrian

Gnosis. But admitting this similarity of form, the difference of spirit which separates St John or the author of the *Hebrews* from Philo, is hardly less wide than that which divides him from St Paul. The λόγος of Philo is an idea, of St John a fact; of the one intellectual, of the other spiritual; the one taking up his abode in the soul of the mystic, while the other is the indwelling light of all mankind. Philo would have shrunk from 'the idea of ideas', as he termed the λόγος, being one 'whom our eyes have seen and our hands have handled'; he would have turned away from the death of Christ. And although the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* approaches more nearly to Philo in his conception of faith, and carries the allegorical method further than St Paul, both in the particular instance of Melchizedek, and in his application of it to the whole of the Mosaic dispensation, and seems even to regard such knowledge as a sort of perfection (*Heb.*, vi, 1), he too never leaves the groundwork of fact and spiritual religion.

Alexandrianism was not the seed of the great tree which was to cover the earth, but the soil in which it grew up. It was not the body of which Christianity was the soul, but the vesture in which it folded itself—the old bottle into which the new wine was poured. When with 'stammering lips and other tongues' the first preachers passed beyond the borders of the sacred land, Alexandrianism was the language which they spoke, not the faith which they taught. It was mystical and dialectical, not moral and spiritual; for the few, not for the many; for the Jewish therapeutae, not for all mankind. It was a literature, not a life; instead of a few short sayings, 'mighty to the pulling down of strong holds', luxuriating in a profusion of rhetoric. It spoke of a Holy Ghost; of a Word; of a divine man; of a first and second Adam; of the faith of Abraham; of bread which came down from heaven: but knew nothing of the God who had made of one blood all nations of the earth; of the victory over sin and death; of the cross of Christ. It was a picture, a shadow, a surface, a cloud above, catching the rising light ere He appeared. It was the reflection of a former world, not the birth of a new one. It lifted up the veil of the temple, to see in a glass only dreams of its own creation.



## On the Connexion of Immorality and Idolatry

'AN idol is nothing in the world' says the Apostle; 'yet he that commits fornication sins against his own body'. It is foolishness to bow to an idol; but immorality and licentiousness are real and essential evil. No mere outward act can make a man different from what he was before, while no inward act can leave him the same after as before its performance. A belief about Jupiter or Hades is not necessarily inconsistent with truth and purity of life. The evils, whether of a heathen or of a Christian country, are not always associated with the corruptions of religion. Whence, then, the connexion often spoken of by theologians, and not unfelt by the heathen themselves, between immorality and idolatry?

It is first to be sought for in their origin. As the Christian religion may be regarded as the great pillar and rock of morality, so the heathen religions sprang up in an age prior to morality. We see men in the dawn of human history just raised above the worship of stocks and stones, 'making themselves gods to go before them'. Like children they feed upon the creations of their own minds; they live in a world of their own and are satisfied. No thought occurs to them of the higher laws of human life; they have no sense of shame or its opposite; the abstract terms for 'right and wrong' have not yet been heard in their vocabulary. The gods who have possession of the heart of man are half-physical, half-magical, and in part also human, beings, not purely evil any more than man himself, but leaning to the worse rather than to the better side of man's nature, of which they are the vacant and magnified images. The deities of the Homeric poems are not better than men, but rather worse; compared with heroes,

they have a fainter sense of truth and justice, less certainly of moral greatness. After ages felt that the Homeric gods were unworthy of a civilized race. And yet it might have been fortunate for mankind had no deeper leaven of evil ingrained itself in the religions of the ancient world ; for mythology at a later, or in some nations at an earlier, stage, dived into a gulf below, out of which rose powers of evil—furies pursuing the homicide, inevitable destiny, capricious vengeance, wild justice for imaginary crimes. Human nature grew and human beings spread over the earth ; but they carried with them, wherever they went, the traditional load of superstition, with which their separate existence as a nation seemed to be bound up. Far otherwise would it have been if the good of states, or the dictates of natural feeling and affection, had been made the standard to which religion was to conform. And accordingly it has everywhere happened, that as reflection has gained ground, or civilization spread, mankind have risen up against the absurdities and barbarities of early mythology, either openly disowning them or secretly explaining them away ; and thus in either case bearing witness that idolatry is not on a level with man's reason, but below it. In the case of the Greeks, especially, many of the grosser forms of religion disappeared from the light of day into the seclusion of the mysteries.

The whole civilized world in modern times are worshippers of an unseen God ; the whole civilized world in ancient times were idolaters. The vastness and uniformity of this latter fact lead us to look upon idolatry as rooted in a natural instinct. It is not an error into which men reason themselves, or a lesson propagated by false teachers, or the trick of priests imposing on the credulity of mankind ; a lower stage of human nature is implied in it. Its birth and origin we scarcely see ; most of the effects which are commonly attributed to it being an after-growth of civilized and historical times. And this of itself was an element of immorality ; it continued in a world which had lost its first meaning, whose convictions of right and truth gradually became opposed to it, whose very ideas of decency were inconsistent with its grosser forms. In old times man had wondered at his own power of bringing into being a creature in his own image ; religious awe had blended with the sensual impulse ; at shrines and sacred places 'the people had come together to eat and to drink, and risen up to play'. And, ever after, sensual love remained as a pervading element of the Pagan religions, consecrated by antiquity, in later ages graced and half-concealed by art. The introduction of the Bacchanalia

at a comparatively recent epoch in the history of Greece, and the attempted introduction of them at Rome, indicate the reawakening of the same religious passions, when older modes of faith failed to satisfy them. Yet more monstrous forms of evil arose when in things not to be named men seemed to see a likeness to the operations and powers of nature. The civilized Greek and Roman knew well that there were frenzies of religious licentiousness unworthy of a rational being, improper and dangerous for a government to allow. As East and West met and mingled, the more did these strange rites spread themselves, passing from Egypt and Phœnicia to Greece, from the mountains of Phrygia to the streets and temples of Rome.

But, besides this direct connexion between idolatry and forms of moral evil, there is also an indirect and general influence which it exercised, even in its better aspect, adverse to morality. Not from religion, but from philosophy, come the higher aspirations of the human soul in Greece and Rome. Idolatry detains men in the world of sight; it offers an outward form to the eye and imagery to the fancy; it draws the many-coloured veil of art over the corruption of human nature. It heals the strife of man with himself superficially. It takes away the conscious want of the higher life, but leaves the real need. But morality has to do with an unseen world: it has no form nor comeliness, when separated from the hope which the Gospel holds out; it is severe and stoical in its demands. It tells men to look within; it deepens the battle with self. It presents duty almost as an abstraction which in the face of death they must pursue, though there be no reward here, though their name perish for evermore. The spirit of all idolatry is the very opposite of this; it bids men rest in this world, it pacifies them about another. The nature of God, who is the ideal and perfection of all morality, it lowers to the level of man; the virtue which is above, the truth which is beyond us, it embodies in the likeness of the human form, or the wayward and grotesque fancies of the human mind. It bids us seek without for what can only be found within.

There remains yet a further parallel to be drawn between immorality and idolatry in the age in which St Paul himself lived, when the ancient religions had already begun to be discredited and explained away. At this time they had become customs rather than beliefs—maxims of state rather than opinions. It is, indeed, impossible to determine how far in any minds they commanded respect, or how much of the reverence that was refused to established modes of worship was accorded

to the claims of newly imported deities. They were in harmony with the outer world of the Roman Empire—that is, with its laws, institutions, traditions, buildings; but strangely out of harmony with its inner life. No one turned to the mythology of Greece and Rome to find a rule of life. Perhaps no one had ever done so, but now least of all. Their hold was going or gone; there was a space in the mind of man which they could no longer fill up, in which Stoic and Epicurean philosophers were free to walk; the chill darkness of which might receive a ray of light and warmth from the Alexandrian mystic; where, too, true voices of philosophy and experience might faintly make themselves heard, and the heart ask itself and find its own solution of the problem ‘What is truth?’ In all this latter period the relation of morality to religion might be said to be one of separation and antagonism. And, upon the whole, this very freedom was favourable to right and truth. It is difficult to determine how far the spectacle of a religion which has outlived its time may corrupt the moral sense, how far the necessary disbelief of an existing superstition tends to weaken and undermine the intellectual faculties of mankind; but there can be little doubt that it does so less than if it were still believed and still ministered to the sensuality or ignorance of the world.

## On the State of the Heathen World

Nor to dwell at length on a subject from which the Christian gladly turns away, it will not be without use, as an illustration of the preceding chapter, to sum up briefly a few of the leading features which distinguish the heathen from the Christian world ; most of which have never existed in Christian times, and which we have no reason to think ever will or can exist again as prevailing practices in a Christian or civilized society.

1. *Παιδεραστία* and in general unnatural crimes.
2. Exposure of offspring.
3. Licentiousness of religious worship, as shown :
  - i. In the representations of the theatre, where the worst parts of the heathen mythology were publicly performed.
  - ii. In the mysteries, especially those of Cybele and of Ceres and Bacchus, which consisted partly of a frantic licentiousness, partly of a consecration of those things which are done in secret by mankind.
  - iii. In the religious ceremonies of Egypt and the East, especially the worship of Cotytto, Astarte, Isis, and Mendes.
4. Cruelty, as shown not merely in maxims or practices of war or the crimes of individuals, but in the offering of human sacrifices, which continued to the age of the Emperor Adrian.

To which may be added, as less revolting characteristics of ancient times :

1. Slavery ;
2. Condition of women : both of which are gradually ameliorated by Christianity.

The picture suggested by these features is not equally true of the heathen world in all ages, nor of Greece and the East, nor of Rome and Greece, nor of Rome itself in the earlier years of the republic and under the emperors. In the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* the fouler Greek vices are found, if anywhere, only among the gods: while the Greek Lyric and Elegiac poets are deeply infected with them. Old Italian life was simpler and better. It could hardly have been the mere fond recollection of the past that made the Roman tell of the Sabine morals of his ancestors, or of the dignity of Roman matrons, or of the lessons of truth and virtue to be gathered from the examples of consuls and dictators. It is probable that Rome was long preserved from the impurities of Greece and the East, yet, as it seems, only reserved for a deeper contamination and pollution. To see the old world in its worst estate we turn to the age of the satirists and of Tacitus, when all the different streams of evil coming from east, west, north, south, the vices of barbarism and the vices of civilization, remnants of ancient cults and the latest refinements of luxury and impurity, met and mingled on the banks of the Tiber. What could have been the state of society when Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, Domitian, Heliogabalus were the rulers of the world? To a good man we should imagine that death itself would be more tolerable than the sight of such things coming upon the earth.

Strange it seems, at first sight, that anything of good, or patriotism or nobler feeling, anything of purity in women or manliness in men, should have subsisted side by side with shameless indecency and impurity. Living, mingling, acting in this world below nature, were men like Seneca, Tacitus, or Agricola, of whom it might be truly said 'these not having the law are a law unto themselves'. The explanation of this anomaly is, perhaps, to be sought in the fact, that in the worst of times good men are better and more entirely separated from the vices of their age. At the same time it can hardly be supposed that they could have regarded the sins which the Apostle describes with that natural horror that they would awaken among ourselves. The feeling which makes the perpetrator of such sins an outcast and an exile upon the earth had as yet no existence: shameful as they were admitted to be, they could still be made the subject of a jest or of a poetical allusion. Nor must the extreme confusion be overlooked which religion had introduced into the natural sense of mankind respecting them, consecrating them by the example of gods and heroes, and representing even the worst of them as religious

mysteries. Least of all would the increase of refinement tend to their diminution. It was not to the elegant and luxurious senator such abominations were peculiarly odious, but to the antique Roman, rude in speech and knowledge, hating the contamination of foreign manners, lingering in thought around the liberties of the republic.

Two reflections naturally append themselves on this subject. The first, that as St Paul tells us that the Gentiles knew or might have known the truth of God, so there never was a time—at least in the history of Greece and Rome, with which we are best acquainted—in which nature and reason did not bear witness against these impurities. Plato and Socrates in their way, and Aristophanes in his, alike protested against the degrading vices of their age; the first by endeavouring to give a nobler and more spiritual character to that which to Christian ideas is absolutely incapable of being associated with anything true or spiritual; the latter, while admitting the universality of such vices, by making them subjects of ridicule and satire, and also to a certain extent claiming for himself the praise of greater decency than his contemporary comic writers. In the times of the emperors the lash of the satirist gave no quarter to the depravity of the age; while the historian, and better men generally, remembered the tradition of a time when purity and decency of manners had not yet been lost, and the Stoic philosopher, if his stoicism were not a mere mask, stood apart, naturally compelled to an austere virtue by the vices of all mankind.

The other is a sad reflection, which we would fain conceal from ourselves, and yet cannot avoid making, when contemplating the glorious Athens, its marvels of art and beauty, its deeds of patriotism, its speculations of wisdom and philosophy; not, perhaps, without the thought flashing across our minds that there was a phase of human life in that old Paganism which in Christianity has never been developed in equal perfection, and from which truly Christianity may be said to have borrowed something which it has incorporated with itself. The reflection is this: That if the inner life had been presented to us of that period which in political greatness and in art is the most brilliant epoch of humanity, we should have turned away from the sight with loathing and detestation. The greatest admirer of old heathen virtues, the man endowed with the finest sensibilities for beauty and form, would feel at once that there was a great gulf fixed between us and them, which no willingness to make allowance for the difference of ages or countries

would enable us to pass. There are vices which have existed in modern times to a far greater extent than in ancient; there were virtues in ancient times which have never been exceeded; but there were vices also which are not even named among us. It is a sad but useful lesson, that the noblest simplicity in art may go along with

Rank corruption mining all within.

Neither is it untrue to say, that there was a thread by which they were linked together.



## On the Abstract Ideas of the New Testament, in Connexion with *Romans*, I, 17

RELIGION and philosophy have often been contrasted as moving in different planes, in which they can never come into contact with each other. Yet there are many meeting points at which either passes into the circle of the other. One of these meeting points is language, which loses nothing of its original imperfection by being employed in the service of religion. Its plastic nature is an element of uncertainty in the interpretation of Scripture; its logical structure is a necessary limit on human faculties in the conception of truths above them; whatever growth it is capable of, must affect also the growth of our religious ideas; the analysis we are able to make of it, we must be able also to extend to the theological use of it. Religion cannot place itself above the instrument through which alone it speaks to man; our true wisdom is, therefore, to be aware of their interdependence.

One of the points in which theology and philosophy are brought into connexion by language, is their common usage of abstract words, and of what in the phraseology of some philosophers are termed 'mixed modes', or ideas not yet freed from associations of time or sense. Logicians speak of the abstract and concrete, and of the formation of our abstract ideas: Are the abstractions of Scripture the same in kind with those of philosophy? May we venture to analyze their growth, to ask after their origin, to compare their meaning in one age of the world and in another? The same words in different languages have not precisely the same meaning. May not this be the case also with abstract terms which have passed from

the Old Testament into the New, which have come down to us from the times of the Apostles, hardened by controversy, worn by the use of two thousand years? These questions do not admit of a short and easy answer. Even to make them intelligible, we have to begin some way off, to enter on our inquiry as a speculation rather of logic than of theology, and hereafter to return to its bearing on the interpretation of Scripture.

It is remarked by a great metaphysician, that abstract ideas are, in one point of view, the highest and most philosophical of all our ideas, while in another they are the shallowest and most meagre. They have the advantage of clearness and definiteness; they enable us to conceive and, in a manner, to span the infinity of things; they arrange, as it were, in the frames of a window the many-coloured world of phenomena. And yet they are 'mere' abstractions removed from sense, removed from experience, and detached from the mind in which they arose. Their perfection consists, as their very name implies, in their idealism: that is, in their negative nature.

For example: the idea of 'happiness' has come down from the Greek philosophy. To us it is more entirely freed from etymological associations than it was to Aristotle, and further removed from any particular state of life, or, in other words, it is more of an abstraction. It is what everybody knows, but what nobody can tell. It is not pleasure, nor wealth, nor power, nor virtue, nor contemplation. Could we define it, we seem at first as if we should have found out the secret of the world. But our next thought is that we should only be defining a word, that it consists rather in a thousand undefinable things which, partly because mankind are not agreed about them, partly because they are too numerous to conceive under any single idea, are dropt by the instinct of language. It means what each person's fancy or experience may lead him to connect with it; it is a vague conception to his own mind, which nevertheless may be used without vagueness as a middle term in conversing with others.

It is the uniformity in the use of such words that constitutes their true value. Like all other words, they represent in their origin things of sense, facts of experience. But they are no longer pictured by the sense, or tinged by the affections; they are beyond the circle of associations in which they arose. When we use the word happiness, no thought of chance now intrudes itself; when we use the word righteousness, no thought of law or courts; when the word virtue is used, the image no longer presents itself of manly strength or beauty.

The growth of abstract ideas is an after-growth of language itself, which may be compared to the growth of the mind when the body is already at its full stature. All language has been originally the reflection of a world of sense; the words which describe the faculties have once referred to the parts of the body; the name of God Himself has been derived in most languages from the sun or the powers of nature. It is indeed impossible for us to say how far, under these earthly and sensual images, there lurked among the primitive peoples of mankind a latent consciousness of the spiritual and invisible; whether the thought or only the word was of the earth earthy. From this garment of the truth it is impossible for us to separate the truth itself. In this form awhile it appears to grow; even the writers of the Old Testament, in its earlier portion, finding in the winds or the light of heaven the natural expression of the power or holiness of Jehovah. But in process of time another world of thought and expression seems to create itself. The words for courage, strength, beauty, and the like, begin to denote mental and moral qualities; things which were only spoken of as actions, become abstract ideas, the name of God loses all sensual and outward associations; until at the end of the first period of Greek philosophy, the world of abstractions, and the words by which they are expressed, have almost as much definiteness and preciseness of meaning as among ourselves.

This process of forming abstractions is ever going on—the mixed modes of one language are the pure ideas of another; indeed, the adoption of words from dead languages into English has, above all other causes, tended to increase the number of our simple ideas, because the associations of such words, being lost in the transfer, they are at once refined from all alloy of sense and experience. Different languages, or the same at different periods of their history, are at different stages of the process. We can imagine a language, such as language was, as far as the vestiges of it allow us to go back, in its first beginnings, in which every operation of the mind, every idea, every relation, was expressed by a sensible image; a language which we may describe as purely sensual and material, the words of which, like the first written characters, were mental pictures: we can imagine a language in a state which none has ever yet reached, in which the worlds of mind and matter are perfectly separated from each other, and no clog or taint of the one is allowed to enter into the other. But all languages which exist are in reality between these two extremes, and are

passing from one to the other. The Greek of Homer is at a different stage from that of the Greek tragedians; the Greek of the early Ionic philosophers, at a different stage from that of Plato; so, though in a different way (for here there was no advancement), the Greek of Plato as compared with the Neo-Platonist philosophy. The same remark is applicable to the Old Testament, the earlier and later books of which may be, in a similar way, contrasted with each other; almost the whole of which (though here a new language also comes in) exhibits a marked difference from the Apocrypha. The structure of thought insensibly changes. This is the case with all languages which have a literature—they are ever becoming more and more abstract—modern languages, more than ancient; the later stages of either, more than the earlier. It by no means follows that as Greek, Latin, and English have words that correspond in a dictionary, they are real equivalents in meaning, because words, the same, perhaps, etymologically, may be used with different degrees of abstraction, which no accuracy or periphrasis of translation will suffice to express, belonging, as they do generally, to the great underlying differences of a whole language.

Another illustration of degrees of abstraction may be found in the language of poetry, or of common life, and the language of philosophy. Poetry, we know, will scarcely endure abstract terms, while they form the stock and staple of morals and metaphysics. They are the language of books, rather than of conversation. Theology, on the other hand, though its problems may seem akin to those of the moralist and metaphysician, yet tends to reject them in the same way that English tends to reject French words, or poetry to reject prose. He who in paraphrasing Scripture spoke of essence, matter, vice, crime, would be thought guilty of a want of taste; the reason of which is, that these abstract terms are not within the circle of our Scripture associations. They carry us into another age or country or school of thought—to the ear of the uneducated they have an unusual sound, while to the educated they appear to involve an anachronism or to be out of place. Vice, they say, is the moral, sin the theological term; nature and law are the proper words in a treatise on physiology, while the actions of which they are the imaginary causes would in a prayer or sermon be suitably ascribed to the Divine Being.

Our subject admits of another illustration from the language of the Fathers as compared with that of Scripture. Those who have observed the circumstance naturally ask why it is that

Scriptural expressions when they reappear in the early patristic literature slightly change their signification, that a greater degree of personality is given to one word, more definiteness to another, while a third has been singled out to be the centre of a scheme of doctrine? The reason is, that use, and reflection, and controversy do not allow language to remain where it was. Time itself is the great innovator in the sense of words. No one supposes that the meaning of conscience or imagination exactly corresponds to the Latin 'conscientia' or 'imaginatio'. Even within the limits of our own language the terms of the scholastic philosophy have acquired and lost a technical signification. And several changes have taken place in the language of creeds and articles, which, by their very attempt to define and systematize, have slightly though imperceptibly departed from the use of words in Scripture.

The principle of which all these instances are illustrations leads to important results in the interpretation of Scripture. It tends to show, that in using the same words with St Paul we may not be using them in precisely the same sense. Nay, that the very exactness with which we apply them, the result of the definitions, oppositions, associations, of ages of controversy, is of itself a difference of meaning. The mere lapse of time tends to make the similarity deceitful. For if the language of Scripture (to use an expression which will have been made intelligible by the preceding remarks) be really at a different stage of abstraction, great differences in the use of language will occur, such as in each particular word escape and perplex us, and yet, on a survey of the whole, are palpable and evident.

A well-known difficulty in the interpretation of the *Epistles* is the seemingly uncertain use of *δικαιοσύνη, ἀλήθεια, ἀγάπη, πίστις, δόξα*, &c., words apparently the most simple, and yet taking sometimes in the same passage different shades and colours of meaning. Sometimes they are attributes of God, in other passages qualities in man; here realities, there mere ideas, sometimes active, sometimes passive. Some of them, as *ἀμαρτία, πίστις*, have a sort of personality assigned to them, while others, as *πνεῦμα*, with which we associate the idea of a person, seem to lose their personality. They are used with genitive cases after them, which we are compelled to explain in various senses. In the technical language of German philosophy, they are objective and subjective at once. For example: in the first chapter of the *Romans*, ver. 17, it is asked by commentators 'Whether the righteousness of God which is revealed in the Gospel' is the

original righteousness of God from the beginning, or the righteousness which He imparts to man, the righteousness of God in Himself or in man. So again, in ch. v, ver. 5, it is doubted whether the words *ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκκέχνηται ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις* refer to the love of God in man, or the love of God to man. So *πνεῦμα θεοῦ* wavers in meaning between a separate existence, or the spirit of God, as we should say the 'mind of man', and the manifestation of that spirit in the soul of the believer. Similar apparent ambiguities occur in such expressions as *πίστις Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ*, *ὑπομονὴ χριστοῦ*, *ἀλήθεια θεοῦ*, *δόξα θεοῦ*, *σοφία θεοῦ*, and several others.

A difficulty akin to this arises from the apparently numerous senses in which another class of words, such as *νόμος*, *θωή*, *ζάνατος* are used in the *Epistles* of St Paul. That *νόμος* should sometimes signify the law of Moses, at other times the law of the conscience, and that it should be often uncertain whether *ζωή* referred to a life spiritual or natural, is inconceivable, if these words had had the same precise and defined sense that the corresponding English words have amongst ourselves. The class of expressions before mentioned seems to widen and extend in meaning as they are brought into contact with God and the human soul, or transferred from things earthly and temporal to things heavenly and spiritual. The subtle transformation which these latter words undergo, may be best described as a metaphorical or analogous use of them: not, to take a single instance, that the meaning of the word 'law' is so widened as to include all 'law', but that the law of Moses becomes the figure or type of the law written on the heart, or of the law of sin and death, and *ζωή*, the natural life, the figure of the spiritual. Each word is a reflector of many thoughts, and we pass from one reflection of it to another in successive verses.

That such verbal difficulties occur much more often in Scripture than in any other book, will be generally admitted. In Plato and Aristotle, for example, they can be hardly said to exist at all. What they meant by *εἶδος* or *οὐσία* is hard to conceive, but their use of the words does not waver in successive sentences. The language of the Greek philosophy is, on the whole, precise and definite. A much nearer parallel to what may be termed the infinity of Scripture is to be found in the Jewish Alexandrian writings. There is the same transition from the personal to the impersonal, the same figurative use of language, the same tendency to realize and speak of all things in reference to God and the human soul. The mind existed prior to the ideas which are therefore conceived of as its qualities

or attributes, and naturally coalesced with it in the Alexandrian phraseology.

The difficulty of which we have been speaking, when considered in its whole extent, is its own solution. It does but force upon us the fact, that the use of language and the mode of thought are different in the writings of the Apostle from what they are amongst ourselves. It is the difficulty of a person who should set himself to explain the structure of a language which he did not know, by one which he did, and at last, in despair, begin to learn the new idiom. Or the difficulty that a person would have in understanding poetry, who imagined it to be prose. It is the difficulty that Aristotle or Cicero found in understanding the philosophers that were before them. They were familiar with the meaning of the words used by them, but not with the mode of thought. Logic itself had increased the difficulty to them of understanding the times before logic.

This is our own difficulty in the interpretation of Scripture. Our use of language is more definite, our abstractions more abstract, our structure more regular and logical. But the moment we perceive and allow for this difference in the use of language in Scripture and among ourselves, the difficulty vanishes. We conceive ideas in a process of formation, falling from inspired lips, growing in the minds of men. We throw ourselves into the world of 'mixed modes', and seek to recall the associations which the technical terms of theology no longer suggest. We observe what may be termed the difference of level in our own ideas and those of the first Christians, without disturbing the meaning of one word in relation to another.

The difficulty while it is increased, is also explained by the personifying character of the age. Ideas in the New Testament are relative to the mind of God or man, in which they seem naturally to inhere so as scarcely, in the usage of language, to have an independent existence. There is ever the tendency to speak of good and virtue and righteousness as inseparable from the Divine nature, while in evil of every sort a reflection of conscience seems to be included. The words *δικαιοσύνη*, *ἀλήθεια*, *ἀγάπη*, are not merely equivalent to righteousness, truth, love, but connect imperceptibly with 'the Author and Father of lights'. There is no other righteousness or truth but that of God, just as there is no sin without the consciousness of sin in man. Consequently, the two thoughts coalesce in one, and what are to us ideas, which we can imagine existing even without God, are to the Israelite attributes of God himself. Still, in our 'mixed modes' we must make a further step; for as these ideas

cannot be separated from God, so neither can they be conceived of, except as revealed in the Gospel, and working in the heart of man. Man who is righteous has no righteousness of his own, his righteousness is the righteousness of God in him. Hence, when considering the righteousness of God, we must go on to conceive of it as the revelation of His righteousness, without which it would be unknown and unmeaning to us. The abstract must become concrete, and must involve at once the attribute of God and the quality in man. This 'concrete' notion of the word righteousness is different from the abstract one with which we are familiar. Righteousness is the righteousness of God; it is also the communion of that righteousness with man. It is used almost with the same double meaning as we attribute to the will of God, which we speak of actively, as intending, doing, and passively, as done, fulfilled by ourselves.

A part of this embarrassment in the interpretation of Scripture arises out of the unconscious influence of English words and ideas on our minds, in translating from Hellenistic Greek. The difficulty is still more apparent, when the attempt is made to render the Scriptures into a language which has not been framed or moulded on Christianity. It is a curious question, the consideration of which is not without practical use, how far the nicer shades either of Scriptural expression or of later theology are capable of being made intelligible in the languages of India or China.

Yet, on the other hand, it must be remembered, that neither this nor any of the other peculiarities here spoken of, is a mere form of speech, but enters deeply into the nature of the Gospel. For the Gospel has necessarily its mixed modes, not merely because it is preached to the poor, and therefore adopts the expressions of ordinary life; nor because its language is incrustated with the phraseology of the Alexandrian writers; but because its subject is mixed, and, as it were, intermediate between God and man. Natural theology speaks clearly, but it is of God only; moral philosophy speaks clearly, but it is of man only; but the Gospel is, as it were, the communion of God and man, and its ideas are in a state of transition or oscillation, having two aspects, towards God and towards man, which it is hard to keep in view at once. Thus, to quote once more the example just given, the righteousness of God is an idea not difficult to us to comprehend, human justice and goodness are also intelligible; but to conceive justice or righteousness as passing from heaven to earth, from God to man, *actu et potentia* at once, as a sort of life, or stream, or motion, is perplexing.



And yet this notion of the communion of the righteousness of God being what constitutes righteousness, is of the very essence of the Gospel. It was what the Apostle and the first believers meant and felt, and what, if we could get the simple unlettered Christian, receiving the Gospel as a little child, to describe to us his feelings, he would describe.

Scripture language may thus be truly said to belong to an intermediate world, different at once both from the visible and invisible world, yet partaking of the nature of both. It does not represent the things that the eye sees merely, nor the things that are within the veil of which those are the images, but rather the world that is in our hearts; the things that we feel, but nobody can express in words. His body is the communion of His body; His spirit is the communion of His spirit; the love of God is 'loving as we are loved'; the knowledge of God is 'knowing as we are known'; the righteousness of faith is Divine as well as human. Hence language seems to burst its bounds in the attempt to express the different aspects of these truths, and from its very inadequacy wavers and becomes uncertain in its meaning. The more intensely we feel and believe, and the less we are able to define our feelings, the more shall we appear to use words at random; employing sometimes one mode of expression, sometimes another; passing from one thought to another, by slender threads of association; 'going off upon a word' as it has been called; because in our own minds all is connected, and, as it were, fulfilled with itself, and from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. To understand the language of St Paul it is necessary, not only to compare the uses of words with one another, or to be versed in Alexandrian modes of thought, but to lead the life of St Paul, to have the mind of St Paul, to be one with Christ, to be dead to sin. Otherwise the world within becomes unmeaning to us. The inversion of all human things of which he speaks, is attributed to the manner of his time, or the peculiarity of his individual character; and at the very moment when we seem to have attained most accurately the Apostle's meaning, it vanishes away like a shadow.

No human eye can pierce the cloud which overhangs another life; no faculty of man can 'by understanding find out' of express in words the Divine nature. Yet it does not follow that our ideas of spiritual things are wholly indefinite. There are many symbols and images of them in the world without and below. There is a communion of thoughts, feelings, and affections, even on earth, quite sufficient to be an image of the

communion with God and Christ, of which the *Epistles* speak to us. There are emotions, and transitions, and passings out of ourselves, and states of undefined consciousness, which language is equally unable to express as it is to describe justification, or the work of grace, or the relation of the believer to his Lord. All these are rather intimated than described or defined by words. The sigh of sorrow, the cry of joy or despair, are but inarticulate sounds, yet expressive, beyond the power of writing, or speech. There are many such 'still small voices' of warning or of consolation in Scripture, beyond the power of philosophy to analyse, yet full of meaning to him who catches them aright. The life and force of such expressions do not depend on the clearness with which they state a logical proposition, or the vividness with which they picture to the imagination a spiritual world. They gain for themselves a truth in the individual soul. Even logic itself affords negative helps to the feebleness of man in the conception of things above him. It limits us by our own faculties; it guards us against identifying the images of things unseen with the 'very things themselves'; it bars remote inferences about terms which are really metaphorical. Lastly, it helps us to define by opposition. Though we do not know what spirit is, we know what body is, and we conceive of spirit as what body is not. 'There is a spiritual body, and there is a natural body'. We imagine it at once both like and unlike. We do not know what heaven, or the glory of God, or His wisdom, is; but we imagine them unlike this world, or the wisdom of this world, or the glory of the princes of this world, and yet, in a certain way, like them, imaged and symbolized by what we see around us. We do not know what eternity is, except as the negative of time; but believing in its real existence, in a way beyond our faculties to comprehend, we do not confine it within the limits of past, present or future. We are unable to reconcile the power of God and the freedom of man, or the contrast of this world and another, or even the opposite feelings of our own minds about the truths of religion. But we can describe them as the Apostle has done, in a paradox: 2 *Cor.*, iv, 12; vi, 8-10.

There is yet a further way in which the ideas of Scripture may be defined, that is, by use. It has been already observed that the progress of language is from the concrete to the abstract. Not the least striking instance of this is the language of theology. Embodied in creeds, it gradually becomes developed and precise. The words are no longer 'living creatures with hands and feet', as it were, feeling after the hearts of men; but they have one

distinct, unchanging meaning. When we speak of justification or truth, no question arises whether by this is meant the attribute of God, or the quality in man. Time and usage have sufficiently circumscribed the diversities of their signification. This is not to be regarded as a misfortune to scriptural truth, but as natural and necessary. Part of what is lost in power and life is regained in certainty and definiteness. The usage of language itself would forbid us, in a discourse or sermon, to give as many senses to the word 'law' as are attributed to it by St Paul. Only in the interpretation of Scripture, if we would feel as St Paul felt, or think as he thought, it is necessary to go back to that age before creeds, in which the water of life was still a running stream.

The course of speculation which has been adopted in this essay, may seem to introduce into Scripture an element of uncertainty. It may seem to cloud truth with metaphysics, and rob the poor and the uneducated of the simplicity of the Gospel. But perhaps this is not so. Whether it be the case that such speculations introduce an element of uncertainty or difficulty into Scripture or not, they introduce a new element of truth. For without the consideration of such questions as that of which a brief sketch has been here attempted, there is no basis for Scriptural interpretation. We are ever liable to draw the meaning of words this way or that, according to the theological system of which we are the advocates; to fall under the slavery of an illogical logic, which first narrows the mind by definitions, and then wearies it with far-fetched inferences. Metaphysics must enter into the interpretation of Scripture, not for the sake of intruding upon it a new set of words or ideas, but with the view of getting rid of metaphysics and restoring to Scripture its natural sense.

But the Gospel is still preached to the poor as before, in the same sacred yet familiar language. They could not understand questions of grammar before; they do not understand modes of thought now. It is the peculiar nature of our religious ideas that we are able to apply them, and to receive comfort from them, without being able to analyse or explain them. All the metaphysical and logical speculations in the world will not rob the poor, the sick, or the dying of the truths of the Gospel. Yet the subject which we have been considering is not without a practical result. It warns us to restore the Gospel to its simplicity, to turn from the letter to the spirit, to withdraw from the number of the essentials of Christianity points almost too subtle for the naked eye, which depend on modes of thought

or Alexandrian usages, to require no more of preciseness of definition than is necessary to give form and substance to our teaching. Not only the feebleness of human faculties, but the imperfection of language itself will often make silence our truest wisdom. The saying of Scaliger, taken not seriously but in irony, is full of meaning: 'Many a man has missed of his salvation from ignorance of grammar'.

To the poor and uneducated, at times to all, no better advice can be given for the understanding of Scripture than to read the Bible humbly with prayer. The critical and metaphysical student requires another sort of rule for which this can never be made a substitute. His duty is to throw himself back into the times, the modes of thought, the language of the Apostolic age. He must pass from the abstract to the concrete, from the ideal and intellectual to the spritual, from later statements of faith or doctrine to the words of inspiration which fell from the lips of the first believers. He must seek to conceive the religion of Christ in its relation to the religions of other ages and distant countries, to the philosophy of our own or other times; and if in this effort his mind seems to fail or waver, he must win back in life and practice the hold on the truths of the Gospel which he is beginning to lose in the mazes of speculation.

## Of the Modes of Time and Place in Scripture

*οἷτινες ἐνδείκνυνται τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν, συμ-  
μαρτυροῦσης αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως καὶ μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν κατηγο-  
ροῦντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων, ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἣ κρινεῖ ὁ θεὸς τὰ κρυπτὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων  
κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου διὰ Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ.—Rom., ii, 15, 16.*

THE change in the tense of *κρινεῖ* causes the difficulty in the explanation of this passage, which some have endeavoured to remove by a parenthesis, extending from *οὐ γὰρ οἱ δικαιοθήσονται* to *ἀπολογουμένων*, and carrying back the sense of the 16th verse to the end of the 12th or 13th (either as many as sinned in the law shall be judged by the law in the day &c. ; or the doers of the law shall be justified in the day). Such a parenthesis is a fiction. Nor does the attempt succeed better to separate *συμμαρτυροῦσης* from *ἐνδείκνυνται* and connect it with *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ*, as thus: 'Who shew the word of the law written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing them witness in the day of judgment'.

The only other way of taking the passage is, as the order of the words suggests, to connect *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ* with *ἐνδείκνυνται*. Nothing apparently can get over the grammatical solecism, involved in the change from the present to the future. For the doing and manifesting forth the works of the law is in this present life ; but the day in which God shall judge is future—the day of judgment.

Can we say that the Apostle, in the same way that he sometimes adopts one meaning of the law, sometimes another, so also glances from past to present, from earth to heaven? This assumed confusion of times and places can only be justified, if at all, by the production of parallel passages, and the general consideration of the modes of time and place in Scripture.

How there can be more than one mode of conceiving time and place may be illustrated as follows :

A child is perfectly well aware that to-day is different from yesterday, evening from morning. It has an idea also of duration of time. But it does not follow from this that it has an idea of past time, such as has elapsed from the time of William the Conqueror to the present day, or from the Flood to the Christian era. Nor again of future time, even of the threescore years of its own future life, or of another person's, still less of time in history, or of a continuation of time to the end of the world. Its ideas of time are almost exclusively present.

So with respect to place. It is not wholly ignorant of place and distance, but it has no idea of the immensity of the world ; it is rooted on its own little spot, and conceives of other places as much nearer to its home than they really are. If it speaks of the world, it has not the vaguest conception what is implied in this ; the world is to it a sort of round infinity.

So the ancients may be said to have a very different idea of time and space from the moderns, barbarous people from civilised, Hindoos from Englishmen.

So we can conceive a state in which the past was unknown, 'a mystery' kept secret, thought of only in some relation to the present, in which the future too seemed to blend with and touch the present, and this world and the next met in the inward consciousness of the believer. To us, it is true, there is a broad line of demarcation between them. But we can imagine, however unlike the fact, that we too, like children, might be living under the influence of present impressions, scarcely ever permitting ourselves to dwell on the distant and indistinct horizon of the past or future.

Something like what has been described was really the case with the first believers. Their modes of time differed in several respects from our own.

First : In the very idea of the latter days. The world seemed to be closing in upon them ; 1 *Cor.*, x, 11. They had no conception of posterity, or of new kingdoms, or of a vista of futurity : *ὁ καιρὸς συνεσταλμένος*. Now was the day of salvation ; now was their salvation nearer than when they believed (*Rom.*, xiii, 11).

Secondly : In the conception of the duration of time. Living, as they did, in the daily expectation of the coming of Christ, seeing the face of the world change in the few years of their own life, time to them was crowded with events. A moment was sufficient for the greatest act of life ; another moment would be sufficient for the act of judgment. There is no idea of gradually

growing up from heathenism to the Gospel, but always of sudden conversion, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye. This is why even the shortest periods of time seem so filled with changes and experiences; why a few short months are sufficient for the conversion and the lapse of whole Churches. Time was to them at once short and long; short, absolutely; long in reference to the events that hurried by.

Thirdly; In relation to this life and a future, which to ourselves are set one against the other, divided by the gate of death. To them another life was one with, and the continuation of this. Both were alike embraced in the expression 'eternal life'. They were 'waiting for the revelation of the Lord' (1 Cor., i, 7): and yet the things 'that eye had not seen, nor ear heard' had already been revealed to them through the Spirit (1 Cor., ii, 4). So in reference to a future judgment. It was at once present and future. So far as it resembled the judgments of Sinai, it was future; so far as it was inward and spiritual, it was present. Compare *John*, v, 24, 25: 'He that believeth on me hath everlasting life, and cometh not into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and *now* is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live'.

Fourthly: In reference to past time, a difference is observable in its being less vivid and distinct than to ourselves. This seems to be the reason why in many passages of Scripture the divinity of Christ dates from His manifestation on earth. The first believers did not uniformly think of Christ as existing from all eternity. They conceived Him as they had seen Him on earth at last entering into His glory, 'ordained to be the Son of God with power'. It was not settled by the language of any creed that He was the only-begotten of the Father, begotten before the worlds. The question had not been asked, the doubt had not arisen. So little did the idea of time enter into their conception of His existence, that they could speak of Him at once as 'ordained to be the Son of God with power', and also as 'the first-born of every creature', as 'speaking by the prophets', and yet also as contrasted with them and following them (*Heb.*, i, 2).

The general result of our inquiry thus far is, that the modes of time in the New Testament converge towards the present moment. Not, of course, that there is no past or no future; but that they meet in the *τέλη τῶν αἰώνων*, which are at once the revelation of both.

Hence, however great the grammatical irregularity, the

passage from the present to the future, which, like the unseen, was present and realized by faith. The transition was natural from the judgment of conscience here to the day of the Lord hereafter.

Compare the following :

Ἐθσαυρίζεις σεαυτῷ ὄργην ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ Θεοῦ. *Rom.*, ii. 5.

ὁ εὐλογήσας ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν χριστῷ. *Eph.*, i, 3.

In the first of these passages, there is nearly the same confusion of times as in *Rom.*, ii, 16.: 'You are treasuring up for yourself something future in the day of judgment'.

In the second, the confusion seems to be precisely parallel, if it be not rather one of place than of time: 'Who hath blessed us here present upon earth with all future and heavenly blessings'.

So *1 Thess.*, ii, 19: τίς γὰρ ἡμῶν ἐλπὶς ἢ χαρὰ ἢ στέφανος καυχήσεως, ἢ οὐχὶ καὶ ὑμεῖς, ἐμπροσθεν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῇ αὐτοῦ παρουσίᾳ; *1 Cor.*, i, 8: ὃς καὶ βεβαιώσει ὑμᾶς ἕως τέλους ἀνεγκλήτους ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ; *2 Cor.*, i, 14: καθὼς καὶ ἐπέγνωτε ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ μέρους, ὅτι καύχημα ὑμῶν ἐσμέν καθάπερ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου [ἡμῶν] Ἰησοῦ; *Col.*, iii, 6, for a weaker expression of the same.

These latter passages are sufficiently parallel with the one which we are considering, to justify the grammatical irregularity of connecting ἐνδείκνυται with ἐν ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου. We say, the sentence of conscience anticipates a higher tribunal. To the Apostle the testimony of conscience enters within the veil, and is already in the presence of God. His thoughts are so transferred to the day of Judgment, that in that, and through that only, he measures all things.

Parallel to the modes of time, though less important, are what may be termed the modes of place in the New Testament.

First; In reference to the word αἰών, which is at once a period of time, and also the world which is to subsist in that period. αἰὼν οὗτος and αἰὼν ὁ μέλλων originally mean the times before and after Messiah's coming; but are also opposed, not merely as we should oppose this life and a future, but as this world and another.

Secondly; In the indistinctness of the idea of heaven; which is at once a different place from earth, and co-existing with it in the same sense that the stars and the sky co-exist with it: and also the kingdom of God within the spiritual dwelling-place in which ideas of time and place are no more. Thus it is said:



‘I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven’ (*Luke*, x, 18): and, again, ‘The heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man’ (*John*, i, 51), in which a sort of pictorial image is presented to the mind. So *2 Cor.*, xii, 2: ‘I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell,) such an one caught up into the third heaven.’ But, on the other hand: ‘We have our conversation in heaven’ or ‘who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly (places)’, *ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις*, *Eph.*, i, 3, where heaven cannot be thought of as a distinct place from earth.

Thirdly: There is a certain degree of indistinctness in the ideas of place as applied only to the earth. As the ends of the world seem to meet in the present moment in the consciousness of the believer, so also the idea of the earth itself is narrowed to that spot in which the struggle is going on, which is all the world to him. A vivid consciousness of past time was, we saw, different from that general and undefined conception of the ‘ages of ages’ which we find in Scripture. So also a geographical idea of all the countries of the earth, with their peoples, climates, languages, is quite different from that, shall we say, spiritual notion of place which occurs in the *Epistles*. Here, where the Apostle himself is, is the scene of the great struggle; the places which he has visited, are the whole world, in which the powers of good and evil are arrayed against one another; a small spot of ground, like a small period of time, is fraught with the fortunes of mankind; the more earthly measure of place and distance is lost. This spiritual notion of time and place is not possible to ourselves, but only to an age which has an imperfect conception of past history, and an indistinct knowledge of the countries of the world. To the Apostle it was natural. In this way, allowing also something for Oriental modes of speech, we are to account for such expressions as the following: ‘I thank my God that your faith is made known in the whole world’ (*Rom.*, i, 8); or the salutation of *1 Cor.*, i, 2: ‘Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, sanctified in Christ Jesus, chosen saints, with all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, in every place both their’s and our’s’; where, in ‘every place’ is probably to be interpreted by the first chapter of the second epistle, *ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Ἀχαΐᾳ*. Compare also, *1 Thess.*, i, 8: ‘For from you hath sounded forth the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad, so that we have no need to say anything’. And yet the Apostle, at the time of

writing this, could hardly have been anywhere but in Macedonia and Achaia.

These mixed modes of time and place are no longer mixed to us, but clear and distinct. We live in the light of history and of nature, and can never mingle together what is inward and what is without us. We cannot but imagine everywhere, and at all times, heaven to be different from earth, the past from the future and present. No inward conscience can ever efface the limits that separate them. No 'contemplation of things under the form of eternity' will take us from the realities of life. We sometimes repeat the familiar language of Scripture, but always in a metaphorical sense. If we desire to understand, and not merely to explain it away, we must throw ourselves back to the age of the Apostle, and gather his meaning from his own words.

## The Old Testament

Ἡνίκα δ' ἂν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα.—2 Cor., iii, 16.

THUS we have reached another stage in the development of the great theme. The new commandment has become old; faith is taught in the Book of the Law. 'Abraham had faith in God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.' David spoke of the forgiveness of sins in the very spirit of the Gospel. The Old Testament is not dead, but alive again. It refers not to the past, but to the present. The truths which we daily feel, are written in its pages. There are the consciousness of sin and the sense of acceptance. There is the veiled remembrance of a former world, which is also the veiled image of a future one.

To us the Old and New Testaments are two books, or two parts of the same book, which fit into one another, and can never be separated or torn asunder. They are doubly one against the other, and the New Testament is the revelation of the Old. To the first believers it was otherwise: as yet there was no New Testament; nor is there any trace that the authors of the New Testament ever expected their own writings to be placed on a level with the Old. We can scarcely imagine what would have been the feeling of St Paul, could he have foreseen that later ages would look not to the faith of Abraham in the law, but to the *Epistle to the Romans*, as the highest authority on the doctrine of justification by faith; or that they would have regarded the allegory of Hagar and Sarah, in the *Epistle to the Galatians*, as a difficulty to be resolved by the inspiration of the Apostle. Neither he who wrote, nor those to whom he wrote could ever have thought, that words which were meant for a particular Church, were to give life also to all mankind; and that the *Epistles* in which they occurred were one day to be placed on a level with the Books of Moses themselves.

But if the writings of the New Testament were regarded by the contemporaries of the Apostle in a manner different from that of later ages, there was a difference, which it is far more difficult for us to appreciate, in their manner of reading the Old Testament. To them it was not half, but the whole, needing nothing to be added to it or to counteract it, but containing everything in itself. It seemed to come home to them; to be meant specially for their age; to be understood by them, as its words had never been understood before. 'Did not their hearts burn within them?' as the Apostles expounded to them the *Psalms* and *Prophets*. The manner of this exposition was that of the age in which they lived. They brought to the understanding of it, not a knowledge of the volume of the New Testament, but the mind of Christ. Sometimes they found the lesson which they sought in the plain language of Scripture; at other times, coming round to the same lesson by the paths of allegory, or seeming even in the sound of a word to catch an echo of the Redeemer's name. Various as are the writings of the Old Testament, composed by such numerous authors, at so many different times, so diverse in style and subject, in them all they read only—the truth of Christ. They read without distinctions of moral and ceremonial, type and antitype, history and prophecy, without inquiries into the original meaning or connexion of passages, without theories of the relation of the Old and New Testaments. Whatever contrast existed was of another kind, not of the parts of a book, but of the law and faith; of the earlier and later dispensations. The words of the book were all equally for their instruction; the whole volume lighted up with new meaning.

What was then joined cannot now be divided or put asunder. The New Testament will never be unclothed of the Old. No one in later ages can place himself in the position of the heathen convert who learnt the name of Christ first, afterwards the Law and the Prophets. Such instances were probably rare even in the first days of the Christian Church. No one can easily imagine the manner in which St Paul himself sets the Law over against the Gospel, and at the same time translates one into the language of the other. Time has closed up the rent which the Law made in the heart of man; and the superficial resemblances on which the Apostle sometimes dwells, have not the same force to us which they had to his contemporaries. But a real unity remains to ourselves as well as to the Apostle, the unity not of the letter, but of the spirit, like the unity of life or of a human soul, which lasts on amid the changes of our

being. The Old Testament and the New do not dovetail into one another like the parts of an indenture; it is a higher figure than this, which is needed to describe the continuity of the Divine work. Or rather, the simple fact is above all figures, and can conceive no addition from philosophical notions of design, or the observation of minute coincidences. What we term the Old and New dispensation is the increasing revelation of God, amid the accidents of human history: first, in Himself; secondly, in His Son, gathering not one nation only, but all mankind into His family. It is the vision of God Himself, true and just, and remembering mercy in one age of the world; not ceasing to be true and just, but softening also into human gentleness, and love, and forgiveness, and making His dwelling in the human heart in another. The wind, and the earthquake, and the fire pass by first, and after that 'the still small voice'. This is the great fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets in the Gospel. No other religion has anything like it. And the use of language, and systems of theology, and the necessity of 'giving ideas through something', and the prayers and thoughts of eighteen hundred years, have formed another connexion between the Old and New Testament, more accidental and outward, and also more intricate and complex, which is incapable of being accurately drawn out, and ought not to be imposed as an article of faith; which yet seems to many to supply a want in human nature, and gives expression to feelings which would otherwise be unuttered.

It is not natural, nor perhaps possible, to us to cease to use the figures in which 'holy men of old' spoke of that which belonged to their peace. But it is well that we should sometimes remind ourselves, that 'all these things are a shadow, but the body is of Christ'. Framed as our minds are, we are ever tending to confuse that which is accidental with that which is essential, to substitute the language of imagery for the severity of our moral ideas, to entangle Divine truths in the state of society in which they came into the world or in the ways of thought of a particular age. 'All these things are a shadow'; that is to say, not only the temple and tabernacle, and the victim laid on the altar, and the atonement offered once a year for the sins of the nation; but the conceptions which later ages express by these words, so far as anything human or outward or figurative mingles with them, so far as they cloud the Divine nature with human passions, so far as they imply, or seem to imply, anything at variance with our notions of truth and right, are as much, or even more a shadow than that outward image

which belonged to the elder dispensation. The same Lord who compared the scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven to a householder who brought forth out of his treasure things new and old, said also in a figure, that 'new cloth must not be put on an old garment' or 'new wine into old bottles'.

## On the Imputation of the Sin of Adam

THAT so many opposite systems of Theology seek their authority in Scripture is a fair proof that Scripture is different from them all. That is to say, Scripture often contains in germ, what is capable of being drawn to either side; it is indistinct, where they are distinct; it presents two lights, where they present only one; it speaks inwardly, while they clothe themselves in the forms of human knowledge. That indistinct, intermediate, inward point of view at which the truth exists but in germ, they have on both sides tended to extinguish and suppress. Passing allusions, figures of speech, rhetorical oppositions, have been made the foundation of doctrinal statements, which are like a part of the human mind itself, and seem as if they could never be uprooted, without uprooting the very sentiment of religion. Systems of this kind exercise a constraining power, which makes it difficult for us to see anything in Scripture but themselves. ;

For example, how slender is the foundation in the New Testament for the doctrine of Adam's sin being imputed to his posterity—two passages in St Paul at most, and these of uncertain interpretation. The little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, has covered the heavens. To reduce such subjects to their proper proportions, we should consider: First, what space they occupy in Scripture; Secondly, how far the language used respecting them is literal or figurative; Thirdly, whether they agree with the more general truths of Scripture and our moral sense, or are not 'rather repugnant thereto'; Fourthly, whether their origin may not be prior to Christianity, or traceable in the after history of the Church: Fifthly, whether the words of Scripture may not be confused with logical inferences which are appended to them; Sixthly, in the case of this and of some other doctrines, whether even poetry has not lent its aid to stamp them in our minds in a more definite and

therefore different form from that in which the Apostles taught them ; Lastly, how far in our own day they are anything more than words.

The two passages alluded to are *Rom.*, v, 12-21, *1 Cor.*, xv, 21, 22, 45-9, in both of which parallels are drawn between Adam and Christ. In both the sin of Adam is spoken of, or seems to be spoken of, as the source of death to man: 'As by one man's transgression sin entered into the world, and death by sin', and 'As in Adam all die'. Such words appear plain at first sight; that is to say, we find in them what we bring to them: let us see what considerations modify their meaning. If we accept the Pelagian view of the passage, which refers the death of each man to actual sin, there is an end of the controversy. But it does not equally follow that, if what is termed the received interpretation is given to the words, the doctrine which it has been attempted to ground upon them would have any real foundation,

We will suppose, then, that no reference is contained in either passage to 'actual sin'. In some other sense than this mankind are identified with Adam's transgression. But the question still remains, whether Adam's sin and death are merely the type of the sin and death of his posterity, or, more than this, the cause. The first explanation quite satisfies the meaning of the words 'As in Adam all die'; the second seems to be required by the parallel passage in the Romans: 'As by one man sin came into the world', and 'As by one man many were made sinners', if taken literally.

The question involves the more general one, whether the use of language by St Paul makes it necessary that we should take his words literally in this passage. Is he speaking of Adam's sin being the cause of sin and death to his posterity, in any other sense than he spoke of Abraham being a father of circumcision to the uncircumcized? (ch. iv). Yet no one has ever thought of basing a doctrine on these words. Or is he speaking of all men dying in Adam, in any other sense than he says in *2 Cor.*, v, 15, that if one died for all, then all died. Yet in this latter passage, while Christ died literally, it was only in a figure that all died. May he be arguing in the same way as when he infers from the word 'seed' being used in the singular, that 'thy seed is Christ'? Or, if we confine ourselves to the passage under consideration: Is the righteousness of Christ there imputed to believers, independently of their own inward holiness, and if so, should the sin of Adam be imputed independently of the actual sins of men?



I. A very slight difference in the mode of expression would make it impossible for us to attribute to St Paul the doctrine of the imputation of the sin of Adam. But we have seen before how varied, and how different from our own, are his modes of thought and language. Compare i, 4; iv, 25. To him, it was but a slight transition, from the identification of Adam with the sins of all mankind, to the representation of the sin of Adam as the cause of those sins. To us, there is the greatest difference between the two statements. To him, it was one among many figures of the same kind, to oppose the first and second Adam, as elsewhere he opposes the old and new man. With us, this figure has been singled out to be made the foundation of a most exact statement of doctrine. We do not remark that there is not even the appearance of attributing Adam's sin to his posterity, in any part of the Apostle's writings in which he is not drawing a parallel between Adam and Christ.

II. The Apostle is not speaking of Adam as fallen from a state of innocence. He could scarcely have said 'The first man is of the earth, earthy', if he had had in his mind that Adam had previously existed in a pure and perfect state. He is only drawing a parallel between Adam and Christ. The moment we leave this parallel, all is uncertain and undetermined. What was the nature of that innocent life, or of the act of Adam which forfeited it? And how was the effect of that act communicated to his posterity? The minds of men in different ages of the world have strayed into these and similar inquiries. Difficulties about 'Fate, predestination, and freewill' (not food for angels' thoughts), cross our path in the garden of Eden itself. But neither the Old nor New Testament give any answer to them. Imagination has possessed itself of the vacant spot, and been busy, as it often is, in proportion to the slenderness of knowledge.

III. There are other elements of St Paul's teaching, which are either inconsistent with the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, or at anyrate are so prominent as to make such a doctrine if held by him comparatively unimportant. According to St Paul, it is not the act of Adam, but the law that

Brought sin into the world and all our woe.

And the law is almost equivalent to 'the knowledge of sin'. But original sin is, or may be, wholly unconscious—the fault of nature in the infant equally with the man. Not so the sin of which St Paul speaks, which is inseparable from consciousness,

as he says himself: 'I was alive without the law once', that is, before I came to the consciousness of sin.

IV. It will be admitted that we ought to feel still greater reluctance to press the statement of the Apostle to its strict logical consequences if we find that the language, which he here uses is that of his age and country. From the circumstance of our first reading the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity in the *Epistles* of St Paul, we can hardly persuade ourselves that this is not its original source. The incidental manner in which it is alluded to, might indeed lead us to suppose that it would scarcely have been intelligible, had it not been also an opinion of his time. But if this inference should seem doubtful there is direct evidence to show that the Jews connected sin and death, and the sins and death of mankind, with the sin of Adam in the same way as the Apostle. The earliest trace of such a doctrine is found in the apocryphal *Book of Wisdom*, ii, 24: 'But God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity. Nevertheless, through envy of the devil came death into the world; and they that do hold of his side do find it'. And *Eccles.*, xxv, 24: 'Of the woman came the beginning of sin, and through her we all die'. It was a further refinement of some of their teachers, that when Adam sinned the whole world sinned; because, at that time, Adam was the whole world, or because the soul of Adam comprehended the souls of all, so that Adam's sin conveyed a hereditary taint to his posterity. It was a confusion of a half physical, half logical or metaphysical notion, arising in the minds of men who had not yet learnt the lesson of our Saviour: 'That which is from without defileth not a man'. That human nature or philosophy sometimes rose up against such inventions is certainly true; but it seems to be on the whole admitted, that the doctrine of Augustine is in substance generally agreed to by the Rabbis, and that there is no trace of their having derived it from the writings of St Paul. Compare the passages quoted in Fritzsche, vol. i, pp. 193-6 and Schœttgen.

But not only is the connexion of sin and death with each other, and with the sin of Adam, found in the Rabbinical writings; the type and antitype of the first and second Adam are also contained in them. In reading the first chapters of *Genesis*, the Jews made a distinction between the higher Adam, who was the light of the world, and had control over all things, who was mystically referred to where it is said, they two shall be one flesh; and the inferior Adam, who was Lord only

of the creation ; who had 'the breath of life', but not 'the living soul'. Schœttgen, i, 512-4, 670-3. By some, indeed, the latter seems to have been identified with the Messiah. By Philo, on the other hand, the *λόγος* is identified with the *πρῶτος Ἀδάμ*, who is without sex, while the *ἄνθρωπος χοϊκός* is created afterwards by the help of the angels (*De Creat. Mund.*, p. 30). It is not the object of this statement to reconcile these variations, but merely to indicate, first, that the idea of a first and second Adam was familiar to the Jews in the time of St Paul, and that one or other of them was regarded by them as the Word and the Messiah.

V. A slighter, though not less real foundation of the doctrine has been what may be termed the logical symmetry of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ and of the sin of Adam. The latter half is the correlative of the former ; they mutually support each other. We place the first and second Adam in juxtaposition, and seem to see a fitness or reason in the one standing in the same relation to the fallen as the other to the saved.

VI. It is hardly necessary to ask the further question, what meaning we can attach to the imputation of sin and guilt which are not our own, and of which we are unconscious. God can never see us other than we really are, or judge us without reference to all our circumstances and antecedents. If we can hardly suppose that He would allow a fiction of mercy to be interposed between ourselves and Him, still less can we imagine that He would interpose a fiction of vengeance. If He requires holiness before He will save, much more, may we say in the Apostle's form of speech, will He require sin before He dooms us to perdition. Nor can anything be in spirit more contrary to the living consciousness of sin of which the Apostle everywhere speaks, than the conception of sin as dead unconscious evil, originating in the act of an individual man, in the world before the Flood.

VII. A small part of the train of consequences which have been drawn out by divines can be made to hang even upon the letter of the Apostle's words, though we should not take into account the general temper and spirit of his writings. Logical inferences often help to fill up the aching void in our knowledge of the spiritual world. They seem necessary ; in time they receive a new support from habit and tradition. They hide away and conceal the nature of the original premisses. They may be likened to the superstructure of a building which the foundation has not strength to bear ; or, rather, perhaps, when

compared to the serious efforts of human thought, to the plaything of the child who places one brick upon another in wondering suspense, until the whole totters and falls, or his childish fancy pleases itself with throwing it down. So, to apply these remarks to our present subject, we are contented to repeat the simple words of the Apostle: 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive'. Perhaps we may not be able to recall all the associations which they conveyed to his mind. But neither are we willing to affirm his meaning to be that the sin of one man was the cause of other men's sins, or that God condemned one part of the human race for a fault not their own, because He was going to save another part; or that original sin, as some say, or the guilt of original sin, as is the opinion of others, is washed away in baptism. There is a terrible explicitness in such language, touching the realities of a future life which makes us shrink from trusting our own faculties amid far-off deductions like these. We feel that we are undermining, not strengthening, the foundations of the Gospel. We fear to take upon ourselves a burden which neither 'we nor our fathers are able to bear'. Instead of receiving such statements only to explain them away, or keep them out of sight, it is better to answer boldly in the words of the Apostle: 'God forbid! for how shall God judge the world'.

On the whole, then, we are led to infer that in the Augustinian interpretation of this passage, even if it agree with the letter of the text, too little regard has been paid to the extent to which St Paul uses figurative language, and to the manner of his age in interpretations of the Old Testament. The difficulty of supposing him to be allegorizing the narrative of *Genesis* is slight, in comparison with the difficulty of supposing him to countenance a doctrine at variance with our first notions of the moral nature of God.

But when the figure is dropped, and allowance is made for the manner of the age, the question once more returns upon us: 'What is the Apostle's meaning?' He is arguing, we see, *κατ' ἀνθρώπων*, and taking his stand on the received opinions of his time. Do we imagine that his object is no other than to set the seal of his authority on these traditional beliefs? The whole analogy, not merely of the writings of St Paul, but of the entire New Testament, would lead us to suppose that his object was not to reassert them, but to teach, through them, a new and nobler lesson. The Jewish Rabbis would have spoken of the first and second Adam; but which of them would have made the application of the figure to all mankind? Which of

them would have breathed the quickening Spirit into the dry bones? The figure of the Apostle bears the impress of his own age and country; the interpretation of the figure is for every age, and for the whole world. A figure of speech it remains still, an allegory after the manner of that age and country, but yet with no uncertain or ambiguous signification. It means that 'God hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth'; and that 'He hath concluded all under sin, that He may have mercy upon all'. It means a truth deep yet simple—the fact which we recognize in ourselves and trace everywhere around us—that we are one in a common evil nature, which, if it be not derived from the sin of Adam, exists as really as if it were. It means that we shall be made one in Christ, by the grace of God, in a measure here, more fully and perfectly in another world. It means that Christ is the natural head of the human race, the author of its spiritual life. It shows Him to us as He enters within the veil, in form as a man, the 'first-fruits of them which sleep'. It is a sign or intimation which guides our thoughts in another direction also, beyond the world of which religion speaks, to observe what science tells us of the interdependence of soul and body—what history tells of the chain of lives and events. It leads us to reflect on ourselves not as isolated, independent beings; not such as we appear to be to our own narrow consciousness; but as we truly are—the creatures of antecedents which we can never know, fashioned by circumstances over which we have no control. The infant, coming into existence in a wonderful manner, inherits something, not from its parents only, but from the first beginning of the human race. He too is born into a family of which God in Christ is the Father. There is enough here to meditate upon—'a mystery since the world was'—without the 'weak and beggarly' elements of Rabbinical lore. We may not encumber St Paul 'with the things which he destroyed.'

## On Conversion and Changes of Character

THUS have we the image of the life-long struggle gathered up in a single instant. In describing it we pass beyond the consciousness of the individual into a world of abstractions ; we loosen the thread by which the spiritual faculties are held together, and view as objects what can, strictly speaking, have no existence, except in relation to the subject. The divided members of the soul are ideal, the combat between them is ideal, so also is the victory. What is real that corresponds to this, is not a momentary, but a continuous conflict, which we feel rather than know—which has its different aspects of hope and fear, triumph and despair, the action and reaction of the Spirit of God in the depths of the human soul, awakening the sense of sin and conveying the assurance of forgiveness.

The language in which we describe this conflict is very different from that of the Apostle. Our circumstances are so changed that we are hardly able to view it in its simplest elements. Christianity is now the established religion of the civilized portion of mankind. In our own country it has become part of the law of the land ; it speaks with authority, it is embodied in a Church, it is supported by almost universal opinion, and fortified by wealth and prescription. Those who know least of its spiritual life, do not deny its greatness as a power in the world. Analogous to this relation in which it stands to our history and social state, is the relation in which it stands also to the minds of individuals. We are brought up in it, and unconsciously receive it as the habit of our thoughts and the condition of our life. It is without us, and we are within its circle ; we do not become Christians, we are so from our birth. Even in those who suppose themselves to have passed through some sudden and violent change, and to have tasted once for all the heavenly gift, the change is hardly ever in

the form or substance of their belief, but in its quickening power; they feel not a new creed, but a new spirit within them. So that we might truly say of Christianity, that it is 'the daughter of time'; it hangs to the past, not only because the first century is the era of its birth, but because each successive century strengthens its form and adds to its external force, and entwines it with more numerous links in our social state. Not only may we say, that it is part and parcel of the law of the land, but part and parcel of the character of each one, which even the worst of men cannot wholly shake off.

But if with ourselves the influence of Christianity is almost always gradual and imperceptible, with the first believers it was almost always sudden. There was no interval which separated the preaching of Peter on the day of Pentecost, from the baptism of the three thousand. The eunuch of Candace paused for a brief space on a journey, and was then baptized into the name of Christ, which a few hours previously he had not so much as heard. There was no period of probation like that which, a century or two later, was appropriated to the instruction of the Catechumens. It was an impulse, an inspiration passing from the lips of one to a chosen few, and communicated by them to the ear and soul of listening multitudes. As the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sounds thereof; as the lightning shineth from the one end of the heaven to the other; so suddenly, fitfully, simultaneously, new thoughts come into their minds, not to one only, but to many, to whole cities almost at once. They were pricked with the sense of sin; they were melted with the love of Christ; their spiritual nature 'came again like the flesh of a little child'. And some, like St Paul, became the very opposite of their former selves; from scoffers, believers; from persecutors, preachers; the thing that they were, was so strange to them, that they could no longer look calmly on the earthly scene which they hardly seemed to touch, which was already lighted up with the wrath and mercy of God. There were those among them who 'saw visions and dreamed dreams', who were 'caught up', like St Paul, 'into the third heaven', or, like the twelve, 'spake with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance'. And sometimes, as in the Thessalonian Church, the ecstasy of conversion led to strange and wild opinions, such as the daily expectation of Christ's coming. The 'round world' itself began to reel before them, as they thought of the things that were shortly to come to pass.

But however sudden were the conversions of the earliest

believers, however wonderful the circumstances which attended them, they were not for that reason the less lasting or sincere. Though many preached 'Christ of contention', though 'Demas forsook the Apostle', there were few who, having once taken up the cross, turned back from 'the love of this present world'. They might waver between Paul and Peter, between the circumcision and the uncircumcision; they might give ear to the strange and bewitching heresies of the East; but there is no trace that many returned to 'those that were no gods' or put off Christ; the impression of the truth that they had received, was everlasting on their minds. Even sins of fornication and uncleanness, which from the Apostle's frequent warnings against them we must suppose to have lingered, as a sort of remnant of heathenism in the early Church, did not wholly destroy their inward relation to God and Christ. Though 'their last state might be worse than the first', they could never return again to live the life of all men after having tasted 'the heavenly gift and the powers of the world to come'.

Such was the nature of conversion among the early Christians, the new birth of which by spiritual descent we are ourselves the offspring. Is there anything in history like it? anything in our own lives which may help us to understand it? That which the Scripture describes from within, we are for a while going to look at from a different point of view, not with reference to the power of God, but to those secondary causes through which He works,—the laws which experience shows that He Himself imposes on the operations of His Spirit. Such an inquiry is not a mere idle speculation; it is not far from the practical question, 'How we are to become better'. Imperfect as any attempt to analyze our spiritual life must ever be, the changes which we ourselves experience or observe in others, compared with those greater and more sudden changes which took place in the age of the Apostle, will throw light upon each other.

In the sudden conversions of the early Christians we observe three things, which either tend to discredit, or do not accompany, the working of a similar power among ourselves. First, that conversion was marked by ecstatic and unusual phenomena; secondly, that, though sudden, it was permanent; thirdly, that it fell upon whole multitudes at once.

When we consider what is implied in such expressions as 'not many wise, not many learned' were called to the knowledge of the truth, we can scarcely avoid feeling that there must have been much in the early Church which would have been distasteful



to us as men of education; much that must have worn the appearance of excitement and enthusiasm. Is the mean conventicle, looking almost like a private house, a better image of that first assembly of Christians which met in the 'large upper room', or the Catholic Church arrayed in all the glories of Christian art? Neither of them is altogether like in spirit perhaps, but in externals the first. Is the dignified hierarchy that occupy the seats around the altar, more like the multitudes of first believers, or the lowly crowd that kneel upon the pavement? If we try to embody in the mind's eye the forms of the first teachers, and still more of their followers, we cannot help reading the true lesson, however great may be the illusions of poetry or of art. Not St Paul standing on Mars' hill in the fulness of manly strength, as we have him in the cartoon of Raphael, is the true image; but such a one as he himself would glory in, whose bodily presence was weak and speech feeble, who had an infirmity in his flesh, and bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

And when we look at this picture, 'full in the face', however we might by nature be inclined to turn aside from it, or veil its details in general language, we cannot deny that many things that accompany the religion of the uneducated now must also have accompanied the Gospel preached to the poor. There must have been, humanly speaking, spiritual delusions where men lived so exclusively in the spiritual world; there were scenes which we know took place such as St Paul says would make the unbeliever think that they were mad. The best and holiest persons among the poor and ignorant are not entirely free from superstition, according to the notions of the educated; at best they are apt to speak of religion in a manner not quite suited to our taste; they sing with a loud and excited voice; they imagine themselves to receive Divine oracles, even about the humblest cares of life. Is not this, in externals at least, very like the appearance which the first disciples must have presented, who obeyed the Apostle's injunction, 'Is any sad?, let him pray; is any merry?, let him sing psalms'? Could our nerves have borne to witness the speaking with tongues, or the administration of Baptism, or the love feasts as they probably existed in the early Church?

This difference between the feelings and habits of the first Christians and ourselves, must be borne in mind in relation to the subject of conversion. For as sudden changes are more likely to be met with among the poor and uneducated in the

present day, it certainly throws light on the subject of the first conversions, that to the poor and uneducated the Gospel was first preached. And yet these sudden changes were as real, nay, more real than any gradual changes which take place among ourselves. The Stoic or Epicurean philosopher who had come into an assembly of believers speaking with tongues, would have remarked, that among the vulgar religious extravagances were usually short-lived. But it was not so. There was more there than he had eyes to see, or than was dreamed of in a philosophy like his. Not only was there the superficial appearance of poverty and meanness and enthusiasm, from a nearer view of which we are apt to shrink, but underneath this, brighter from its very obscurity, purer from the meanness of the raiment in which it was apparelled, was the life hidden with Christ in God. There, and there only, was the power which made a man humble instead of proud, self-denying instead of self-seeking, spiritual instead of carnal, a Christian instead of a Jew ; which made him embrace, not only the brethren, but the whole human race in the arms of his love.

But it is a further difference between the power of the Gospel now and in the first ages, that it no longer converts whole multitudes at once. Perhaps this very individuality in its mode of working may not be without an advantage in awakening us to its higher truths and more entire spiritual freedom. Whether this be so or not ; whether there be any spiritual law by which reason, in a measure, takes the place of faith, and the common religious impulse weakens as the power of reflection grows, we certainly observe a diminution in the collective force which religion exercises on the hearts of men. In our own days the preacher sees the seed which he has sown gradually spring up ; first one, then another begins to lead a better life ; then a change comes over the state of society, often from causes over which he has no control ; he makes some steps forwards and a few backwards, and trusts far more, if he is wise, to the silent influence of religious education than to the power of preaching ; and, perhaps, the result of a long life of ministerial labour is far less than that of a single discourse from the lips of the Apostles or their followers. Even in missions to the heathen the vital energies of Christianity cease to operate to any great extent, at least on the effete civilization of India and China ; the limits of the kingdoms of light and darkness are nearly the same as heretofore. At any rate it cannot be said that Christianity has wrought any sudden amelioration of mankind by the immediate preaching of the Word, since the conversion of the barbarians. Even within the

Christian world there is a parallel retardation. The ebb and flow of reformation and counter-reformation have hardly changed the permanent landmarks. The age of spiritual crises is past. The growth of Christianity in modern times may be compared to the change of the body, when it has already arrived at its full stature. In one half-century so vast a progress was made, in a few centuries more the world itself seemed to 'have gone after Him', and now for near a thousand years the voice of experience is repeating to us, 'Hitherto shalt thou go, but no farther'.

Looking at this remarkable phenomenon of the conversion of whole multitudes at once, not from its Divine but from its human aspect (that is, with reference to that provision that God Himself has made in human nature for the execution of His will), the first cause to which we are naturally led to attribute it, is the power of sympathy. Why it is that men ever act together is a mystery of which our individual self-consciousness gives no account, any more than why we speak a common language, or form nations or societies, or merely in our physical nature are capable of taking diseases from one another. Nature and the Author of nature have made us thus dependent on each other both in body and soul. Whoever has seen human beings collected together in masses, and watched the movements that pass over them, like 'the trees of the forest moving in the wind', will have no difficulty in imagining, if not in understanding, how the same voice might have found its way at the same instant to a thousand hearts, without our being able to say where the fire was first kindled, or by whom the inspiration was first caught. Such historical events as the Reformation, or the Crusades, or the French Revolution, are a sufficient evidence that a whole people, or almost, we may say, half a world, may be 'drunk into one spirit', springing up, as it might seem, spontaneously in the breast of each, yet common to all. A parallel yet nearer is furnished by the history of the Jewish people, in whose sudden rebellion and restoration to God's favour, we recognize literally the momentary workings of, what is to ourselves a figure of speech, a national conscience.

In ordinary cases we should truly say that there must have been some predisposing cause of a great political or religious revolution; some latent elements acting alike upon all, which, though long smouldering beneath, burst forth at last into a flame. Such a cause might be the misery of mankind, or the intense corruption of human society, which could not be quickened except it die, or the long-suppressed yearnings of the soul after something higher than it had hitherto known upon earth.

or the reflected light of one religion or one movement of the human mind upon another. Such causes were actually at work, preparing the way for the diffusion of Christianity. The law itself was beginning to pass away in an altered world, the state of society was hollow, the chosen people were hopelessly under the Roman yoke. Good men refrained from the wild attempt of the Galilean Judas; yet the spirit which animated such attempts was slumbering in their bosoms. Looking back at their own past history, they could not but remember, even in an altered world, that there was One who ruled among the kingdoms of men, 'beside whom there was no God'. Were they to suppose that His arm was straitened to save?, that He had forgotten His tender mercies to the house of David?, that the aspirations of the prophets were vain?, that the blood of the Maccabean heroes had sunk like water into the earth? This was a hard saying; who could bear it? It was long ere the nation, like the individual, put off the old man—that is, the temporal dispensation—and put on the new man—that is, the spiritual Israel. The very misery of the people seemed to forbid them to acquiesce in their present state. And with the miserable condition of the nation sprang up also the feeling, not only in individuals but in the race, that for their sins they were chastened, the feeling which their whole history seemed to deepen and increase. At last the scales fell from their eyes; the veil that was on the face of Moses was first transfigured before them, then removed; the thoughts of many hearts turned simultaneously to the Hope of Israel, 'Him whom the law and the prophets foretold'. As they listened to the preaching of the Apostles, they seemed to hear a truth both new and old; what many had thought, but none had uttered; which in its comfort and joyousness seemed to them new, and yet, from its familiarity and suitability to their condition, not the less old.

Spiritual life, no less than natural life, is often the very opposite of the elements which seem to give birth to it. The preparation for the way of the Lord, which John the Baptist preached, did not consist in a direct reference to the Saviour. The words 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire', and 'He shall burn up the chaff with fire unquenchable', could have given the Jews no exact conception of Him who 'did not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax'. It was in another way that John prepared for Christ, by quickening the moral sense of the people, and sounding in their ears the voice 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'. Beyond this useful lesson, there was a kind of vacancy in the

preaching of John. He himself as, 'he was finishing his course,' testified that his work was incomplete, and that he was not the Christ. The Jewish people were prepared by his preaching for the coming of Christ, just as an individual might be prepared to receive Him by the conviction of sin and the conscious need of forgiveness.

Except from the Gospel history and the writings of Josephus and Philo, we know but little of the tendencies of the Jewish mind in the time of our Lord. Yet we cannot doubt that the entrance of Christianity into the world was not sudden and abrupt; that is an illusion which arises in the mind from our slender acquaintance with contemporary opinions. Better and higher and holier as it was, it was not absolutely distinct from the teaching of the doctors of the law either in form or substance; it was not unconnected with, but gave life and truth to, the mystic fancies of Alexandrian philosophy. Even in the counsels of perfection of the Sermon on the Mount, there is probably nothing which might not be found, either in letter or spirit, in Philo or some other Jewish or Eastern writer. The peculiarity of the Gospel is, not that it teaches what is wholly new, but that it draws out of the treasure-house of the human heart things new and old, gathering together in one the dispersed fragments of the truth. The common people would not have 'heard Him gladly', but for the truth of what He said. The heart was its own witness to it. The better nature of man, though but for a moment, responded to it, spoken as it was with authority, and not as the scribes; with simplicity, and not as the great teachers of the law; and sanctified by the life and actions of Him from whose lips it came, and 'Who spake as never man spake'.

And yet, after reviewing the circumstances of the first preaching of the Gospel, there remains something which cannot be resolved into causes or antecedents; which eludes criticism, and can no more be explained in the world than the sudden changes of character in the individual. There are processes of life and organization about which we know nothing, and we seem to know that we shall never know anything. 'That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die'; but the mechanism of this new life is too complex, and yet too simple for us to untwist its fibres. The figure which St Paul applies to the resurrection of the body, is true also of the renewal of the soul, especially in the first ages of which we know so little, and in which the Gospel seems to have acted with such far greater power than among ourselves.

Leaving further inquiry into the conversion of the first Christians at the point at which it hides itself from us in mystery, we have now to turn to a question hardly less mysterious, though seemingly more familiar to us, which may be regarded as a question either of moral philosophy or of theology,—the nature of conversion and changes of character among ourselves. What traces are there of a spiritual power still acting upon the human heart? What is the inward nature, and what are the outward conditions of changes in human conduct? Is our life a gradual and insensible progress from infancy to age, from birth to death, governed by fixed laws; or is it a miracle and mystery of thirty, or fifty, or seventy years' standing, consisting of so many isolated actions or portions knit together by no common principle?

Were we to consider mankind only from without, there could be no doubt of the answer which we should give to the last of these questions. The order of the world would scarcely even *seem* to be infringed by the free will of man. In morals, no less than in physics, everything would appear to proceed by regular law. Individuals have certain capacities, which grow with their growth and strengthen with their strength; and no one by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature. As the poet says:—'The child is father to the man'. The lives of the great majority have a sort of continuity; as we know them by the same look, walk, manner, so when we come to converse with them, we recognize the same character as formerly. They may be changed; but the change in general is such as we expected to find in them from youth to maturity, or from maturity to decay. There is something in them which is not changed, by which we perceive them to be the same. If they were weak, they remain so still; if they were sensitive, they remain so still; if they were selfish or passionate, such faults are seldom cured by increasing age or infirmities. And often the same nature puts on many veils and disguises; to the outward eye it may have, in some instances, almost disappeared; when we look beneath, it is still there.

The appearance of this sameness in human nature has led many to suppose that no real change ever takes place. Does a man from a drunkard become sober?, from a knight errant become a devotee?, from a sensualist a believer in Christ?; or a woman from a life of pleasure pass to a romantic and devoted religion? It has been maintained that they are the same still; and that deeper similarities remain than the differences which are a part of their new profession. Those who make the remark

would say, that such persons exhibit the same vanity, the same irritability, the same ambition; that sensualism still lurks under the disguise of refinement, or earthly and human passion transfuses itself into devotion.

This 'practical fatalism', which says that human beings can be what they are and nothing else, has a certain degree of truth, or rather, of plausibility, from the circumstances that men seldom change wholly, and that the part of their nature which changes least is the weakness and infirmity that shows itself on the surface. Few, comparatively, ever change their outward manner, except from the mere result of altered circumstances; and hence, to a superficial observer, they appear to change less than is really the fact. Probably, St Paul never lost that trembling and feebleness which was one of the trials of his life. Nor, in so far as the mind is dependent on the body, can we pretend to be wholly free agents. Who can say that his view of life and his power of action are unaffected by his bodily state?, or who expects to find a firm and decided character in the nervous and sensitive frame? The commonest facts of daily life sufficiently prove the connexion of mind and body; the more we attend to it the closer it appears. Nor, indeed, can it be denied that external circumstances fix for most men the path of life. They are the inhabitants of a particular country; they have a certain position in the world; they rise to their occupations as the morning comes round; they seldom get beyond the circle of ideas in which they have been brought up. Fearfully and wonderfully as they are made, though each one in his bodily frame, and even more in his thoughts and feelings, is a miracle of complexity, they seem, as they meet in society, to reunite into a machine, and society itself is the great automaton of which they are the parts. It is harder and more conventional than the individuals which compose it; it exercises a kind of regulating force on the wayward fancies of their wills; it says to them in an unmistakable manner that 'they shall not break their ranks'. The laws of trade, the customs of social life, the instincts of human nature, act upon us with a power little less than that of physical necessity.

If from this external aspect of human things, we turn inward, there seems to be no limit to the changes which we deem possible. We are no longer the same, but different every hour. No physical fact interposes itself as an obstacle to our thoughts any more than to our dreams. The world and its laws have nothing to do with our free determinations. At any moment we can begin a new life; in idea at least, no time is

required for the change. One instant we may be proud, the next humble, one instant sinning, at the next repenting; one instant, like St Paul, ready to persecute, at another to preach the Gospel; full of malice and hatred one hour, melting into tenderness the next. As we hear the words of the preacher, there is a voice within telling us, that 'now, even now, is the day of salvation', and if certain clogs and hindrances of earth could only be removed, we are ready to pass immediately into another state. And, at times, it seems as though we had actually passed into rest, and had a foretaste of the heavenly gift. Something more than imagination enables us to fashion a divine pattern to which we conform for a little while. The 'new man' unto which we become transformed, is so pleasant to us that it banishes the thought of 'the old'. In youth especially, when we are ignorant of the compass of our own nature, such frames of mind are perpetually recurring; perhaps, not without attendant evils; certainly, also, for good.

But besides such feelings as these, which we know to be partly true, partly illusive, every one's experience of himself appears to teach him, that he has gone through many changes and had many special providences vouchsafed to him; he says to himself that he has been led into a mysterious and peculiar way, not like the way of other men, and had feelings not common to others; he compares different times and places, and contrasts his own conduct here and there, now and then. In other men he remarks similarity of character; in himself he sees chiefly diversity. They seem to be the creatures of habit and circumstance; he alone is a free agent. The truth is, that he observes himself; he cannot equally observe them. He is not conscious of the inward struggles through which they have passed; he sees only the veil of flesh which conceals them from his view. He knows when he thinks about it, but he does not habitually remember, that, under that calm exterior, there is a like current of individual thoughts, feelings, interests, which have as great charm and intensity for another as the workings of his own mind have for himself.

And yet it does not follow, that this inward fact is to be set aside as the result of egotism and illusion. It may be not merely the dreamy reflection of our life and actions in the mirror of self, but the subtle and delicate spring of the whole machine. To purify the feelings or to move the will, the internal sense may be as necessary to us as external observation is to regulate and sustain them. Even to the formula of the fatalist, that 'freedom is the consciousness of necessity', it may



be replied, that that very consciousness, as he terms it, is as essential as any other link in the chain in which 'he binds fast the world'. Human nature is beset by the contradiction, not of two rival theories, but of many apparently contradictory facts. If we cannot imagine how the world could go on without law and order in human actions, neither can we imagine how morality could subsist unless we clear a space around us for the freedom of the will.

But not in this place to get further into the meshes of the great question of freedom and necessity, let us rather turn aside for a moment to consider some practical aspects of the reflections which precede. Scripture and reason alike require that we should entirely turn to God, that we should obey the whole law. And hard as this may seem at first, there is a witness within us which pleads that it is possible. Our mind and moral nature are one; we cannot break ourselves into pieces in action any more than in thought. The whole man is in every part and in every act. This is not a mere mode of thought, but a truth of great practical importance. 'Easier to change many things than one' is the common saying. Easier, we may add, in religion or morality, to change the whole than the part, Easier because more natural, more agreeable to the voice of conscience and the promises of Scripture. God himself deals with us as a whole; He does not forgive us in part any more than He requires us to serve Him in part. It may be true that, of the thousand hearers of the appeal of the preacher, not above one begins a new life. And some persons will imagine that it might be better to make an impression on them little by little, like the effect of the dropping of water upon stone. Not in this way is the Gospel written down on the fleshy tables of the heart. More true to our own experience of self, as well as to the words of Scripture, are such ideas as renovation, renewal, regeneration, taking up the cross and following Christ, dying with Christ that we may also live with Him.

Many a person will tease himself by counting minutes and providing small rules for his life, who would have found the task an easier and a nobler one, had he viewed it in its whole extent, and gone to God in a 'large and liberal spirit', to offer up his life to Him. To have no 'arrière pensée' in the service of God and virtue is the great source of peace and happiness. Make clean that which is within, and you have no need to purify that which is without. Take care of the little things of life, and the great things will take care of themselves, is the maxim of the trader, which is sometimes, and with a certain

degree of truth, applied to the service of God. But much more true is it in religion that we should take care of the great things, and the trifles of life will take care of themselves. 'If thine eye be single, thy whole body will be full of light'. Christianity is not acquired as an art by long practice; it does not carve and polish human nature with a graving tool; it makes the whole man; first pouring out his soul before God, and then 'casting him in a mould'. Its workings are not to be measured by time, even though among educated persons, and in modern times, sudden and momentary conversions can rarely occur.

For the doctrine of conversion, the moralist substitutes the theory of habits. Good actions, he says, produce good habits; and the repetition of good actions makes them easier to perform, and 'fortifies us indefinitely against temptation'. There are bodily and mental habits—habits of reflection and habits of action. Practice gives skill or sleight of hand; constant attention, the faculty of abstraction; so the practice of virtue makes us virtuous, that of vice, vicious. The more meat we eat, to use the illustration of Aristotle, in whom we find a cruder form of the same theory, the more we are able to eat meat; the more we wrestle, the more able we are to wrestle, and so forth. If a person has some duty to perform, say of common and trivial sort, to rise at a particular hour in the morning, to be at a particular place at such an hour, to conform to some rule about abstinence, we tell him that he will find the first occasion difficult, the second easy, and the difficulty is supposed to vanish by degrees until it wholly disappears. If a man has to march into a battle, or to perform a surgical operation, or to do anything else from which human nature shrinks, his nerves, we say, are gradually strengthened; his head, as was said of a famous soldier, clears up at the sound of the cannon; like the grave-digger in Hamlet, he has soon no 'feeling of his occupation'.

From a consideration of such instances as these, the rule has been laid down, that, 'as the passive impression weakens, the active habit strengthens'. But is not this saying of a great man founded on a narrow and partial contemplation of human nature? For, in the first place, it leaves altogether out of sight the motives of human action; it is equally suited to the most rigid formalist, and to a moral and spiritual being. Secondly, it takes no account of the limitation of the power of habits, which neither in mind nor body can be extended beyond a certain point; nor of the original capacity or peculiar character of individuals; nor of the different kinds of habits, nor of the degrees of strength and weakness in different minds; nor of the

enormous difference between youth and age, childhood and manhood, in the capacity for acquiring habits. Old age does not move with accumulated force, either upwards or downwards; they are the lesser habits, not the great springs of life, that show themselves in it with increased power. Nor can the man who has neglected to form habits in youth, acquire them in mature life; like the body, the mind ceases to be capable of receiving a particular form. Lastly, such a description of human nature agrees with no man's account of himself; whatever moralists may say, he knows himself to be a spiritual being. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth', and he cannot 'tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth'.

All that is true in the theory of habits seem to be implied in the notion of order or regularity. Even this is inadequate to give a conception of the structure of human beings. Order is the beginning, but freedom is the perfection of our moral nature. Men do not live at random, or act one instant without reference to their actions just before. And in youth especially, the very sameness of our occupations is a sort of stay and support to us, as in age it may be described as a kind of rest. But no one will say that the mere repetition of actions until they constitute a habit, gives any explanation of the higher and nobler forms of human virtue, or the finer moulds of character. Life cannot be explained as the working of a mere machine, still less can moral or spiritual life be reduced to merely mechanical laws.

But if, while acknowledging that a great proportion of mankind are the creatures of habit, and that a great part of our actions are nothing more than the result of habit, we go on to ask ourselves about the changes of our life, and fix our minds on the critical points, we are led to view human nature, not only in a wider and more generous spirit, but also in a way more accordant with the language of Scripture. We no longer measure ourselves by days or by weeks; we are conscious that at particular times we have undergone great revolutions or emotions; and then, again, have intervened periods, lasting perhaps for years, in which we have pursued the even current of our way. Our progress towards good may have been in idea an imperceptible and regular advance; in fact, we know it to have been otherwise. We have taken plunges in life; there are many eras noted in our existence. The greatest changes are those of which we are the least able to give an account, and which we feel the most disposed to refer to a superior power. That they were simply mysterious, like some utterly unknown natural phenomena, is our first thought about them. But although unable to fathom

their true nature, we are capable of analyzing many of the circumstances which accompany them, and of observing the impulses out of which they arise.

Every man has the power of forming a resolution, or, without previous resolution, in any particular instance, acting as he will. As thoughts come into the mind one cannot tell how, so too motives spring up, without our being able to trace their origin. Why we suddenly see a thing in a new light, is often hard to explain; why we feel an action to be right or wrong which has previously seemed indifferent, is not less inexplicable. We fix the passing dream or sentiment in action; the thought is nothing, the deed may be everything. That day after day, to use a familiar instance, the drunkard will find abstinence easier, is probably untrue; but that from once abstaining he will gain a fresh experience, and receive a new strength and inward satisfaction, which may result in endless consequences, is what every one is aware of. It is not the sameness of what we do, but its novelty, which seems to have such a peculiar power over us; not the repetition of many blind actions, but the performance of a single conscious one, that is the birth to a new life. Indeed, the very sameness of actions is often accompanied with a sort of weariness, which makes men desirous of change.

Nor is it less true, that by the commission, not of many, but a single act of vice or crime, an inroad is made into our whole moral constitution, which is not proportionably increased by its repetition. The first act of theft, falsehood, or other immorality, is an event in the life of the perpetrator which he never forgets. It may often happen that no account can be given of it; that there is nothing in the education, nor in the antecedents of the person, that would lead us, or even himself, to suspect it. In the weaker sort of natures, especially, suggestions of evil spring up we cannot tell how. Human beings are the creatures of habit; but they are the creatures of impulse too; and from the greater variableness of the outward circumstances of life, and especially of particular periods of life, and the greater freedom of individuals, it may, perhaps, be found that human actions, though less liable to widespread or sudden changes, have also become more capricious, and less reducible to simple causes, than formerly.

Changes in character come more often in the form of feeling than of reason, from some new affection or attachment, or alienation of our former self, rather than from the slow growth of experience, or a deliberate sense of right and duty. The meeting with some particular person, the remembrance of some

particular scene, the last words of a parent or friend, the reading of a sentence in a book, may call forth a world within us of the very existence of which we were previously unconscious. New interests arise such as we never before knew, and we can no longer lie grovelling in the mire, but must be up and doing; new affections seem to be drawn out, such as warm our inmost soul and make action and exertion a delight to us. Mere human love at first sight, as we say, has been known to change the whole character and produce an earthly effect, analogous to that heavenly love of Christ and the brethren, of which the New Testament speaks. Have we not seen the passionate become calm, the licentious pure, the weak strong, the scoffer devout? We may not venture to say with St Paul, 'This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church'. But such instances serve, at least, to quicken our sense of the depth and subtlety of human nature.

Of many of these changes no other reason can be given than that nature and the Author of nature have made men capable of them. There are others, again, which we seem to trace, not only to particular times, but to definite actions, from which they flow in the same manner that other effects follow from their causes. Among such causes none are more powerful than acts of self-sacrifice and devotion. A single deed of heroism makes a man a hero; it becomes a part of him, and, strengthened by the approbation and sympathy of his fellow-men, a sort of power which he gains over himself and them. Something like this is true of the lesser occasions of life no less than of the greatest; provided in either case the actions are not of such a kind that the performance of them is a violence to our nature. Many a one has stretched himself on the rack of asceticism, without on the whole raising his nature; often he has seemed to have gained in self-control only what he has lost in the kindlier affections, and by his very isolation to have wasted the opportunities which nature offered him of self-improvement. But no one with a heart open to human feelings, loving not man the less, but God the more, sensitive to the happiness of this world, yet aiming at a higher—no man of such a nature ever made a great sacrifice, or performed a great act of self-denial, without impressing a change on his character, which lasted to his latest breath. No man ever took his besetting sin, it may be lust, or pride, or love of rank and position, and, as it were, cut it out by voluntarily placing himself where to gratify it was impossible, without sensibly receiving a new strength of character. In one day, almost in an hour, he may become an altered man; he

may stand, as it were, on a different stage of moral and religious life; he may feel himself in new relations to an altered world.

Nor, in considering the effects of action, must the influence of impressions be lost sight of. Good resolutions are apt to have a bad name; they have come to be almost synonymous with the absence of good actions. As they get older, men deem it a kind of weakness to be guilty of making them; so often do they end in raising 'pictures of virtue, or going over the theory of virtue in our minds'. Yet this contrast between passive impression and active habit, is hardly justified by our experience of ourselves or others. Valueless as they are in themselves, good resolutions are suggestive of great good; they are seldom wholly without effect on our conduct; in the weakest of men they are still the embryo of action. They may meet with a concurrence of circumstances in which they take root and grow, coinciding with some change of place, or of pursuits, or of companions, or of natural constitution, in which they acquire a peculiar power. They are the opportunities of virtue, if not virtue itself. At the worst they make us think; they give us an experience of ourselves; they prevent our passing our lives in total unconsciousness. A man may go on all his life making and not keeping them; miserable as such a state appears, he is perhaps not the worse, but something the better for them. The voice of the preacher is not lost, even if he succeed but for a few instants in awakening them.

A further cause of sudden changes in the moral constitution is the determination of the will by reason and knowledge. Suppose the case of a person living in a narrow circle of ideas, within the limits of his early education, perplexed by difficulties, yet never venturing beyond the wall of prejudices in which he has been brought up, or changing only into the false position of a rebellion against them. A new view of his relation to the world and to God is presented to him; such, for example, as in St Paul's day was the grand acknowledgment that God was 'not the God of the Jews only'; such as in our own age would be the clear vision of the truth and justice of God, high above the clouds of earth and time, and of his goodwill to man. Convinced of the reasonableness of the Gospel, it becomes to him at once a self-imposed law. No longer does the human heart rebel; no longer has he 'to pose his understanding' with that odd resolution of Tertullian, 'certum quia impossibile'. He perceives that the perplexities of religion have been made, not by the appointment of God, but by the ingenuity of man.

Lastly. Among those influences, by the help of which the

will of man learns to disengage itself from the power of habit, must not be omitted the influence of circumstances. If men are creatures of habit, much more are they creatures of circumstances. These two, nature without us, and 'the second nature' that is within, are the counterbalancing forces of our being. Between them (so we may figure to ourselves the working of the mind) the human will inserts itself, making the force of one a lever against the other, and seeming to rule both. We fall under the power of habit, and feel ourselves weak and powerless to shake off the almost physical influence which it exerts upon us. The enfeebled frame cannot rid itself of the malady; the palsied springs of action cannot be strengthened for good, nor fortified against evil. Transplanted into another soil, and in a different air, we renew our strength. In youth especially, the character seems to respond kindly to the influence of the external world. Providence has placed us in a state in which we have many aids in the battle with self; the greatest of these is change of circumstances.

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We have wandered far from the subject of conversion in the early Church, into another sphere in which the words 'grace, faith, the spirit', have disappeared, and notions of moral philosophy have taken their place. It is better, perhaps, that the attempt to analyze our spiritual nature should assume this abstract form. We feel that words cannot express the life hidden with Christ in God; we are afraid of declaring on the housetop, what may only be spoken in the closet. If the rites and ceremonies of the elder dispensation, which have so little in them of a spiritual character, became a figure of the true, much more may the moral world be regarded as a figure of the spiritual world of which religion speaks to us.

There is a view of the changes of the characters of men which begins where this ends, which reads human nature by a different light, and speaks of it as the seat of a great struggle between the powers of good and evil. It would be untrue to identify this view with that which has preceded, and scarcely less untrue to attempt to interweave the two in a system of 'moral theology'. No addition of theological terms will transfigure Aristotle's Ethics into a 'Summa Theologiæ'. When St Paul says 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' 'I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord', he is not speaking the language of moral philosophy, but of religious feeling. He expresses what few have

truly felt concentrated in a single instant, what many have deluded themselves into the belief of, what some have experienced accompanying them through life, what a great portion even of the better sort of mankind are wholly unconscious of. It seems as if Providence allowed us to regard the truths of religion and morality in many ways which are not wholly unconnected with each other, yet parallel rather than intersecting; providing for the varieties of human character, and not leaving those altogether without law, who are incapable in a world of sight of entering within the veil.

As we return to that 'hidden life' of which the Scripture speaks, our analysis of human nature seems to become more imperfect, less reducible to rule or measure, less capable of being described in a language which all men understand. What the believer recognizes as the record of his experience is apt to seem mystical to the rest of the world. We do not seek to tread the mazes of the human soul, or to draw forth to the light its hidden communion with its Maker, but only to present in general outline the power of religion among other causes of human action.

Directly, religious influences may be summed up under three heads: The power of God; the love of Christ; the efficacy of prayer.

(1) So far as the influence of the first of these is capable of analysis, it consists in the practical sense that we are dependent beings, and that our souls are in the hands of God, who is acting through us, and ever present with us, in the trials of life and in the work of life. The believer is a minister who executes this work, hardly the partner in it; it is not his own, but God's. He does it with the greatest care, as unto the Lord and not to men, yet is indifferent as to the result, knowing that all things, even through his imperfect agency, are working together for good. The attitude of his soul towards God is such as to produce the strongest effects on his power of action. It leaves his faculties clear and unimpassioned; it places him above accidents; it gives him courage and freedom. Trusting in God only, like the Psalmist, 'he fears no enemy'; he has no want. There is a sort of absoluteness in his position in the world, which can neither be made better nor worse; as St Paul says 'All things are his, whether life or death, or things present or things to come'.

In merely human things, the aid and sympathy of others increase our power to act: it is also the fact that we can work more effectually and think more truly, where the issue is not



staked on the result of our thought and work. The confidence of success would be more than half the secret of success, did it not also lead to the relaxation of our efforts. But in the life of the believer, the sympathy, if such a figure of speech may be allowed, is not human but Divine; the confidence is not a confidence in ourselves, but in the power of God, which at once takes us out of ourselves and increases our obligation to exertion. The instances just mentioned have an analogy, though but a faint one, with that which we are considering. They are shadows of the support which we receive from the Infinite and Everlasting. As the philosopher said that his theory of fatalism was absolutely required to insure the repose necessary for moral action, it may be said, in a far higher sense, that the consciousness of a Divine Providence is necessary to enable a rational being to meet the present trials of life, and to look without fear on his future destiny.

(2) But yet more strongly is it felt that the love of Christ has this constraining power over souls, that here, if anywhere, we are unlocking the twisted chain of sympathy, and reaching the inmost mystery of human nature. The sight, once for all, of Christ crucified, recalling the thought of what, more than 1800 years ago, He suffered for us, has ravished the heart and melted the affections, and made the world seem new, and covered the earth itself with a fair vision, that is, a heavenly one. The strength of this feeling arises from its being directed towards a person, a real being, an individual like ourselves, who has actually endured all this for our sakes, who was above us, and yet became one of us and felt as we did, and was like ourselves a true man. The love which He felt towards us, we seek to return to Him; the unity which He has with the Divine nature, He communicates to us; His Father is our Father, His God our God. And as human love draws men onwards to make sacrifices, and to undergo sufferings for the good of others, Divine love also leads us to cast away the interests of this world, and rest only in the noblest object of love. And this love is not only a feeling or sentiment, or attachment, such as we may entertain towards a parent, a child, or a wife, in which, pure and disinterested as it may be, some shadow of earthly passions unavoidably mingles; it is also the highest exercise of the reason, which it seems to endow with the force of the affections, making us think and feel at once. And although it begins in gentleness, and tenderness, and weakness, and is often supposed to be more natural to women than men, yet it grows up also to 'the fulness of the stature of the perfect man'. The

truest note of the depth and sincerity of our feelings towards our fellow creatures is a manly—that is, a self-controlled—temper: still more is this true of the love of the soul towards Christ and God.

Every one knows what it is, to become like those whom we admire or esteem; the impress which a disciple may sometimes have received from his teacher, or the servant from his Lord. Such devotion to a particular person can rarely be thought to open our hearts to love others also; it often tends to weaken the force of individual character. But the love of Christ is the conducting medium to the love of all mankind; the image which He impresses upon us is the image not of any particular individual, but of the Son of Man. And this image, as we draw nearer to it, is transfigured into the image of the Son of God. As we become like Him, we see Him as He is; and see ourselves and all other things with true human sympathy. Lastly, we are sensible that more than all we feel towards Him, He feels towards us, and that it is He who is drawing us to Him, while we seem to be drawing to Him ourselves. This is a part of that mystery which the Apostle speaks, 'of the length, and depth, and breadth of the love of Christ', which passeth knowledge. Mere human love rests on instincts, the working of which we cannot explain, but which, nevertheless touch the inmost springs of our being. So, too, we have spiritual instincts, acting towards higher objects, still more suddenly and wonderfully capturing our souls in an instant, and making us indifferent to all things else. Such instincts show themselves in the weak no less than in the strong; they seem to be not so much an original part of our nature as to fulfil our nature, and add to it, and draw it out, until they make us different beings to ourselves and others. It was the quaint fancy of a sentimentalist to ask whether any one who remembers the first sight of a beloved person, could doubt the existence of magic. We may ask another question, Can any one who has ever known the love of Christ, doubt the existence of a spiritual power?

(3) The instrument whereby, above all others, we realize the power of God, and the love of Christ, which carries us into their presence, and places us within the circle of a Divine yet personal influence, is prayer. Prayer is the summing up of the Christian life in a definite act, which is at once inward and outward, the power of which on the character, like that of any other act, is proportioned to its intensity. The imagination of doing rightly adds little to our strength; even the wish to do so is not necessarily accompanied by a change of heart and conduct.

But in prayer we imagine, and wish, and perform all in one. Our imperfect resolutions are offered up to God; our weakness becomes strength, our words deeds. No other action is so mysterious; there is none in which we seem, in the same manner, to renounce ourselves that we may be one with God.

Of what nature that prayer is which is effectual to the obtaining of its requests is a question of the same kind as what constitutes a true faith. That prayer, we should reply, which is itself most of an act, which is most immediately followed by action, which is most truthful, manly, self-controlled, which seems to lead and direct, rather than to follow, our natural emotions. That prayer which is its own answer because it asks not for any temporal good, but for union with God. That prayer which begins with the confession, 'We know not what to pray for as we ought'; which can never by any possibility interfere with the laws of nature, because even in extremity of danger or suffering, it seeks only the fulfilment of His will. That prayer which acknowledges that our enemies, or those of a different faith, are equally with ourselves in the hands of God; in which we never unwittingly ask for our own good at the expense of others. That prayer in which faith is strong enough to submit to experience; in which the soul of man is nevertheless conscious not of any self-produced impression, but of a true communion with the Author and Maker of his being.

In prayer, as in all religion, there is something that it is impossible to describe, and that seems to be untrue the moment it is expressed in words. In the relations of man with God, it is vain to attempt to separate what belongs to the finite and what to the infinite. We can feel, but we cannot analyze it. We can lay down practical rules for it, but can give no adequate account of it. It is a mystery which we do not need to fathom. In all religion there is an element of which we are conscious; which is no mystery, which ought to be and is on a level with reason and experience. There is something besides, which, in those who give way to every vague spiritual emotion, may often fall below reason (for to them it becomes a merely physical state); which may also raise us above ourselves, until reason and feeling meet in one, and the life on earth even of the poor and ignorant answers to the description of the Apostle, 'Having your conversation in heaven'.

This partial indistinctness of the subject of religion, even independently of mysticism or superstition, may become to intellectual minds a ground for doubting the truth of that which will not be altogether reduced to the rules of human knowledge,

which seems to elude our grasp, and retires into the recesses of the soul the moment we ask for the demonstration of its existence. Against this natural suspicion let us set two observations: first, that if the Gospel had spoken to the reason only, and not to the feelings—if 'the way to the blessed life' had to be won by clearness of ideas, then it is impossible that 'to the poor the Gospel should have been first preached'. It would have begun at the other end of society, and probably remained, like Greek philosophy, the abstraction of educated men. Secondly, let us remark that even now, judged by its effects, the power of religion is of all powers the greatest. Knowledge itself is a weak instrument to stir the soul compared with religion; morality has no way to the heart of man; but the Gospel reaches the feelings and the intellect at once. In nations as well as individuals, in barbarous times as well as civilized, in the great crises of history especially, even in the latest ages, when the minds of men seem to wax cold, and all things remain the same as at the beginning, it has shown itself to be a reality without which human nature would cease to be what it is. Almost every one has had the witness of it in himself. No one, says Plato, ever passed from youth to age in unbelief of the gods, in heathen times. Hardly any educated person in a Christian land has passed from youth to age without some aspiration after a better life, some thought of the country to which he is going.

As a fact, it would be admitted by most, that, at some period of their lives, the thought of the world to come and of future judgment, the beauty and loveliness of the truths of the Gospel, the sense of the shortness of our days here, have wrought a more quickening and powerful effect than any moral truths or prudential maxims. Many a one would acknowledge that he has been carried whither he knew not; and had nobler thoughts, and felt higher aspirations, than the course of his ordinary life seemed to allow. These were the most important moments of his life for good or for evil; the critical points which have made him what he is, either as he used or neglected them. They came he knew not how, sometimes with some outward and apparent cause, at other times without,—the result of affliction or sickness, or 'the wind blowing where it listeth'.

And if such changes and such critical points should be found to occur in youth more often than in age, in the poor and ignorant rather than in the educated, in women more often than in men, if reason and reflection seem to weaken as they regulate the springs of human action, this very fact may lead us to

consider that reason, and reflection, and education, and the experience of age, and the force of manly sense, are not the links which bind us to the communion of the body of Christ ; that it is rather to those qualities which we have, or may have, in common with our fellow-men, that the Gospel is promised ; and that it is with the weak, the poor, the babes in Christ—not with the strong-minded, the resolute, the consistent—that we shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven.

## Contrasts of Prophecy

EVERY reader of the *Epistles* must have remarked the opposite and apparently inconsistent uses, which the Apostle St Paul makes of the Old Testament. This appearance of inconsistency arises out of the different and almost conflicting statements, which may be read in the Old Testament itself. The law and the prophets are their own witnesses, but they are witnesses also to a truth which is beyond them. Two spirits are found in them, and the Apostle sets aside the one, that he may establish the other. When he says that 'the man that doeth these things shall live in them,' *Rom.*, x. 5, and again two verses afterwards 'the word is very nigh unto thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart', he is using the authority of the law, first, that out of its own mouth he may condemn the law; secondly, that he may confirm the Gospel by the authority of that which he condemns. Still more striking are the contrasts of prophecy in which he reads, not only the rejection of Israel, but its restoration; the overruling providence of God, as well as the free agency of man; not only as it is written, 'God gave unto them a spirit of heaviness', but, 'who hath believed our report'; nor only, 'all day long I have stretched forth my hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people', but 'there shall come out of Zion a deliverer and He shall turn away iniquities from Jacob'. Experience and faith seem to contend together in the Apostle's own mind, and alike to find an echo in the two voices of prophecy.

It were much to be wished that we could agree upon a chronological arrangement of the Old Testament, which would approach more nearly to the true order in which the books were written, than that in which they have been handed down to us. Such an arrangement would throw great light on the interpretation of prophecy. At present, we scarcely resist the illusion

exercised upon our minds by 'four prophets the greater, followed by twelve prophets the less', some of the latter being of a prior date to any of the former. Even the distinction of the law and the prophets as well as of the Psalms and the prophets leads indirectly to a similar error. For many elements of the prophetic spirit enter into the law, and legal precepts are repeated by the prophets. The continuity of Jewish history is further broken by the *Apocrypha*. The four centuries before Christ were as fruitful of hopes and struggles and changes of thought and feeling in the Jewish people as any preceding period of their existence as a nation, perhaps more so. And yet we piece together the Old and New Testament as if the interval were blank leaves only. Few if any English writers have ever attempted to form a conception of the growth of the spirit of prophecy, from its first beginnings in the law itself, as it may be traced in the lives and characters of Samuel and David, and above all, of Elijah and his immediate successor; as it reappears a few years later, in the written prophecies respecting the house of Israel, and the surrounding nations (not even in the oldest of the prophets, without reference to Messiah's kingdom); or again after the carrying away of the ten tribes, as it concentrates itself in Judah, uttering a sadder and more mournful cry in the hour of captivity, yet in the multitude of sorrows increasing the comfort; the very dispersion of the people widening the prospect of Christ's kingdom, as the nation 'is cut short in righteousness', God being so much the nearer to those who draw near to Him.

Other reasons might be given why the study of the prophetic writings has made little progress among us. It often seems as if the only thing which could properly be the subject of study—namely, the meaning of prophecy, as it presented itself to the prophet's own mind—had been wholly lost sight of. There has been a jealousy of attempts to explain by contemporary history what we would rather regard as a light from heaven shining on some distant future. We have been unwilling to receive any help, however imperfect, toward the better understanding of the nature of prophecy, which might be drawn from the comparison of 'the religion of the Gentiles'. No account has been taken of prophecy as a gift of the mind, common to early stages of the world and of society, and to no other. The material imagery which was its mode of thought ('I saw the Lord high and lifted up, and his throne also filled the temple'), is resolved into poetical ornament. The description in the prophecies themselves, of the manner in which the

prophet received the word of the Lord, whether by seeing of the eye or hearing of the ear, and in which he wrote it down and uttered it, has also been little considered. The repetitions of the earlier prophets in the later ones have been noted only as parallel passages in the margin of the Bible. Principles of interpretation have been assumed, resting on no other basis than the practice of interpreters. The fulfilment of prophecy has been sought for in a series of events which have been sometimes bent to make them fit, and one series of events has frequently taken the place of another. Even the passing circumstances of to-day or yesterday, at the distance of about two thousand years, and as many miles, which are but shadows flitting on the mountains compared with the deeper foundations of human history, are thought to be within the range of the prophet's eye. And it may be feared that, in attempting to establish a claim which, if it could be proved, might be made also for heathen oracles and prophecies, commentators have sometimes lost sight of those great characteristics which distinguish Hebrew prophecy from all other professing revelations of other religions: (1) the sense of the truthfulness, and holiness, and loving-kindness of the Divine Being, with which the prophet is as one possessed, which he can no more forget or doubt than he can cease to be himself; (2) their growth, that is, their growing perception of the moral nature of the revelation of God to man, apart from the commandments of the law or the privileges of the house of Israel.

It would be a great external help to the perception of this increasing purpose of prophecy, if the study of the prophetic writings were commenced with an inquiry into the order in which the books of the Old Testament follow one another. Yet, in the present day, how could we come to an understanding about the first principles upon which such an enquiry ought to be conducted? Not the prophecies only, but the superstructures of interpreters of prophecy, would be considered. Nor does criticism seem equal to the task of arranging, on grounds often of internal evidence alone, not merely books, but parts of books, in their precise order. Even the real arguments that might be urged in favour of a particular arrangement, arising out of doubtful considerations, or considerations of a kind which, however certain, are hardly appreciable to any but critical scholars, could not be expected to prevail when weighed in the balance against religious feelings or the supposed voice of antiquity or agreement of the Christian world.

The difficulty of arranging the prophecies of the Old



Testament in an exact chronological order, need not, however, prevent our recognizing general differences in their spirit and structures, such as arise, partly out of the circumstances under which they were written at different periods of Jewish history, partly also out of a difference of feeling in contemporary prophets; sometimes from what may be termed the action and reaction in the prophet's own mind, which even in the same prophecy will not allow him to forget that the God of judgment remembers mercy. There are some prophecies more national, of which the fortunes of the Jewish people are the only subject; others more individual, seeming to enter more into the recesses of the human soul, and which are, at the same time, more universal, rising above earthly things, and passing into the distant heaven. At one time the prophet embodies 'these thoughts of many hearts' as present, at another as future; in some cases as a following out of the irrevocable decree of God, in others as dependent on the sin or repentance of man. At one moment he is looking for the destruction of Israel, at another for its consolation; going from one of these aspects of the heavenly vision to another, like St Paul himself in successive verses. And sometimes he sees the Lord's house exalted in the top of the mountains, and the image of the 'Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty Prince, the Everlasting God'. At other times, his vision is of the Servant whom it 'pleased the Lord to bruise', whose form was 'marred more than that of the sons of men', who was 'led as a lamb to the slaughter'.

National, individual,—spiritual, temporal,—present, future,—rejection, restoration,—faith, the law,—Providence, freewill,—mercy, sacrifice,—Messiah suffering and triumphant,—are so many pairs of opposites with reference to which the structure of prophecy admits of being examined. It is true that such an examination is nothing more than a translation or decomposition of prophecy into the modes of thought of our own time, and is far from reproducing the living image which presented itself to the eyes of the prophet. But, like all criticism, it makes us think; it enables us to observe fresh points of connexion between the Old Testament and the New; it keeps us from losing our way in the region of allegory or of modern history. Many things are unlearnt as well as learnt by the aid of criticism; it clears the mind of conventional interpretations, teaching us to look amid the symbols of time and place for the higher and universal meaning.

Prophecy has a human as well as a divine element; that is to say, it partakes of the ordinary workings of the mind. There

is also something beyond which the analogy of human knowledge fails to explain. Could the prophet himself have been asked what was the nature of that impulse by which he was carried away, he would have replied that 'the God of Israel was a living God' who had 'ordained him a prophet before he came forth from the womb'. Of the divine element no other account can be given; 'it pleased God to raise up individuals in a particular age and country, who had a purer and loftier sense of truth than their fellow men'. Prophecy would be no longer prophecy if we could untwist its soul. But the human part admits of being analyzed like poetry or history, of which it is a kind of union; it is written with a man's pen in a known language; it is cast in the imaginative form of early language itself. The truth of God comes into contact with the world, clothing itself in human feelings, revealing the lesson of historical events. But human feelings and the lesson of events vary, and in this sense the prophetic lesson varies too. Even in the workings of our own minds we may perceive this; those who think much about themselves and God cannot but be conscious of great changes and transitions of feeling at different periods of life. We are the creatures of impression, and associations; and although Providence has not made our knowledge of himself dependent on these impressions, he has allowed it to be coloured by them. We cannot say that in the hours of prosperity and adversity, in health and sickness, in poverty and wealth, our sense of God's dealings with us is absolutely the same: still less, that all our prayers and aspirations have received the answer that we wished or expected. And sometimes the thoughts of our own hearts go before to God; at other times the power of God seems to anticipate the thoughts of our hearts. And sometimes, in looking back at our past lives, it seems as if God had done everything; at other times, we are conscious of the movement of our own will. The wide world itself also, and the political fortunes of our country have been enveloped in the light or darkness which rested on our individual soul.

Especially are we liable to look at religious truth under many aspects, if we live among changes of religious opinions, or are witnesses of some revival or reaction in religion, or supposing our lot to be cast in critical periods of history, such as extend the range and powers of human nature, or certainly enlarge our experience of it. Then the germs of new truths will subsist side by side with the remains of old ones; and thoughts that are really inconsistent, will have a place together in our minds, without our being able to perceive their inconsistency. The

inconsistency will be traced by posterity ; they will remark that up to a particular point we saw clearly ; but that no man is beyond his age—there was a circle which we could not pass. And some one living in our own day may look into the future with 'eagle eye' ; he may weigh and balance with a sort of omniscience the moral forces of the world, perhaps with something too much of confidence that the right will ultimately prevail even on earth ; and after ages may observe that his predictions were not always fulfilled or not fulfilled at the time he said.

Such general reflections may serve as an introduction to what at first appears an anomaly in prophecy,—that it has no tone, but many lessons ; and that the manner in which it teaches those lessons is through the alternations of the human soul itself. There are failings of prophecy, just as there are failings in our own anticipations of the future. And sometimes when we had hoped to be delivered it has seemed good to God to afflict us still. But it does not follow that religion is a cunningly devised fable, either now or then. Neither the faith of the people, nor of the prophet, is shaken in the God of their fathers because the prophecies are not realized before their eyes ; because 'the vision' as they said, 'is delayed' ; because in many cases events seem to occur which make it impossible that it should be accomplished. A true instinct still enables them to separate the prophets of Jehovah from the numberless false prophets with whom the land swarmed ; they were gifted with the 'same discernment of spirits,' which distinguished Micaiah from the four hundred whom Ahab called. The internal evidence of the true prophet we are able to recognize in the written prophecies also. In the earliest as well as the latest of them there is the same spirit one and continuous, the same witness of the invisible God, the same character of the Jewish people, the same law of justice and mercy in the dealings of Providence with respect to them, the same 'walking with God' in the daily life of the prophet himself.

'*Novum Testamentum in vetere latet*', has come to be a favourite word among theologians, who have thought they saw in the truths of the Gospel the original design as well as the evangelical application of the Mosaical law. With a deeper meaning, it may be said that prophecy grows out of itself into the Gospel. Not, as some extreme critics have conceived, that the facts of the Gospel history are but the crystallization of the imagery of prophecy. Say, rather, that the river of the water of life is beginning again to flow. The Son of God himself is 'that prophet'—the prophet, not of one nation only, but of all

mankind, in whom the particularity of the old prophets is finally done away, and the ever changing form of the 'servant in whom my soul delighteth' at last finds rest. St Paul, too, is a prophet who has laid aside the poetical and authoritative garb of old times, and is wrapped in the rhetorical or dialectical one of his own age. The language of the old prophets comes unbidden into his mind ; it seems to be the natural expression of his own thoughts. Separated from Joel, Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah by an interval of about eight hundred years, he finds their words very near to him 'even in his mouth and his heart' ; that is the word which he preached. When they spoke of forgiveness of sins, of non-imputation of sins, of a sudden turning to God, what did this mean but righteousness by faith ; when they said 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice', here also was imaged the great truth, that salvation was not of the law. If St Paul would have 'no man judged for a new moon or sabbath', the prophets of the old time had again and again said in the name of Jehovah 'Your new moons and sabbaths I cannot away with'. Like the elder prophets, he came not 'to build up a temple made with hands', but to teach a moral truth ; like them he went forth alone, and not in connexion with the Church at Jerusalem. His calling is to be Apostle of the Gentiles ; they also sometimes pass beyond the borders of Israel, to receive Egypt and Assyria into covenant with God.

It is not, however, this deeper unity between St Paul and the prophets of the old dispensation that we are about to consider further, but a more superficial parallelism, which is afforded by the alternation or successive representation of the purposes of God towards Israel, which we meet with in the Old Testament, and which recurs in the *Epistle to the Romans*. Like the elder prophets, St Paul also 'prophesies in part', feeling after events rather than seeing them, and divided between opposite aspects of the dealings of Providence with mankind. This changing feeling often finds an expression in the words of Isaiah or the Psalmist, or the author of the *Book of Deuteronomy*. Hence a kind of contrast springs up in the writings of the Apostle, which admits of being traced to its source in the words of the prophets. Portions of his *Epistles* are the *disjecta membra* of prophecy. Oppositions are brought into view by him, and may be said to give occasion to a struggle in his own mind, which were unobserved by the prophets themselves. For so far from prophecy setting forth one unchanging purpose of God, it seems rather to represent a succession of purposes conditional on men's actions ; speaking as distinctly of the rejection as of the restoration of Israel ;

and of the restoration almost as the correlative of the rejection ; often too making a transition from the temporal to the spiritual. Some of these contrasts it is proposed to consider in detail as having an important bearing on St Paul's *Epistles*, especially on the *Epistles to the Thessalonians*, and on chapters x-xii of the *Epistle to the Romans*.

(1) All the prophets are looking for and hastening to 'the day of the Lord', the 'great day', 'which there is none like', 'the day of the Lord's sacrifice', the 'day of visitation', of 'the great slaughter', in which the Lord shall judge 'in the valley of Jehoshaphat', in which 'they shall go into the clefts of the rocks and into the tops of the ragged rocks for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth'. That day is the fulfilment and realization of prophecy, without which it would cease to have any meaning, just as religion itself would cease to have any meaning to ourselves, were there no future life, or retribution of good and evil. All the prophets are in spirit present at it ; living alone with God, and hardly mingling with men on earth, they are fulfilled with its terrors and its glories. For the earth is not to go on for ever as it is, the wickednesses of the house of Israel are not to last for ever. First, the prophet sees the pouring out of the vials of wrath upon them ; then, more at a distance, follows the vision of mercy, in which they are to be comforted, and their enemies, the ministers of God's vengeance on them, in turn punished. And evil and oppression everywhere, so far as it comes within the range of the prophet's eye, is to be punished in that day, and good is to prevail.

In these 'terrors of the day of the Lord', of which the prophets speak, the fortunes of the Jewish people mingle with another vision of a more universal judgment, and it has been usual to have recourse to the double senses of prophecy to separate the one from the other, an instrument of interpretation which has also been applied to the New Testament for the same purpose. Not in this way could the prophet or apostle themselves have conceived them. To them they were not two, but one ; not 'double one against the other', or separable into the figure and the thing signified. For the figure is in early ages the mode of conception also. More true would it be to say that the judgments of God on the Jewish people were an anticipation or illustration of His dealings with the world generally. If a separation is made at all, let us rather separate the accidents of time and place from that burning sense of the righteousness of God, which somewhere we cannot tell where, at some time we cannot tell

when, must and will have retribution on evil ; which has this other note of its divine character, that in judgment it remembers mercy, pronouncing no endless penalty or irreversible doom, even upon the house of Israel. This twofold lesson of goodness and severity speaks to us as well as to the Jews. Better still to receive the words of prophecy as we have them, and to allow the feeling which it utters to find its way to our hearts, without stopping to mark out what was not separated in the prophet's own mind and cannot therefore be divided by us.

Other contrasts are traceable in the teaching of the prophets respecting the day of the Lord. In that day the Lord is to judge Israel, and He is to punish Egypt and Assyria ; and yet it is said also, the Lord shall heal Egypt, and Israel shall be the third with Egypt and Assyria whom the Lord shall bless (*Is.*, xix, 25). In many of the prophecies also the judgment is of two kinds ; it is a judgment on Israel, which is executed by the heathen ; it is a judgment against the heathen and in favour of Israel, in which God Himself is sometimes said to be their Advocate as well as their Judge 'in that day'. A singular parallel with the New Testament is presented by another contrast which occurs in a single passage. That the day of the Lord is near, 'it cometh, it cometh' ; is the language of all the prophets ; and yet there were those who said also in Ezekiel's time, 'The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth ; tell them, therefore, thus saith the Lord God ; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel, but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision' (xii, 22). (Compare *2 Pet.*, iii, 4 : 'Where is the promise of his coming ?'). On the other hand, in the later chapters of *Isaiah* (xl, *seq.*) we seem to trace the same feeling as in the New Testament itself : the anticipation of prophecy has ceased ; the hour of its fulfilment has arrived ; men seem to be conscious that they are living during the restoration of Israel as the disciples at the day of Pentecost felt that they were living amid the things spoken of by the prophet Joel.

(2) A closer connexion with the *Epistle to the Romans* is furnished by the double and, on the surface, inconsistent language of prophecy respecting the rejection and restoration of Israel. These seem to follow one another often in successive verses. It is true that the appearance of inconsistency is greater than the reality, owing to the lyrical and concentrated style of prophecy (some of its greatest works being not much longer than this 'cobweb'<sup>1</sup> of an essay) ; and this leads to opposite feelings

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle.

and trains of thought being presented to us together, without the preparations and joinings which would be required in the construction of a modern poem. Yet, after making allowance for this peculiarity of the ancient Hebrew style, it seems as if there were two thoughts ever together in the prophet's mind: captivity, restoration—judgment, mercy—sin, repentance—'the people sitting in darkness,' and 'the great light'.

There are portions of prophecy in which the darkness is deep and enduring, 'darkness that may be felt', in which the prophet is living amid the sins and sufferings of the people, and hope is a long way off from them; when they need to be awakened rather than comforted, and things must be worse, as men say, before they can become better. Such is the spirit of the greater part of the *Book of Jeremiah*. But the tone of prophecy is on the whole that of alternation; God deals with the Israelites as with children; he cannot bear to punish them for long; His heart comes back to them when they are in captivity; their very helplessness gives them a claim on Him. Vengeance may endure for a time but soon the full tide of His mercy returns upon them. Another voice is heard, saying, 'Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people'. 'Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and say unto her that she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins'. So from the vision of God on Mount Sinai, at the giving of the Law amid storms and earthquakes, arises that tender human relation in which the Gospel teaches that He stands, not merely to His Church as a body, but to each one of us.

Naturally this human feeling is called forth most in the hour of adversity. As the affliction deepens, the hope also enlarges, seeming often to pass beyond the boundaries of this life into a spiritual world. Though their sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; when Jerusalem is desolate, there shall be a tabernacle on Mount Sion. The formula in which this enlargement of the purposes of God is introduced, is itself worthy of notice. 'It shall be no more said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the North, and from all the lands whither he had driven them'. Their old servitude in Egypt came back to their minds now that they were captives in a strange land, and the remembrance that they had already been delivered from it was an earnest that they were yet to return. Deeply rooted in the national mind, it had almost become an attribute of God Himself that He was their deliverer from the house of bondage.

With this narrower view of the return of the children of Israel

from captivity, not without a remembrance of that great empire which had once extended from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates, there blended also the hope of another kingdom in which dwelt righteousness—the kingdom of Solomon ‘become the kingdom of Christ and God’. The children of Israel had been in their origin ‘the fewest of all people’, and the most alien to the nations round about. The Lord their God was a jealous God, who would not suffer them to mingle with the idolatries of the heathen. And in that early age of the world, when national life was so strong and individuals so feeble, we cannot conceive how the worship of the true God could have been otherwise preserved. But the day had passed away when the nation could be trusted with the preservation of the faith of Jehovah; ‘it had never been good for much at any time’. The prophets, too, seem to withdraw from the scenes of political events; they are no longer the judges and leaders of Israel; it is a part of their mission to commit to writing for the use of after ages the predictions which they utter. We pass into another country, to another kingdom in which the prospect is no more that which Moses saw from Mount Pisgah, but in which the ‘Lord’s horn is exalted in the top of the mountains and all nations flock to it’.

In this kingdom the Gentiles have a place, still on the outskirts, but not wholly excluded from the circle of God’s providence. Sometimes they are placed on a level with Israel, the ‘circumcised with the uncircumcised’, as if only to teach the Apostle’s lesson, ‘that there is no respect of persons with God’ (*Jer.*, ix, 25, 26; compare *Rom.*, ii, 12–28). At other times they are themselves the subjects of promises and threatenings (*Jer.*, xii, 14–17). It is to them that God will turn when His patience is exhausted with the rebellions of Israel; for whom it shall be ‘more tolerable’ than for Israel and Judah in the day of the Lord. They are those upon whom, though at a distance, the brightness of Jehovah must overflow; who, in the extremities of the earth, are bathed with the light of His presence. Helpers of the joy of Israel, they pour with gifts and offerings through the open gates of the city of God. They have a part in Messiah’s kingdom, not of right, but because without them it would be imperfect and incomplete. In one passage only, which is an exception to the general spirit of prophecy, Israel ‘makes the third’ with Egypt and Assyria, ‘whom the Lord of Hosts shall bless’ (*Is.*, xix, 18–25).

It was not possible that such should be the relation of the Gentiles to the people of God in the *Epistles* of St Paul. Experience seemed to invert the natural order of Providence—the Jew



first and afterwards the Gentile. Accordingly, what is subordinate in the prophets, becomes of principal importance in the application of the Apostle. The dark sayings about the Gentiles had more meaning than the utterers of them were aware of. Events connected them with the rejection of the Jews, of which the same prophets spoke. Not only had the Gentiles a place on the outskirts of the people of God, gathering up the fragments of promises 'under the table'; they themselves were the spiritual Israel. When the prophets spoke of the Mount Sion, and all nations flowing to it, they were not expecting literally the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. They spoke of they knew not what—of something that had as yet no existence upon the earth. What that was, the vision on the way to Damascus, no less than the history of the Church and the world, revealed to the Apostle of the Gentiles.

(3) Another characteristic of Hebrew prophecy is the transition from the nation to the individual. That is to say, first the nation becomes an individual; it is spoken of, thought of, dealt with, as a person, it 'makes the third' with God and the prophet. Almost a sort of drama is enacted between them, the argument of which is the mercy and justice of God; and the Jewish nation itself has many parts assigned to it. Sometimes she is the 'adulterous sister', the 'wife of whoredoms', who has gone astray with Chaldean and Egyptian lovers. In other passages, still retaining the same personal relation to God, the 'daughter of my people' is soothed and comforted; then a new vision rises before the prophet's mind,—not the same with that of the Jewish people, but not wholly distinct from it, in which the suffering prophet himself, or Cyrus the prophet king, have a part,—the vision of 'the servant of God', 'the Saviour with dyed garments' from Bosra—'he shall grow up before him as a tender plant'; 'he is led as a lamb to the slaughter' (*Is.*, liii, 2, 7; compare *Jer.*, xi, 19). Yet there is a kind of glory even on earth in this image of gentleness and suffering. 'A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, until he hath brought forth judgment unto victory'. We feel it to be strange, and yet it is true. So we have sometimes seen the image of the kingdom of God among ourselves, not in noble churches or scenes of ecclesiastical power or splendour, but in the face of some child or feeble person, who, after overcoming agony, is about to depart and be with Christ.

Analogies from Greek philosophy may seem far-fetched in reference to Hebrew prophecy, yet there are particular points in which subjects the most dissimilar receive a new light from

one another. In the writings of Plato and Aristotle, and the philosophers who were their successors, moral truths gradually separate from politics, and the man is acknowledged to be different from the mere citizen: and there arises a sort of ideal of the individual, who has a responsibility to himself only. The growth of Hebrew prophecy is so different; its figures and modes of conception are so utterly unlike; there seems such a wide gulf between morality which almost excludes God, and religion which exists only in God, that at first sight we are unwilling to allow any similarity to exist between them. Yet an important point in both of them is really the same. For the transition from the nation to the individual is also the more perfect revelation of God Himself, the change from the temporal to the spiritual, from the outward glories of Messiah's reign to the kingdom of God which is within. Prophets as well as apostles teach the near intimate personal relation of man to God. The prophet and psalmist, who is at one moment inspired with the feelings of a whole people, returns again to God to express the lowliest sorrows of the individual Christian. The thought of the Israel of God is latent in prophecy itself, not requiring a great nation or company of believers; 'but where one is' there is God present with him.

There is another way also in which the individual takes the place of the nation in the purposes of God; 'a remnant shall be saved'. In the earlier books of the Old Testament, the whole people is bound up together for good or for evil. In the law especially, there is no trace that particular tribes or individuals are to be singled out for the favour of God. Even their great men are not so much individuals as representatives of the whole people. They serve God as a nation; as a nation they go astray. If, in the earlier times of Jewish history, we suppose an individual good man living 'amid an adulterous and crooked generation', we can scarcely imagine the relation in which he would stand to the blessings and cursings of the law. Would the righteous perish with the wicked? That be 'far from thee, O Lord'. Yet 'prosperity, the blessing of the Old Testament', was bound up with the existence of the nation. Gradually the germ of the new dispensation begins to unfold itself; the bands which held the nation together are broken in pieces; a fragment only is preserved, a branch, in the Apostle's language, cut off from the patriarchal stem, to be the beginning of another Israel.

The passage quoted by St Paul in the eleventh chapter of the *Romans* is the first indication of this change in God's mode of dealing with His people. The prophet Elijah wanders forth

into the wilderness to lay before the Lord the iniquities of the people: 'The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword'. 'But what', we may ask with the Apostle, 'saith the answer of God to him?' Not 'They are corrupt, they are altogether become abominable', but 'Yet I have seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal'. The whole people were not to be regarded as one; there were a few who still preserved, amid the general corruption, the worship of the true God.

The marked manner in which the answer of God is introduced, the contrast of the 'still small voice' with the thunder, the storm, and the earthquake, the natural symbols of the presence of God in the law,—the contradiction of the words spoken to the natural bent of the prophet's mind, and the greatness of Elijah's own character—all tend to stamp this passage as marking one of the epochs of prophecy. The solitude of the prophet and his separation in 'the mount of God', from the places in which 'men ought to worship', are not without meaning. There had not always 'been this proverb in the house of Israel'; but from this time onwards it is repeated again and again. We trace the thought of a remnant to be saved in captivity, or to return from captivity, through a long succession of prophecies—Hosea, Amos, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel; it is the text of almost all the prophets, passing, as a familiar word, from the Old Testament to the New. The voice uttered to Elijah was the beginning of this new Revelation.

(4) Coincident with the promise of a remnant is the precept, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice', which, in modern language, opposes the moral to the ceremonial law. It is another and the greatest step onward towards the spiritual dispensation. Moral and religious truths hang together; no one can admit one of them in the highest sense, without admitting a principle which involves the rest. He who acknowledged that God was a God of mercy and not of sacrifice, could not long have supposed that He dealt with nations only, or that He raised men up for no other end but to be vessels of His wrath or monuments of His vengeance. For a time there might be 'things too hard for him', clouds resting on his earthly tabernacle, when he 'saw the ungodly in such prosperity'; yet had he knowledge enough, as he 'went into the sanctuary of God', and confessed himself to be 'a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth'.

It is in the later prophets that the darkness begins to be dispelled and the ways of God justified to man. Ezekiel is above all others the teacher of this 'new commandment'. The familiar

words, 'when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive', are the theme of a great part of this wonderful book. Other prophets have more of poetical beauty, a deeper sense of divine things, a tenderer feeling of the mercies of God to His people; none teach so simply this great moral lesson, to us the first of all lessons. On the eve of the captivity, and in the midst of it, when the hour of mercy is past, and no image is too loathsome to describe the iniquities of Israel, still the prophet does not forget that the Lord will not destroy the righteous with the wicked: 'Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the land, as I live, saith the Lord, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall deliver but their own souls by their righteousness (xiv, 20). Yet, behold, therein shall be left a remnant; and they shall know that I have not done without cause all that I have done, saith the Lord' (22).

It is observable that, in the *Book of Ezekiel* as well as of *Jeremiah*, this new principle on which God deals with mankind, is recognized as a contradiction to the rule by which he had formerly dealt with them. At the commencement of chapter xviii, as if with the intention of revoking the words of the second commandment, 'visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children', it is said:

'The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying:

'What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?

'As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.

'Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die'.

Similar language occurs also in *Jer.*, xxxi, 29, in a connexion which makes it still more remarkable, as the new truth is described as a part of that fuller revelation which God will give of Himself, when He makes a new covenant with the house of Israel. And yet the same prophet, as if not at all times conscious of his own lesson, says also in his prayer to God (*Lam.*, v, 7), 'Our fathers have sinned and are not, and we have borne their iniquities'. The truth which he felt was not one and the same always, but rather two opposite truths, like the Law and the Gospel, which, for a while, seemed to struggle with one another in the teaching of the prophet and the heart of man.

And yet this opposition was not necessarily conscious to the prophet himself. Isaiah, who saw the whole nation going before

to judgment, did not refrain from preaching the lessons, 'If ye be willing and obedient', and 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts'. Ezekiel, the first thought and spirit of whose prophecies might be described in modern language as the responsibility of man, like Micaiah in the *Book of Kings*, seemed to see the false prophets inspired by Jehovah Himself to their own destruction. As in the prophet, so in the Apostle, there was no sense that the two lessons were in any degree inconsistent with each other. It is an age of criticism and philosophy, which, in making the attempt to conceive the relation of God to the world in a more abstract way, has invented for itself the perplexity, or, may we venture to say, by the very fact of acknowledging it, has also found its solution. The intensity with which the prophet felt the truths that he revealed, the force with which he uttered them, the desire with which he yearned after their fulfilment, have passed from the earth; but the truths themselves remain an everlasting possession. We seem to look upon them more calmly, and adjust them more truly. They no longer break through the world of sight with unequal power; they can never again be confused with the accidents of time and place. The history of the Jewish people has ceased to be the only tabernacle in which they are enshrined; they have an independent existence, and a light and order of their own.

## Casuistry

RELIGION and morality seem often to become entangled in circumstances. The truth which came, not 'to bring peace upon earth but a sword', could not but give rise to many new and conflicting obligations. The kingdom of God had to adjust itself with the kingdoms of this world; though 'the children were free', they could not escape the fulfilment of duties to their Jewish or Roman governors; in the bosom of a family there were duties too; in society there were many points of contact with the heathen. A new element of complexity had been introduced in all the relations between man and man, giving rise to many new questions, which might be termed, in the phraseology of modern times, 'cases of conscience'.

Of these the one which most frequently recurs in the *Epistles* of St Paul, is the question respecting meats and drinks, which appears to have agitated both the Roman and Corinthian Churches, as well as those of Jerusalem and Antioch, and probably, in a greater or less degree, every other Christian community in the days of the Apostle. The scruple which gave birth to it was not confined to Christianity; it was Eastern rather than Christian, and originated in a feeling into which entered, not only Oriental notions of physical purity and impurity, but also those of caste and of race. With other Eastern influences it spread towards the West, in the flux of all religions, exercising a peculiar power on the susceptible temper of mankind.

The same tendency exhibited itself in various forms. In one form it was the scruple of those who ate herbs, while others 'had faith' to eat anything. The Essenes and Therapeutæ among the Jews, and the Pythagoreans in the heathen world, had a similar feeling respecting the use of animal food. It was a natural association which led to such an abstinence. In the East, ever ready to connect, or rather incapable of separating, ideas of

moral and physical impurity—where the heat of the climate rendered animal food unnecessary, if not positively unhealthful; where corruption rapidly infected dead organized matter; where, lastly, ancient tradition and ceremonies told of the sacredness of animals and the mysteriousness of animal life,—nature and religion alike seemed to teach the same lesson, it was safer to abstain. It was the manner of such a scruple to propagate itself. He who revolted at animal food could not quietly sit by and see his neighbour partake of it. The ceremonialism of the age was the tradition of thousands of years, and passed by a sort of contagion from one race to another, from Paganism or Judaism to Christianity. How to deal with this 'second nature' was a practical difficulty among the first Christians. The Gospel was not a gospel according to the Essenes, and the Church could not exclude those who held the scruples, neither could it be narrowed to them; it would not pass judgment on them at all. Hence the force of the Apostle's words: 'Him that is weak in the faith receive, not to the decision of his doubts'.

There was another point in reference to which the same spirit of ceremonialism propagated itself, *viz.* meats offered to idols. Even if meat in general were innocent and a creature of God, it could hardly be a matter of indifference to partake of that which had been 'sacrificed to devils'; least of all, to sit at meat in the idol's temple. True, the idol was 'nothing in the world—a block of stone, to which the words good or evil were misapplied; 'a graven image' which the workman made, 'putting his hand to the hammer', as the old prophets described in their irony. And such is the Apostle's own feeling (1 *Cor.*, viii, 4; x, 19). But he has also the other feeling which he himself regards as, not less true (1 *Cor.*, x, 20), and which was more natural to the minds of the first believers. When they saw the worshippers of the idol revelling in impurity, they could not but suppose that a spirit of some kind was there. Their warfare, as the Apostle had told them, was not 'against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world'. Evil angels were among them; where would they more naturally take up their abode than around the altars and in the temples of the heathen? And if they had been completely free from superstition, and could have regarded the heathen religions which they saw enthroned over the world simply with contempt, still the question would have arisen, What connexion were they to have with them and with their worshippers?, a question not easy to be answered in the bustle of Rome and Corinth, where every circumstance of daily life, every amusement, every political

and legal right, was in some way bound up with the heathen religions. Were they to go out of the world? ; if not, what was to be their relation to those without? It was a branch of this more general question, the beginning of the difficulty so strongly felt and so vehemently disputed about in the days of Tertullian, which St Paul discusses in reference to meats offered to idols. Where was the line to be drawn? Were they to visit the idol's temple; to sacrifice like other men to Diana or Jupiter? That could hardly be consistent with their Christian profession. But granting this, where were they to stop? Was it lawful to eat meats offered to idols? But if not, then how careful should they be to discover what was offered to idols? How easily might they fall into sin unawares? The scruple once indulged would soon gather strength, until the very provision of their daily food would become difficult by their disuse of the markets of the heathen.

A third instance of the same ceremonialism so natural to that age, and to ourselves so strange and unmeaning, is illustrated by the words of the Jerusalem Christians to the Apostle: 'Thou wentest in unto men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them'; a scruple so strong that, probably, St Peter himself was never entirely free from it, and at any rate yielded to the fear of it in others when withstood by St Paul at Antioch. This scruple may be said in one sense to be hardly capable of an explanation, and in another not to need one. For, probably, nothing can give our minds any conception of the nature of the feeling, the intense hold which it exercised, the concentration which it was of every national and religious prejudice, the constraint which was required to get rid of it as a sort of 'horror naturalis' in the minds of Jews; while, on the other hand, feelings at the present day not very dissimilar exist, not only in Eastern countries, but among ourselves. There is nothing strange in human nature being liable to them, or in their long lingering and often returning, even when reason and charity alike condemn them. We ourselves are not insensible to differences of race and colour, and may therefore be able partially to comprehend (allowing for the difference of East and West) what was the feeling of Jews and Jewish Christians towards men uncircumcised.

On the last point St Paul maintains but one language: 'In Christ Jesus there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision'. No compromise could be allowed here, without destroying the Gospel that he preached. But the other question of meats and drinks, when separated from that of circumcision, admitted of various answers and points of view. Accordingly there is an appearance of inconsistency in the modes in which the Apostle



resolves it. All these modes have a use and interest for ourselves ; though our difficulties are not the same as those of the early Christians, the words speak to us, so long as prudence, and faith, and charity are the guides of Christian life. It is characteristic of the Apostle that his answers run into one another, as though each of them to different individuals, and all in their turn, might present the solution of the difficulty.

Separating them under different heads, we may begin with *1 Cor.*, x, 25, which may be termed the rule of Christian prudence : ' Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake '. That is to say : ' Buy food as other men do ; perhaps what you purchase has come from the idol's temple, perhaps not. Do not encourage your conscience in raising scruples, life will become impossible if you do. One question involves another and another and another without end. The manly and the Christian way is to cut them short ; both as tending to weaken the character and as inconsistent with the very nature of spiritual religion '.

So we may venture to amplify the Apostle's precept, which breathes the same spirit of moderation as his decisions respecting celibacy and marriage. Among ourselves the remark is often made that ' extremes are practically untrue '. This is another way of putting the same lesson : If I may not sit in the idol's temple, it may be plausibly argued, neither may I eat meats offered to idols ; and if I may not eat meats offered to idols, then it logically follows that I ought not to go into the market where idols' meat is sold. The Apostle snaps the chain of this misapplied logic : there must be a limit somewhere ; we must not push consistency where it is practically impossible. A trifling scruple is raised to the level of a religious duty, and another and another, until religion is made up of scruples, and the light of life fades, and the ways of life narrow themselves.

It is not hard to translate the Apostle's precept into the language of our time. Instances occur in politics, in theology, in our ordinary occupations, in which beyond a certain point consistency is impossible. Take for example the following : A person feels that he would be wrong in carrying on his business, or going to public amusements, on a Sunday. He says : If it be wrong for me to work, it is wrong to make the servants in my house work ; or if it be wrong to go to public amusements, it is wrong to enjoy the recreation of walking on a Sunday. So it may be argued that, because slavery is wrong, therefore it is not right to purchase the produce of slavery, or that of which the produce of slavery is a part, and so on without end, until

we are forced out of the world from a remote fear of contagion with evil. Or I am engaged in a business which may be in some degree deleterious to the health or injurious to the morals of those employed in it, or I trade in some articles of commerce which are unwholesome or dangerous, or I let a house or a ship to another whose employment is of this description. Numberless questions of the same kind relating to the profession of a clergyman, an advocate, or a soldier, have been pursued into endless consequences. Is the mind of any person so nicely balanced that 'every one of six hundred disputed propositions' is the representative of his exact belief, or can every word in a set form of prayer at all times reflect the feeling of those who read or follow it? There is no society to which we can belong, no common act of business or worship in which two or three are joined together, in which such difficulties are not liable to arise. Three editors conduct a newspaper; can it express equally the conviction of all the three? Three lawyers sign an opinion in common; is it the judgment of all or of one or two of them? High-minded men have often got themselves into a false position by regarding these questions in too abstract a way. The words of the Apostle are a practical answer to them which may be paraphrased thus: 'Do as other men do in a Christian country'. Conscience will say: 'He who is guilty of the least, is guilty of all'. In the Apostle's language it then becomes 'the strength of sin', encouraging us to despair of all, because in that mixed condition of life in which God has placed us we cannot fulfil all.

In accordance with the spirit of the same principle of doing as other men do, the Apostle further implies that believers are to accept the hospitality of the heathen (1 *Cor.*, x, 27). But here a modification comes in, which may be termed the law of Christian charity or courtesy: Avoid giving offence, or, as we might say, 'Do not defy opinion'. Eat what is set before you; but if a person sitting at meat pointedly says to you, 'This was offered to idols', do not eat. 'All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient', and this is one of the not expedient class. There appears to be a sort of inconsistency in this advice, as there must always be inconsistencies in the rules of practical life which are relative to circumstances. It might be said: 'We cannot do one thing at one time, and another thing at another; now be guided by another man's conscience, now by our own'. It might be retorted, 'Is not this the dissimulation which you blame in St Peter?' To which it may be answered in turn: 'But a man may do one thing at one time, another thing at another time, "becoming to the Jews a Jew", if he do it in such a manner

as to avoid the risk of misconstruction'. And this again admits of a retort. 'Is it possible to avoid misconstruction? Is it not better to dare to be ourselves, to act like ourselves, to speak like ourselves, to think like ourselves?' We seem to have lighted unawares on two varieties of human disposition; the one harmonizing and adapting itself to the perplexities of life, the other rebelling against them, and seeking to disentangle itself from them. Which side of this argument shall we take; neither or both? The Apostle appears to take both sides; for in the abrupt transition that follows, he immediately adds, 'Why is my liberty to be judged of another man's conscience?, what right has another man to attack me for what I do in the innocence of my heart?' It is good advice to say, 'Regard the opinions of others'; and equally good advice to say, 'Do not regard the opinions of others'. We must balance between the two; and over all, adjusting the scales, is the law of Christian love.

Both in *1 Cor.*, viii, and *Rom.*, xiv, the Apostle adds another principle, which may be termed the law of individual conscience, which we must listen to in ourselves and regard in others. 'He that doubteth is damned; whatsoever is not of faith is sin'. All things are lawful to him who feels them to be lawful, but the conscience may be polluted by the most indifferent things. When we eat, we should remember that the consequence of following our example may be serious to others. For not only may our brother be offended at us, but also by our example be drawn into sin; that is, to do what, though indifferent in itself, is sin to him. And so the weak brother, for whom Christ died, may perish through our fault; that is, he may lose his peace and harmony of soul and conscience void of offence, and all through our heedlessness in doing some unnecessary thing, which were far better left undone.

Cases may be readily imagined, in which, like the preceding, the rule of conduct here laid down by the Apostle would involve dissimulation. So many thousand scruples and opinions as there are in the world, we should have 'to go out of the world' to fulfil it honestly. All reserve, it may be argued, tends to break up the confidence between man and man; and there are times in which concealment of our opinions, even respecting things indifferent, would be treacherous and mischievous; there are times, too, in which things cease to be indifferent, and it is our duty to speak out respecting the false importance which they have acquired. But, after all qualifications of this kind have been made, the secondary duty yet remains, of consideration for others, which should form an element in our conduct. If truth is the first

principle of our speech and action, the good of others should, at any rate, be the second. 'If any man (not see thee who hast knowledge sitting in the idol's temple, but) hear thee discoursing rashly of the Scriptures and the doctrines of the Church, shall not the faith of thy younger brother become confused? and his conscience being weak shall cease to discern between good and evil. And so thy weak brother shall perish for whom Christ died'.

The Apostle adds a fourth principle, which may be termed the law of Christian freedom, as the last solution of the difficulty: 'Therefore, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God'. From the perplexities of casuistry, and the conflicting rights of a man's own conscience and that of another, he falls back on the simple rule: 'Whatever you do, sanctify the act'. It cannot be said that all contradictory obligations vanish the moment we try to act with simplicity and truth; we cannot change the current of life and its circumstances by a wish or an intention; we cannot dispel that which is without, though we may clear that which is within. But we have taken the first step, and are in the way to solve the riddle. The insane scruple, the fixed idea, the ever-increasing doubt begins to pass away; the spirit of the child returns to us; the mind is again free, and the road of life open. 'Whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God'; that is, determine to seek only the will of God, and you may have a larger measure of Christian liberty allowed to you; things, perhaps wrong in others, may be right for you.

The law, then, of Christian prudence, using that moderation which we show in things pertaining to this life; or the law of Christian charity, resolving, and as it were absorbing, our scruples in the love of other men; or the law of the individual conscience, making that right to a man in matters in themselves indifferent which seems to be so; or the law of freedom, giving us a spirit, instead of a letter, and enlarging the first principles of the doctrine of Christ; or all together—shall furnish the doubting believer with a sufficient rule of faith and conduct. Even the law of Christian charity is a rule of freedom rather than of restraint, in proportion as it places men above questions of meats and drinks, and enables them to regard such disputes only by the light of love to God and man. For there is a tyranny which even freedom may exercise, when it makes us intolerant of other men's difficulties. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty'; but there is also a liberty without the Spirit of the Lord. To eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man; but to denounce those who do, or do not do so, may, in St Paul's

language, cause not only the weak brother, but him that fancieth he standeth, to fall ; and so, in a false endeavour to preach the Gospel of Christ, men ' may perish for whom Christ died '.

The general rule of the Apostle is : ' Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision ' ; ' neither if we eat not are we the better, neither if we eat are we the worse ' . But then ' all things are lawful, but all things are not expedient ' , even in reference to ourselves, and still more as we are members one of another. There is a further counsel of prudence : ' Receive such an one, but not to the determination of his doubt ' . And lastly, as the guide to the spirit of our actions, remember the words : ' I will eat no meat as long as the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend ' .

Questions of meats and drinks, of eating with washen or unwashen hands, have passed from the stage of religious ordinances to that of proprieties and decencies of life. Neither the purifications of the law of Moses, nor the seven precepts of Noah, are any longer binding upon Christians. Nature herself teaches all things necessary for health and comfort. But the spirit of casuistry in every age finds fresh materials to employ itself upon, laying hold of some question of a new moon or a sabbath, some fragment of antiquity, some inconsistency of custom, some subtilty of thought, some nicety of morality, analyzing and dividing the actions of daily life ; separating the letter from the spirit, and words from things ; winding its toils around the infirmities of the weak, and linking itself to the sensibility of the intellect. Out of this labyrinth of the soul the believer finds his way, by keeping his eye fixed on that landmark which the Apostle himself has set up : ' In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature ' .

There is no one probably, of any religious experience, who has not at times felt the power of a scrupulous conscience. In speaking of a scrupulous conscience, the sense of remorse for greater offences is not intended to be included. These may press more or less heavily on the soul ; and the remembrance of them may ingrain itself, with different degrees of depth, on different temperaments ; but whether deep or shallow, the sorrow for them cannot be brought under the head of scruples of conscience. There are ' many things in which we offend all ' about which there can be no mistake, the impression of which on our minds it would be fatal to weaken or do away. Nor is it to be denied that there may be customs almost universal among us which are so plainly repugnant to morality, that we can never be justified in

acquiescing in them ; or that individuals of clear head and strong will have been led on by feelings which other men would deride as conscientious scruples into an heroic struggle against evil. But quite independently of real sorrows for sin, or real protests against evil, most religious persons in the course of their lives have felt unreal scruples or difficulties, or exaggerated real but slight ones ; they have abridged their Christian freedom, and thereby their means of doing good ; they have cherished imaginary obligations, and artificially hedged themselves in a particular course of action. Honour and truth have seemed to be at stake about trifles light as air, or conscience has become a burden too heavy for them to bear in some doubtful matter of conduct. Scruples of this kind are ever liable to increase : as one vanishes, another appears ; the circumstances of the world and of the Church, and the complication of modern society, have a tendency to create them. The very form in which they come is of itself sufficient to put us on our guard against them ; for we can give no account of them to ourselves ; they are seldom affected by the opinion of others ; they are more often put down by the exercise of authority than by reasoning or judgment. They gain hold on the weaker sort of men, or on those not naturally weak, in moments of weakness. They often run counter to our wish or interest, and for this very reason acquire a kind of tenacity. They seem innocent, mistakes, at worst, on the safe side, characteristic of the ingenuousness of youth, or indicative of a heart uncorrupted by the world. But this is not so. Creatures as we are of circumstances, we cannot safely afford to give up things indifferent, means of usefulness, instruments of happiness to ourselves, which may affect our lives and those of our children to the latest posterity. There are few greater dangers in religion than the indulgence of such scruples, the consequences of which can rarely be seen until too late, and which affect the moral character of a man at least as much as his temporal interests.

Strange as it may appear, it is nevertheless true, that scruples about lesser matters almost always involve some dereliction of duty in greater and more obvious ones. A tender conscience is a conscience unequal to the struggles of life. At first sight it seems as if, when lesser duties were cared for, the greater would take care of themselves. But this is not the lesson which experience teaches. In our moral as in our physical nature, we are finite beings, capable only of a certain degree of tension, ever liable to suffer disorder and derangement, to be over-exercised in one part and weakened in another. No one can fix his mind intently on a trifling scruple or become absorbed in an eccentric

fancy, without finding the great principles of truth and justice insensibly depart from him. He has been looking through a microscope at life, and cannot take in its general scope. The moral proportions of things are lost to him ; the question of a new moon or a Sabbath has taken the place of diligence or of honesty. There is no limit to the illusions which he may practise on himself. There are those, all whose interests and prejudices at once take the form of duties and scruples, partly from dishonesty, but also from weakness, and because that is the form in which they can with the best grace maintain them against other men, and conceal their true nature from themselves.

Scruples are dangerous in another way, as they tend to drive men into a corner in which the performance of our duty becomes so difficult as to be almost impossible. A virtuous and religious life does not consist merely in abstaining from evil, but in doing what is good. It has to find opportunities and occasions for itself, without which it languishes. A man has a scruple about the choice of a profession ; as a Christian, he believes war to be unlawful ; in familiar language, he has doubts respecting orders, difficulties about the law. Even the ordinary ways of conducting trade appear deficient to his nicer sense of honesty ; or perhaps he has already entered on one of these lines of life, and finds it necessary to quit it. At last, there comes the difficulty of ' how he is to live '. There cannot be a greater mistake than to suppose that a good resolution is sufficient in such a case to carry a man through a long life.

But even if we suppose the case of one who is endowed with every earthly good and instrument of prosperity, who can afford, as is sometimes said, to trifle with the opportunities of life, still the mental consequences will be hardly less injurious to him. For he who feels scruples about the ordinary enjoyments and occupations of his fellows, does so far cut himself off from his common nature. He is an isolated being, incapable of acting with his fellow-men. There are plants which, though the sun shine upon them, and the dews water them, peak and pine from some internal disorder, and appear to have no sympathy with the influences around them. So is the mind corroded by scruples of conscience. It cannot expand to sun or shower ; it belongs not to the world of light ; it has no intelligence of or harmony with mankind around. It is insensible to the great truth, that though we may not do evil that good may come, yet that good and evil, truth and falsehood, are bound together on earth, and that we cannot separate ourselves from them.

It is one of the peculiar dangers of scruples of conscience,

that the consequence of giving way to them is never felt at the time that they press upon us. When the mind is worried by a thought secretly working in it, and its trial becomes greater than it can bear, it is eager to take the plunge in life that may put it out of its misery ; to throw aside a profession it may be, or to enter a new religious communion. We shall not be wrong in promising ourselves a few weeks of peace and placid enjoyment. The years that are to follow we are incapable of realizing ; whether the weary spirit will require some fresh pasture, will invent for itself some new doubt ; whether its change is a return to nature or not, it is impossible for us to anticipate. Whether it has in itself that hidden strength which, under every change of circumstances, is capable of bearing up, is a question which we are the least able to determine for ourselves. In general we may observe, that the weakest minds, and those least capable of enduring such consequences, are the most likely to indulge the scruples. We know beforehand the passionate character, hidden often under the mask of reserve, the active yet half-reasoning intellect, which falls under the power of such illusions.

In the Apostolic Church 'cases of conscience' arose out of religious traditions, and what may be termed the ceremonial cast of the age ; in modern times the most frequent source of them may be said to be the desire of logical or practical consistency, such as is irreconcilable with the mixed state of human affairs and the feebleness of the human intellect. There is no lever like the argument from consistency, with which to bring men over to our opinions. A particular system or view, Calvinism perhaps, or Catholicism, has taken possession of the mind. Shall we stop short of pushing its premises to their conclusions ? Shall we stand in the midway, where we are liable to be overridden by the combatants on either side in the struggle ? Shall we place ourselves between our reason and our affections ; between our practical duties and our intellectual convictions ? Logic would have us go forward, and take our stand at the most advanced point—we are there already, it is urged, if we were true to ourselves ; but feeling, and habit, and common sense bid us stay where we are, unable to give an account of ourselves, yet convinced that we are right. We may listen to the one voice, we may listen also to the other. The true way of guiding either is to acknowledge both ; to use them for a time against each other, until experience of life and of ourselves has taught us to harmonize them in a single principle.

So, again, in daily life cases often occur, in which we must do as other men do, and act upon a general understanding, even



though unable to reconcile a particular practice to the letter of truthfulness or even to our individual conscience. It is hard in such cases to lay down a definite rule. But in general we should be suspicious of any conscientious scruples in which other good men do not share. We shall do right to make a large allowance for the perplexities and entanglements of human things ; we shall observe that persons of strong mind and will brush away our scruples ; we shall consider that not he who has most, but he who has fewest scruples approaches most nearly the true Christian. The man whom we emphatically call ' honest ', ' able ', ' upright ', who is a religious as well as a sensible man, seems to have no room for them ; from which we are led to infer that such scruples are seldom in the nature of things themselves, but arise out of some peculiarity or eccentricity in those who indulge them. That they are often akin to madness, is an observation not without instruction even to those whom God has blest with the full use of reason.

So far we arrive at a general conclusion like St Paul's : ' Whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God ' ; and, ' Blessed is he who condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth '. ' Have the Spirit of truth, and the truth shall make you free ' ; and the entanglements of words and the perplexities of action will disappear. But there is another way in which such difficulties have been resolved, which meets them in detail ; viz. the practice of confession and the rules of casuistry, which are the guides of the confessor. When the spirit is disordered within us, it may be urged that we ought to go out of ourselves, and confess our sins one to another. But he who leads, and he who is led, alike require some rules for the examination of conscience, to quicken or moderate the sense of sin, to assist experience, to show men to themselves as they really are, neither better nor worse. Hence the necessity for casuistry.

It is remarkable, that what is in idea so excellent that it may be almost described in St Paul's language as ' holy, just, and good ' should have become a byword among mankind for hypocrisy and dishonesty. In popular estimation, no one is supposed to resort to casuistry, but with the view of evading a duty. The moral instincts of the world have risen up and condemned it. It is fairly put down by the universal voice, and shut up in the darkness of the tomes of the casuists. A kind of rude justice has been done upon the system, as in most cases of popular indignation, probably with some degree of injustice to the individuals who were its authors. Yet, hated as casuistry has deservedly been, it is fair also to admit that it has an element of truth which

was the source of its influence. This element of truth is the acknowledgment of the difficulties which arise in the relations of a professing Christian world to the Church and to Christianity. How, without lowering the Gospel, to place it on a level with daily life is a hard question. It will be proper for us to consider the system from both sides—in its origin and in its perversion. Why it existed, and why it has failed, furnish a lesson in the history of the human mind of great interest and importance.

The unseen power by which the systems of the casuists were brought into being, was the necessity of the Roman Catholic Church. Like the allegorical interpretation of Scripture, they formed a link between the present and the past. At the time of the Reformation the doctrines of the ancient, no less than of the Reformed, faith awakened into life. But they required to be put in a new form, to reconcile them to the moral sense of mankind. Luther ended the work of self-examination by casting all his sins on Christ. But the casuists could not thus meet the awakening of men's consciences and the fearful looking for of judgment. They had to deal with an altered world, in which nevertheless the spectres of the past, purgatory, penance, mortal sin, were again rising up; hallowed as they were by authority and antiquity they could not be cast aside; the preacher of the Counter-reformation could only explain them away. If he had placed distinctly before men's eyes, that for some one act of immorality or dishonesty they were in a state of mortal sin, the heart true to itself would have recoiled from such a doctrine, and the connexion between the Church and the world would have been for ever severed. And yet the doctrine was a part of ecclesiastical tradition; it could not be held, it could not be given up. The Jesuits escaped the dilemma by holding and evading it.

So far it would not be untrue to say that casuistry had originated in an effort to reconcile the Roman Catholic faith with nature and experience. The Roman system was, if strictly carried out, horrible and impossible; a doctrine not, as it has been sometimes described, of salvation made easy, but of universal condemnation. From these fearful conclusions of logic the subtlety of the human intellect was now to save it. The analogy of law, as worked out by jurists and canonists, supplied the means. What was repugnant to human justice could not be agreeable to Divine. The scholastic philosophy, which had begun to die out and fade away before the light of classical learning, was to revive in a new form, no longer hovering between heaven and earth, out of the reach of experience, yet below the region of spiritual

truth, but, as it seemed, firmly based in the life and actions of mankind. It was the same sort of wisdom which defined the numbers and order of the celestial hierarchy, which was now to be adapted to the infinite modifications of which the actions of men are capable.

It is obvious that there are endless points of view in which the simplest duties may be regarded. Common sense says: 'A man is to be judged by his acts', 'there can be no mistake about a lie', and so on. The casuists proceed by a different road. Fixing the mind, not on the simplicity, but on the intricacy of human action, they study every point of view, and introduce every conceivable distinction. A first most obvious distinction is that of the intention and the act: ought the one to be separated from the other? The law itself seems to teach that this may hardly be; rather the intention is held to be that which gives form and colour to the act. Then the act by itself is nothing, and the intention by itself almost innocent. As we play between the two different points of view, the act and the intention together evanesce. But, secondly, as we consider the intention, must we not also consider the circumstances of the agent? For plainly a being deprived of free will cannot be responsible for his actions. Place the murderer in thought under the conditions of a necessary agent, and his actions are innocent; or under an imperfect necessity, and he loses half his guilt. Or, suppose a man ignorant, or partly ignorant, of what is the teaching of the Church, or the law of the land—here another abstract point of view arises, leading us out of the region of common sense to difficult and equitable considerations, which may be determined fairly, but which we have the greatest motive to decide in favour of ourselves. Or again, try to conceive an act without reference to its consequences, or in reference to some single consequence, without regarding it as a violation of morality or of nature, or in reference solely to the individual conscience. Or imagine the will half consenting to, half withdrawing from its act; or acting by another, or in obedience to another, or with some good object, or under the influence of some imperfect obligation, or of opposite obligations. Even conscience itself may be at last played off against the plainest truths.

By the aid of such distinctions the simplest principles of morality multiply to infinity. An instrument has been introduced of such subtilty and elasticity that it can accommodate the canons of the Church to any consciences, to any state of the world. Sin need no longer be confined to the dreadful distinction of mortal and venial sin; it has lost its infinite and mysterious

character ; it has become a thing of degrees, to be aggravated or mitigated in idea, according to the expediency of the case or the pliability of the confessor. It seems difficult to perpetrate a perfect sin. No man need die of despair ; in some page of the writings of the casuists will be found a difference suited to his case. And this without in any degree interfering with a single doctrine of the Church, or withdrawing one of its anathemas against heresy.

The system of casuistry, destined to work such great results, in reconciling the Church to the world and to human nature, like a torn web needing to be knit together, may be regarded as a science or profession. It is a classification of human actions, made in one sense without any reference to practice. For nothing was further from the mind of the casuist than to inquire whether a particular distinction would have a good or bad effect, was liable to perversion or not. His object was only to make such distinctions as the human mind was capable of perceiving and acknowledging. As to the physiologist objects in themselves loathsome and disgusting may be of the deepest interest, so to the casuist the foulest and most loathsome vices of mankind are not matters of abhorrence, but of science, to be arranged and classified, just like any other varieties of human action. It is true that the study of the teacher was not supposed to be also open to the penitent. But it inevitably followed that the spirit of the teacher communicated itself to the taught. He could impart no high or exalted idea of morality or religion, who was measuring it out by inches, not deepening men's idea of sin, but attenuating it ; ' mincing into nonsense ' the first principles of right and wrong.

The science was further complicated by the ' doctrine of probability ', which consisted in making anything approved or approvable that was confirmed by authority ; even, as was said by some, of a single casuist. That could not be very wrong which a wise and good man had once thought to be right—a better than ourselves perhaps, surveying the circumstances calmly and impartially. Who would wish that the rule of his daily life should go beyond that of a saint and doctor of the Church ? Who would require such a rule to be observed by another ? Who would refuse another such an escape out of the labyrinth of human difficulties and perplexities ? As in all the Jesuit distinctions, there was a kind of reasonableness in the theory of this ; it did but go on the principle of cutting short scruples by the rule of common sense.

And yet, what a door was here opened for the dishonesty of

mankind! The science itself had dissected moral action until nothing of life or meaning remained in it. It had thrown aside, at the same time, the natural restraint which the moral sense itself exercises in determining such questions. And now for the application of this system, so difficult and complicated in itself, so incapable of receiving any check from the opinions of mankind, the authority not of the Church, but of individuals, was to be added as a new lever to overthrow the last remains of natural religion and morality.

The marvels of this science are not yet ended. For the same changes admit of being rung upon speech as well as upon action, until truth and falsehood become alike impossible. Language itself dissolves before the decomposing power; oaths, like actions, vanish into air when separated from the intention of the speaker; the shield of custom protects falsehood. It would be a curious though needless task to follow the subject into further details. He who has read one page of the casuists has read all. There is nothing that is not right in some particular point of view—nothing that is not true under some previous supposition.

Such a system may be left to refute itself. Those who have strayed so far away from truth and virtue are self-condemned. Yet it is not without interest to trace, by what false lights of philosophy or religion, good men revolting themselves at the commission of evil were led, step by step, to the unnatural result. We should expect to find that such a result originated not in any settled determination to corrupt the morals of mankind, but in an intellectual error; and it is suggestive of strange thoughts respecting our moral nature, that an intellectual error should have had the power to produce such consequences. Such appears to have been the fact. The conception of moral action on which the system depends, is as erroneous and imperfect as that of the scholastic philosophy respecting the nature of ideas. The immediate reduction of the error to practice through the agency of an order made the evil greater than that of other intellectual errors on moral and religious subjects, which, springing up in the brain of an individual, are often corrected and purified in the course of nature before they find their way into the common mind.

1. Casuistry ignores the difference between thought and action. Actions are necessarily external. The spoken word constitutes the lie; the outward performance the crime. The Highest Wisdom, it is true, has identified the two: 'He that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart'. But this is not the rule by which

we are to judge our past actions, but to guard our future ones. He who has thoughts of lusts or passion is not innocent in the sight of God, and is liable to be carried on to perform the act on which he suffers himself to dwell. And, in looking forward, he will do well to remember this caution of Christ ; but in looking backward, in thinking of others, in endeavouring to estimate the actual amount of guilt or trespass, if he begins by placing thought on the level of action, he will end by placing action on the level of thought. It would be a monstrous state of mind in which we regarded mere imagination of evil as the same with action ; hatred as the same with murder ; thoughts of impurity as the same with adultery. It is not so that we must learn Christ. Actions are one thing and thoughts another in the eye of conscience, no less than of the law of the land ; of God as well as man. However important it may be to remember that the all-seeing eye of God tries the reins, it is no less important to remember also that morality consists in definite acts, capable of being seen and judged of by our fellow-creatures, impossible to escape ourselves.

2. What may be termed the frame of casuistry was supplied by law, while the spirit is that of the scholastic philosophy. Neither afforded any general principle which might correct extravagancies in detail, or banish subtilities, or negative remote and unsafe inferences. But the application of the analogy of law to subjects of morality and religion was itself a figment which, at every step, led deeper into error. The object was to realize and define, in every possible stage, acts which did not admit of legal definition, either because they were not external, but only thoughts or suggestions of the mind, or because the external part of the action was not allowed to be regarded separately from the motives of the agent. The motive or intention which law takes no account of except as indicating the nature of the act, becomes the principal subject of the casuist's art. Casuistry may be said to begin where law ends. It goes where law refuses to follow with legal rules and distinctions into the domain of morality. It weighs in the balance of precedent and authority the impalpable acts of a spiritual being. Law is a real science which has its roots in history, which grasps fact ; seeking, in idea, to rest justice on truth only, and to reconcile the rights of individuals with the well-being of the whole. But casuistry is but the ghost or ape of a science ; it has no history and no facts corresponding to it ; it came into the world by the ingenuity of man ; its object is to produce an artificial disposition of human affairs, at which nature rebels.

3. The distinctions of the casuist are far from equalling the subtilty of human life, or the diversity of its conditions. It is quite true that actions the same in name are, in the scale of right and wrong, as different as can be imagined ; varying with the age, temperament, education, circumstances of each individual. The casuist is not in fault for maintaining this difference, but for supposing that he can classify or distinguish them so as to give any conception of their innumerable shades and gradations. All his folios are but the weary effort to abstract or make a brief of the individuality of man. The very actions which he classifies change their meaning as he writes them down, like the words of a sentence torn away from their context. He is ever idealizing and creating distinctions, splitting straws, dividing hairs ; yet any one who reflects on himself will idealize and distinguish further still, and think of his whole life in all its circumstances, with its sequence of thoughts and motives, and, withal, many excuses. But no one can extend this sort of idealism beyond himself ; no insight of the confessor can make him clairvoyant of the penitent's soul. Know ourselves we sometimes truly may, but we cannot know others, and no other can know us. No other can know or understand us in the same wonderful or mysterious way ; no other can be conscious of the spirit in which we have lived ; no other can see us as a whole or get within. God has placed a veil of flesh between ourselves and other men, to screen the nakedness of our soul. Into the secret chamber He does not require that we should admit any other judge or counsellor but Himself. Two eyes only are upon us—the eye of our own soul—the eye of God, and the one is the light of the other. That is the true light, on the which if a man look he will have a knowledge of himself, different in kind from that which the confessor extracts from the books of the casuists.

4. There are many cases in which our first thoughts, or, to speak more correctly, our instinctive perceptions, are true and right ; in which it is not too much to say, that he who deliberates is lost. The very act of turning to a book, or referring to another, enfeebles our power of action. Works of art are produced we know not how, by some simultaneous movement of hand and thought, which seem to lend to each other force and meaning. So in moral action, the true view does not separate the intention from the act, or the act from the circumstances which surround it, but regards them as one and absolutely indivisible. In the performance of the act and in the judgment of it, the will and the execution, the hand and the thought are to be considered as one. Those who act most energetically, who in difficult circumstances

judge the most truly, do not separately pass in review the rules, and principles, and counter principles of action, but grasp them at once, in a single instant. Those who act most truthfully, honestly, firmly, manfully, consistently, take least time to deliberate. Such should be the attitude of our minds in all questions of right and wrong, truth and falsehood: we may not inquire, but act.

5. Casuistry not only renders us independent of our own convictions, it renders us independent also of the opinion of mankind in general. It puts the confessor in the place of ourselves, and in the place of the world. By making the actions of men matters of science, it cuts away the supports and safeguards which public opinion gives to morality: the confessor in the silence of the closet easily introduces principles from which the common sense or conscience of mankind would have shrunk back. Especially in matters of truth and falsehood, in the nice sense of honour shown in the unwillingness to get others within our power, his standard will probably fall short of that of the world at large. Public opinion, it is true, drives men's vices inwards; it teaches them to conceal their faults from others, and if possible from themselves, and this very concealment may sink them in despair, or cover them with self-deceit. And the soul—whose 'house is its castle'—has an enemy within, the strength of which may be often increased by communications from without. Yet the good of this privacy is on the whole greater than the evil. Not only is the outward aspect of society more decorous, and the confidence between man and man less liable to be impaired; the mere fact of men's sins being known to themselves and God only, and the support afforded even by the undeserved opinion of their fellows, are of themselves great helps to a moral and religious life. Many a one by being thought better than he was has become better; by being thought as bad or worse has become worse. To communicate our sins to those who have no claim to know them is of itself a diminution of our moral strength. It throws upon others what we ought to do for ourselves; it leads us to seek in the sympathy of others a strength which no sympathy can give. It is a greater trust than is right for us commonly to repose in our fellow-creatures; it places us in their power; it may make us their tools.

To conclude, the errors and evils of casuistry may be summed up as follows: It makes that abstract which is concrete, scientific which is contingent, artificial which is natural, positive which is moral. theoretical which is intuitive and immediate. It puts the parts in the place of the whole, exceptions in the place of rules,



system in the place of experience, dependence in the place of responsibility, reflection in the place of conscience. It lowers the heavenly to the earthly, the principles of men to their practice, the tone of the preacher to the standard of ordinary life. It sends us to another for that which can only be found in ourselves. It leaves the highway of public opinion to wander in the labyrinths of an imaginary science; the light of the world for the darkness of the closet. It is to human nature what anatomy is to our bodily frame; instead of a moral and spiritual being, preserving only 'a body of death'.

## Natural Religion

THE revelation of righteousness by faith in the *Epistle to the Romans*, is relative to a prior condemnation of Jew and Gentile, who are alike convicted of sin. If the world had not been sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, there would have been no need of the light. And yet this very darkness is a sort of contradiction, for it is the darkness of the soul, which, nevertheless, sees itself and God. Such 'darkness visible' St Paul had felt in himself, and, passing from the individual to the world he lifts up the veil partially, and lets the light of God's wrath shine upon the corruption of man. What he himself in the searchings of his own spirit had become conscious of, was 'written in large letters' on the scene around. To all Israelites at least, the law stood in the same relation as it had once done to himself; it placed them in a state of reprobation. Without law, 'they had not had sin', and now, the only way to do away with sin, is to do away with the law itself.

But, if 'sin is not imputed where there is no law', it might seem as though the heathen could not be brought within the sphere of the same condemnation. Could we suppose men to be like animals, 'nourishing a blind life within the brain', 'the seed that is not quickened except it die' would have no existence in them. Common sense tells us that all evil implies a knowledge of good, and that no man can be responsible for the worship of a false God who has no means of approach to the true. But this was not altogether the case of the Gentile; 'without the law sin was in the world'; as the Jew had the law, so the Gentile had the witness of God in creation. Nature was the Gentile's law, witnessing against his immoral and degraded state, leading him upward through the visible things to the unseen power of God. He knew God, as the Apostle four times repeats, and magnified Him not as God; so that he was

without excuse, not only for his idolatry, but because he worshipped idols in the presence of God Himself.

Such is the train of thought which we perceive to be working in the Apostle's mind, and which leads him, in accordance with the general scope of the *Epistle to the Romans*, to speak of natural religion. In two passages in the *Acts* he dwells on the same subject. It was one that found a ready response in the age to which St Paul preached. Reflections of a similar kind were not uncommon among the heathen themselves. If at any time in the history of mankind natural religion can be said to have had a real and independent existence, it was in the twilight of heathenism and Christianity. 'Seeking after God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him' is a touching description of the efforts of philosophy in its later period. That there were principles in Nature higher and purer than the creations of mythology was a reflection made by those who would have deemed 'the cross of Christ foolishness', who 'mocked at the resurrection of the dead'. The Olympic heaven was no longer the air which men breathed, or the sky over their heads. The better mind of the world was turning from 'dumb idols'. Ideas about God and man were taking the place of the old heathen rites. Religions, like nations, met and mingled. East and West were learning of each other, giving and receiving spiritual and political elements; the objects of Gentile worship fading into a more distant and universal God; the Jew also travelling in thought into regions which his fathers knew not, and beginning to form just conceptions of the earth and its inhabitants.

While we remain within the circle of Scripture language, or think of St Paul as speaking only to the men of his own age in words that were striking and appropriate to them, there is no difficulty in understanding his meaning. The Old Testament denounced idolatry as hateful to God. It was away from Him, out of His sight: except where it touched the fortunes of the Jewish people, hardly within the range either of His judgments or of His mercies. No Israelite, in the elder days of Jewish history, supposed the tribes round about, or the individuals who composed them, to be equally with himself the objects of God's care. The Apostle brings the heathen back before the judgment seat of God. He sees them sinking into the condition of the old Canaanitish nations. He regards this corruption of Nature as a consequence of their idolatry. They knew, or might have known, God, for creation witnesses of Him. This is the hinge of the Apostle's argument: 'If they had not known God they had not had sin'; but now they know

Him, and sin in the light of knowledge. Without this consciousness of sin there would be no condemnation of the heathen, and therefore no need of justification for him—no parallelism or coherence between the previous states of Jew and Gentile, or between the two parts of the scheme of redemption.

But here philosophy, bringing into contrast the Scriptural view of things and the merely historical or human one, asks the question: 'How far was it possible for the heathen to have seen God in Nature?' Could a man anticipate the true religion any more than he could anticipate discoveries in science or in art? Could he pierce the clouds of mythology, or lay aside language as it were a garment? Three or four in different ages, who have been the heralds of great religious revolutions, may have risen above their natural state under the influence of some divine impulse. But men in general do as others do; single persons in India or China do not dislocate themselves from the customs, traditions, prejudices, rites, in which they have been brought up. The mind of a nation has its own structure, which receives and also idealizes in various degrees the forms of outward Nature. Religions, like languages, conform to this mental structure; they are prior to the thoughts of individuals; no one is responsible for them. Homer is not to blame for his conception of the Grecian gods; it is natural and adequate to his age. For no one in primitive times could disengage himself from that world of sense which grew to him and enveloped him; we might as well imagine that he could invent a new language, or change the form which he inherited from his race into some other type of humanity.

The question here raised is one of the most important, as it is perhaps one that has been least considered, out of the many questions in which reason and faith, historical fact and religious belief, come into real or apparent conflict with each other. Volumes have been written on the connexion of geology with the Mosaic account of the creation—a question which is on the outskirts of the great difficulty, a sort of advanced post, at which theologians go out to meet the enemy. But we cannot refuse seriously to consider the other difficulty, which affects us much more nearly, and in the present day almost forces itself upon us, as the spirit of the ancient religions is more understood, and the forms of religion still existing among men become better known.

It sometimes seems as if we lived in two, or rather many distinct worlds—the world of faith and the world of experience, the world of sacred and the world of profane history. Between

them there is a gulf; it is not easy to pass from one to the other. They have a different set of words and ideas, which it would be bad taste to intermingle; and of how much is this significant? They present themselves to us at different times, and call up a different train of associations. When reading Scripture we think only of the heavens 'which are made by the word of God', of 'the winds and waves obeying His will' of the accomplishment of events in history by the interposition of His hand. But in the study of ethnology or geology, in the records of our own or past times, a curtain drops over the Divine presence; human motives take the place of spiritual agencies; effects are not without causes; interruptions of Nature repose in the idea of law. Race, climate, physical influences, states of the human intellect and of society, are among the chief subjects of ordinary history; in the Bible there is no allusion to them; to the inspired writer they have no existence. Were men different, then, in early ages, or does the sacred narrative show them to us under a different point of view? The being of whom Scripture gives one account, philosophy another—who has a share in Nature and a place in history, who partakes also of a hidden life, and is the subject of an unseen power—is he not the same? This is the difficulty of our times, which presses upon us more and more, both in speculation and in practice, as different classes of ideas come into comparison with each other. The day has passed in which we could look upon man in one aspect only, without interruption or confusion from any other. And Scripture, which uses the language and ideas of the age in which it was written, is inevitably at variance with the new modes of speech, as well as with the real discoveries of later knowledge.

Yet the Scriptures lead the way in subjecting the purely supernatural and spiritual view of human things to the laws of experience. The revocation in *Ezekiel* of the 'old proverb in the house of Israel', is the assertion of a moral principle, and a return to fact and Nature. The words of our Saviour; 'Think ye that those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, were sinners above all the men who dwelt in Jerusalem?' and the parallel passage respecting the one born blind; 'Neither this man did sin, nor his parents', are an enlargement of the religious belief of the time in accordance with experience. When it is said that faith is not to look for wonders; or 'the kingdom of God cometh not with observation', and 'neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead', here, too, is an elevation of the order of Nature over the miraculous and

uncommon. The preference of charity to extraordinary gifts is another instance, in which the spirit of Christ speaks by the lips of Paul, of a like tendency. And St Paul himself, in recognizing a world without the Jewish, as responsible to God, and subject to His laws, is but carrying out, according to the knowledge of his age, the same principle which a wider experience of the world and of antiquity compels us to extend yet further to all time and to all mankind.

It has been asked: 'How far, in forming a moral estimate of an individual, are we to consider his actions simply as good or evil; or how far are we to include in our estimate education, country, rank in life, physical constitution, and so forth?' Morality is rightly jealous of our resolving evil into the influence of circumstances; it will no more listen to the plea of temptation as the excuse for vice, than the law will hear of the same plea in mitigation of the penalty for crime. It requires that we should place ourselves within certain conditions before we pass judgment. Yet we cannot deny a higher point of view also—of 'Him that judged not as a man judgeth', in which we fear to follow only because of the limitation of our faculties. And in the case of a murderer or other great criminal, if we were suddenly made aware, when dwelling on the enormity of his crime, that he had been educated in vice and misery, that his act had not been unprovoked, perhaps that his physical constitution was such as made it nearly impossible for him to resist the provocation which was offered to him, the knowledge of these and similar circumstances would alter our estimate of the complexion of his guilt. We might think him guilty, but we should also think him unfortunate. Stern necessity might still require that the law should take its course, but we should feel pity as well as anger. We should view his conduct in a larger and more comprehensive way, and acknowledge that, had we been placed in the same circumstances, we might have been guilty of the same act.

Now the difference between these two views of morality is analogous to the difference between the way in which St Paul regards the heathen religions, and the way in which we ourselves regard them, in proportion as we become better acquainted with their true nature. St Paul conceives idolatry separate from all the circumstances of time, of country, of physical or mental states by which it is accompanied, and in which it may be almost said to consist. He implies a deliberate knowledge of the good, and choice of the evil. He supposes each individual to contrast the truth of God with the error of false religions, and deliberately

to reject God. He conceives all mankind 'creatures as they are one of another' and

'Moving all together if they move at all'

to be suddenly freed from the bond of nationality, from the customs and habits of thoughts of ages. The moral life which is proper to the individual, he breathes into the world collectively. Speaking not of agents and their circumstances, but of their acts, and seeing these reflected in what may be termed in a figure the conscience, not of an individual but of mankind in general, he passes on all men everywhere the sentence of condemnation. We can hardly venture to say what would have been his judgment on the great names of Greek and Roman history, had he familiarly known them. He might have felt as we feel, that there is a certain impropriety in attempting to determine, with a Jesuit writer, or even in the spirit of love and admiration which the great Italian poet shows for them, the places of the philosophers and heroes of antiquity in the world to come. More in his own spirit, he would have spoken of them as a part of 'the mystery which was not then revealed as it now is'. But neither can we imagine how he could have become familiar with them at all without ceasing to be St Paul.

Acquainted as we are with Greek and Roman literature from within, lovers of its old heroic story, it is impossible for us to regard the religions of the heathen world in the single point of view which they presented to the first believers. It would be a vain attempt to try and divest ourselves of the feelings towards the great names of Greek and Roman history which a classical education has implanted in us; as little can we think of the deities of the heathen mythology in the spirit of a Christian of the first two centuries. Looking back from the vantage ground of ages, we see more clearly the proportions of heathenism and Christianity, as of other great forms or events of history, than was possible for contemporaries. Ancient authors are like the inhabitants of a valley who know nothing of the countries beyond: they have a narrow idea either of their own or other times; many notions are entertained by them respecting the past history of mankind which a wider prospect would have dispelled. The horizon of the sacred writers too is limited: they do not embrace the historical or other aspects of the state of man to which modern reflection has given rise: they are in the valley still, though with the 'light of the world' above. The Apostle sees the Athenians from Mars' Hill 'wholly given

to idolatry': to us, the same scene would have revealed wonders of art and beauty, the loss of which the civilized nations of Europe still seem with a degree of seriousness to lament. He thinks of the heathen religions in the spirit of one of the old prophets; to us they are subjects of philosophy also. He makes no distinction between their origin and their decline, the dreams of the childhood of the human race and the fierce and brutal lusts with which they afterwards became polluted; we note many differences between Homer and the corruption of later Greek life, between the rustic simplicity of the old Roman religion and the impurities of the age of Clodius or Tiberius. More and more, as they become better known to us, the original forms of all religions are seen to fall under the category of nature and less under that of mind, or free will. There is nothing to which they are so much akin as language, of which they are a sort of after-growth—in their fantastic creations the play or sport of the same faculty of speech; they seem to be also based on a spiritual affection, which is characteristic of man equally with the social ones. Religions, like languages, are inherent in all men everywhere, having a close sympathy or connection with political or family life. It would be a shallow and imaginary explanation of them that they are corruptions of some primeval revelation, or impostures framed by the persuasive arts of magicians or priests. There are many other respects in which our first impressions respecting the heathen world are changed by study and experience. There was more of true greatness in the conceptions of heathen legislators and philosophers than we readily admit, and more of nobility and disinterestedness in their character. The founders of the Eastern religions especially, although indistinctly seen by us, appear to be raised above the ordinary level of mortality. The laws of our own country are an inheritance partly bequeathed to us by a heathen nation; many of our philosophical and most of our political ideas are derived from a like source. What shall we say to these things? Are we not undergoing, on a wider scale and in a new way, the same change which the Fathers of Alexandria underwent, when they became aware that heathenism was not wholly evil, and that there was as much in Plato and Aristotle which was in harmony with the Gospel as of what was antagonistic to it.

Among the many causes at present in existence which will influence 'the Church of the future', none is likely to have greater power than our increasing knowledge of the religions of mankind. The study of them is the first step in the



philosophical study of revelation itself. For Christianity or the Mosaic religion, standing alone, is hardly a subject for scientific inquiry: only when compared with other forms of faith do we perceive its true place in history, or its true relation to human nature. The glory of Christianity is not to be as unlike other religions as possible, but to be their perfection and fulfilment. Those religions are so many steps in the education of the human race. One above another, they rise or grow side by side, each nation, in many ages, contributing some partial ray of a divine light, some element of morality, some principle of social life, to the common stock of mankind. The thoughts of men, like the productions of Nature, do not endlessly diversify; they work themselves out in a few simple forms. In the fulness of time, philosophy appears, shaking off, yet partly retaining, the nationality and particularity of its heathen origin. Its top 'reaches to heaven', but it has no root in the common life of man. At last, the crown of all, the chief corner-stone of the building, when the impressions of Nature and the reflections of the mind upon itself have been exhausted, Christianity arises in the world, seeming to stand in the same relation to the inferior religions that man does to the inferior animals.

When, instead of painting harsh contrasts between Christianity and other religions, we rather draw them together as nearly as truth will allow, many thoughts come into our minds about their relation to each other which are of great speculative interest as well as of practical importance. The joyful words of the Apostle: 'Is he the God of the Jews only, is he not also of the Gentiles?' have a new meaning for us. And this new application the Apostle himself may be regarded as having taught us, where he says: 'When the Gentiles which know not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these not having the law are a law unto themselves'. There have been many schoolmasters to bring men to Christ, and not the law of Moses only. Ecclesiastical history enlarges its borders to take in the preparations for the Gospel, the anticipations of it, the parallels with it: collecting the scattered gleams of truth which may have revealed themselves even to single individuals in remote ages and countries. We are no longer interested in making out a case against the heathen religions in the spirit of party,—the superiority of Christianity will appear sufficiently without that,—we rather rejoice that, at sundry times and in divers manners, by ways more or less akin to the methods of human knowledge, 'God spake in the past to the fathers', and that in the darkest ages, amid the most fanciful aberrations of

mythology, He left not Himself wholly without a witness between good and evil in the natural affections of mankind.

Some facts also begin to appear, which have hitherto been unknown or concealed. They are of two kinds, relating partly to the origin or development of the Jewish or Christian religion; partly also independent of them, yet affording remarkable parallels both to their outward form and to their inner life. Christianity is seen to have partaken much more of the better mind of the Gentile world than the study of Scripture only would have led us to conjecture: it has received, too, many of its doctrinal terms from the language of philosophy. The Jewish religion is proved to have incorporated with itself some elements which were not of Jewish origin; and the Jewish history begins to be explained by the analogy of other nations. The most striking fact of the second kind is found in a part of the world which Christianity can be scarcely said to have touched, and is of a date some centuries anterior to it. That there is a faith<sup>1</sup> which has a greater number of worshippers than all sects of Christians put together, which originated in a reformation of society, tyrannized over by tradition, spoiled by philosophy, torn asunder by caste—which might be described, in the words of Scripture, as a 'preaching of the Gospel to the poor'; that this faith, besides its more general resemblance to Christianity, has its incarnation, its monks, its saints, its hierarchy, its canonical books, its miracles, its councils, the whole system being 'full blown' before the Christian era; that the founder of this religion descended from a throne to teach the lesson of equality among men ('there is no distinction of' Chinese or Hindoo, Brahmin or Sudra, such at least was the indirect consequence of his doctrine) that, himself contented with nothing, he preached to his followers the virtues of poverty, self-denial, chastity, temperance, and that once, at least, he is described as 'taking upon himself the sins of mankind':—these are acts which, when once known, are not easily forgotten; they seem to open an undiscovered world to us, and to cast a new light on Christianity itself. And it 'harrows us with fear and wonder' to learn that this vast system, numerically the most universal or catholic of all religions, and, in many of its leading features, most like Christianity, is based, not on the hope of eternal life, but of complete annihilation.

The Greek world presents another parallel with the Gospel, which is also independent of it; less striking, yet coming nearer

<sup>1</sup>Buddhism

home, and sometimes overlooked because it is general and obvious. That the political virtues of courage, patriotism, and the like, have been received by Christian nations from a classical source is commonly admitted. Let us ask now the question, Whence is the love of knowledge, who first taught men that the pursuit of truth was a religious duty? Doubtless the words of one greater than Socrates come into our minds: 'For this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that they might know the truth'. But the truth here spoken of is of another and more mysterious kind; not truth in the logical or speculative sense of the word, nor even in its ordinary use. The earnest inquiry after the nature of things, the devotion of a life to such an inquiry, the forsaking all other good in the hope of acquiring some fragment of true knowledge—this is an instance of human virtue not to be found among the Jews, but among the Greeks. It is a phenomenon of religion, as well as of philosophy, that among the Greeks too there should have been those who, like the Jewish prophets, stood out from the world around them, who taught a lesson, like them, too exalted for the practice of mankind in general; who anticipated out of the order of nature the knowledge of future ages; whose very chance words and misunderstood modes of speech have moulded the minds of men in remote times and countries. And that these teachers of mankind, 'as they were finishing their course' in the decline of Paganism, like Jewish prophets, though unacquainted with Christianity, should have become almost Christian, preaching the truths which we sometimes hold to be 'foolishness to the Greek', as when Epictetus spoke of humility, or Seneca told of a God who had made of one blood all nations of the earth—is a sad and touching fact.

But it is not only the better mind of heathenism in east or west that affords parallels with the Christian religion: the corruptions of Christianity, its debasement by secular influences, its temporary decay at particular times or places, receive many illustrations from similar phenomena in ancient times and heathen countries. The manner in which the Old Testament has taken the place of the New; the tendency to absorb the individual life in the outward church; the personification of the principle of separation from the world in monastic orders; the accumulation of wealth with the profession of poverty; the spiritualism, or child-like faith, of one age, and the rationalism or formalism of another; many of the minute controversial disputes which exist between Christians respecting doctrines both of natural and revealed religion—all these errors or corruptions of

Christianity admit of being compared with similar appearances either in Buddhism or Mahomedanism. Is not the half-believing, half-sceptical attitude in which Socrates and others stood to the 'orthodox' pagan faith very similar to that in which philosophers, and in some countries educated men, generally have stood to established forms of Christianity? Is it only in Christian times that men have sought to consecrate art in the service of religion? Did not Paganism do so far more completely, or was it Plato only to whom moral ideas represented themselves in sensual forms? Has not the whole vocabulary of art, in modern times, become confused with that of morality? The modern historian of Greece and Rome draws our attention to other religious features in the ancient world, which are not without their counterpart in the modern—'old friends with new faces'—which a few words are enough to suggest. The aristocratic character of Paganism, the influence which it exerted over women, its galvanic efforts to restore the past, the ridicule with which the sceptic assails its errors, and the manner in which the antiquarians Pausanias and Dionysius contemptuously reply; also the imperfect attempts at reconciliation of old and new, found in such writers as Plutarch, and the obscure sense of the real connexion of the Pagan worship with political and social life, the popularity of its temporary hierophants; its panics, wonders, oracles, mysteries—these features make us aware that however unlike the true life of Christianity may have been even to the better mind of heathenism, the corruptions and weaknesses of Christianity have never been without a parallel under the sun.

Those religions which possess sacred books furnish some other curious, though exaggerated, likenesses of the use which has been sometimes made of the Jewish or Christian Scriptures. No believer in organic or verbal inspiration has applied more high-sounding titles to the Bible than the Brahmin or Mussulman to the *Koran* or the *Vedas*. They have been loaded with commentaries—buried under the accumulations of tradition; no care has been thought too great of their words and letters, while the original meaning has been lost, and even the language in which they were written ceased to be understood. Every method of interpretation has been practized upon them; logic and mysticism have elicited every possible sense; the aid of miracles has been called in to resolve difficulties and reconcile contradictions. And still, notwithstanding the perverseness with which they are interpreted, these half-understood books exercise a mighty spell; single verses, misapplied words, disputed texts,

have affected the social and political state of millions of mankind during a thousand or many thousand years. Even without reference to their contents, the mere name of these books has been a power in the Eastern world. Facts like these would be greatly misunderstood if they were supposed to reduce the Old and New Testament to the level of other sacred books, or Christianity to the level of other religions. But they may guard us against some forms of superstition which insensibly, almost innocently, spring up among Christians; and they reveal weaknesses of human nature, from which we can scarcely hope that our own age or country is exempt.

Let us conclude this digression by summing up the use of such inquiries; as a touchstone and witness of Christian truth; as bearing on our relations with the heathens themselves.

Christianity, in its way through the world, is ever taking up and incorporating with itself Jewish, secular, or even Gentile elements. And the use of the study of the heathen religions is just this: it teaches us to separate the externals or accidents of Christianity from its essence; its local, temporary type from its true spirit and life. These externals, which Christianity has in common with other religions of the East, may be useful, may be necessary, but they are not the truths which Christ came on earth to reveal. The fact of the possession of sacred books, and the claim which is made for them, that they are free from all error or imperfection, if admitted, would not distinguish the Christian from the Mahomedan faith. Most of the Eastern religions, again, have had vast hierarchies and dogmatic systems; neither is this a note of divinity. Also, they are witnessed to by signs and wonders; we are compelled to go further to find the characteristics of the Gospel of Christ. As the Apostle says; 'And yet I show you a more excellent way'—not in the Scriptures, nor in the Church, nor in a system of doctrines, nor in miracles, does Christianity consist, though some of these may be its necessary accompaniments or instruments, but in the life and teaching of Christ.

The study of 'comparative theology' not only helps to distinguish the accidents from the essence of Christianity; it also affords a new kind of testimony to its truth; it shows what the world was aiming at through many cycles of human history—what the Gospel alone fulfilled. The Gentile religions, from being enemies, became witnesses of the Christian faith. They are no longer adverse positions held by the powers of evil, but outworks or buttresses, like the courts of the Temple on Mount Sion, covering the holy place. Granting that some of the

doctrines and teachers of the heathen world were nearer the truth than we once supposed, such resemblances cause no alarm or uneasiness; we have no reason to fable that they are the fragments of some primeval revelation. We look forwards, not backwards; to the end, not to the beginning; not to the garden of Eden, but to the life of Christ. There is no longer any need to maintain a thesis; we have the perfect freedom and real peace which is attained by the certainty that we know all, and that nothing is kept back. Such was the position of Christianity in former ages; it was on a level with the knowledge of mankind. But in later years unworthy fear has too often paralyzed its teachers: instead of seeking to readjust its relations to the present state of history and science, they have clung in agony to the past. For the Gospel is the child of light; it lives in the light of this world; it has no shifts or concealments; there is no kind of knowledge which it needs to suppress; it allows us to see the good in all things; it does not forbid us to observe also the evil which has incrustated upon itself. It is willing that we should look calmly and steadily at all the facts of the history of religion. It takes no offence at the remark, that it has drawn into itself the good of other religions; that the laws and institutions of the Roman Empire have supplied the outer form, and heathen philosophy some of the inner mechanism which was necessary to its growth in the world. No violence is done to its spirit by the enumeration of the causes which have led to its success. It permits us also to note, that while it has purified the civilization of the West, there are soils of earth on which it seems hardly capable of living without becoming corrupt or degenerate. Such knowledge is innocent and a 'creature of God'. And considering how much of the bitterness of Christians against one another arises from ignorance and a false conception of the nature of religion, it is not chimerical to imagine that the historical study of religions may be a help to Christian charity. The least differences seem often to be the greatest; the perception of the greater differences makes the lesser insignificant. Living within the sphere of Christianity, it is good for us sometimes to place ourselves without; to turn away from 'the weak and beggarly elements' of worn-out controversies to contemplate the great phases of human existence. Looking at the religions of mankind, succeeding one another in a wonderful order, it is hard to narrow our minds to party or sectarian views in our own age or country. Had it been known that a dispute about faith and works existed among Buddhists, would not this knowledge have modified the great question of the Reformation? Such

studies have also a philosophical value as well as a Christian use. They may, perhaps, open to us a new page in the history of our own minds, as well as in the history of the human race. Mankind, in primitive times, seem at first sight very unlike ourselves: as we look upon them with sympathy and interest, a likeness begins to appear; in us too there is a piece of the primitive man; many of his wayward fancies are the caricatures of our errors or perplexities. If a clearer light is ever to be thrown either on the nature of religion or of the human mind, it will come, not from analyses of the individual or from inward experience, but from a study of the mental history of mankind, and especially of those ages in which human nature was fusile, still not yet cast in a mould, and rendered incapable of receiving new creations or impressions.

The study of the religions of the world has also a bearing on the present condition of the heathen. We cannot act upon men unless we understand them; we cannot raise or elevate their moral character unless we are able to draw from its concealment the seed of good which they already contain. It is a remarkable fact, that Christianity, springing up in the East, should have conquered the whole western world, and that in the East itself it should have scarcely extended its border, or even retained its original hold. 'Westward the course of Christianity has taken its way'; and now it seems as if the two ends of the world would no longer meet; as if differences of degree had extended to differences of kind in human nature, and that we cannot pass from one species to another. Whichever way we look, difficulties appear such as had no existence in the first ages; either barbarism, paling in the presence of a superior race, so that it can hardly be kept alive to receive Christianity, or the mummy-like civilization of China, which seems as though it could never become instinct with a new life, or Brahminism, outlasting in its pride many conquerors of the soil, or the nobler form of Mahomedanism; the religion of the patriarchs, as it were, overliving itself, preaching to the sons of Ishmael the God of Abraham, who had not yet revealed himself as man. These great systems of religious belief have been subject to some internal changes in a shifting world; the effect produced upon them from without is as yet scarcely perceptible. The attempt to move them is like a conflict between man and nature. And in some places it seems as if the wave had receded again after its advance, and some conversions have been dearly bought, either by the violence of persecution or the corruption or accommodation of the truth. Each sect of Christians has been apt to lend itself

to the illusion that the great organic differences of human nature might be bridged over, could the Gospel of Christ be preached to the heathen in that precise form in which it is received by themselves ; 'if we could but land in remote countries, full armed in that particular system or way after which we in England worship the God of our Fathers'. And often the words have been repeated, sometimes in the spirit of delusion, sometimes in that of faith and love: 'Lift up your eyes, and behold the fields that they are already white for harvest', when it was but a small corner of the field that was beginning to whiten, a few ears only which were ready for the reapers to gather.

And yet the command remains: 'Go forth and preach the Gospel to every creature'. Nor can any blessing be conceived greater than the spread of Christianity among heathen nations, nor any calling nobler or higher to which Christians can devote themselves. Why are we unable to fulfil this command in any effectual manner? Is it that the Gospel has had barriers set to it, and that the stream no longer overflows on the surrounding territory; that we have enough of this water for ourselves, but not enough for us and them? or that the example of nominal Christians, who are bent on their own trade or interest, destroys the lesson which has been preached by the ministers of religion? Yet the lives of believers did not prevent the spread of Christianity at Corinth and Ephesus. And it is hard to suppose that the religion which is true for ourselves has lost its vital power in the world.

The truth seems to be, not that Christianity has lost its power, but that we are seeking to propagate Christianity under circumstances which, during the eighteen centuries of its existence, it has never yet encountered. Perhaps there may have been a want of zeal, or discretion, or education in the preachers; sometimes there may have been too great a desire to impress on the mind of the heathen some peculiar doctrine, instead of the more general lesson of 'righteousness, temperance, judgment to come'. But however this may be, there is no reason to believe that even if a saint or apostle could rise from the dead, he would produce by his preaching alone, without the use of other means, any wide or deep impression on India or China. To restore life to those countries is a vast and complex work, in which many agencies have to co-operate—political, industrial, social; and missionary efforts, though a blessed, are but a small part; and the Government is not the less Christian because it seeks to rule a heathen nation on principles of truth and justice only. Let us not measure this great work by the number of communicants or converts.



Even when wholly detached from Christianity, the true spirit of Christianity may animate it. The extirpation of crime, the administration of justice, the punishment of falsehood, may be regarded, without a figure of speech, as 'the word of the Lord' to a weak and deceitful people. Lessons of purity and love too, flow insensibly out of improvement in the relations of social life. It is the disciple of Christ, not Christ Himself, who would forbid us to give these to the many, because we can only give the Gospel to a very few. For it is of the millions, not of the thousands, in India that we must first give an account. Our relations to the heathen are different from those of Christians in former ages, and our progress in their conversion slower. The success which attends our efforts may be disparagingly compared with that of Boniface or Augustine ; but if we look a little closer, we shall see no reason to regret that Providence has placed in our hands other instruments for the spread of Christianity besides the zeal of heroes and martyrs. The power to convert multitudes by a look or a word has passed away ; but God has given us another means of ameliorating the condition of mankind, by acting on their circumstances, which works extensively rather than intensively, and is in some respects safer and less liable to abuse. The mission is one of governments rather than of churches or individuals. And if, in carrying it out, we seem to lose sight of some of the distinctive marks of Christianity, let us not doubt that the increase of justice and mercy, the growing sense of truth, even the progress of industry, are in themselves so many steps towards the kingdom of heaven.

In the direct preaching of the Gospel, no help can be greater than that which is gained from a knowledge of the heathen religions. The resident in heathen countries readily observes the surface of the world ; he has no difficulty in learning the habits of the natives ; he avoids irritating their fears or jealousies. It requires a greater effort to understand the mind of a people ; to be able to rouse or calm them ; to sympathize with them, and yet to rule them. But it is a higher and more commanding knowledge still to comprehend their religion, not only in its decline and corruption, but in its origin and idea—to understand that which they misunderstand, to appeal to that which they reverence against themselves, to turn back the currents of thought and opinion which have flowed in their veins for thousands of years. Such is the kind of knowledge which St Paul had when to the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might win some ; which led him while placing the new and old in irreconcilable opposition, to bring forth the new out of the treasure-house of the old. No

religion, at present existing in the world, stands in the same relation to Christianity that Judaism once did ; there is no other religion which is prophetic or anticipatory of it. But neither is there any religion which does not contain some idea of truth, some notion of duty or obligation, some sense of dependence on God and brotherly love to man, some human feeling of home or country. As in the vast series of the animal creation, with its many omissions and interruptions, the eye of the naturalist sees a kind of continuity,—some elements of the higher descending into the lower, rudiments of the lower appearing in the higher also—so the Christian philosopher, gazing on the different races and religions of mankind, seems to see in them a spiritual continuity, not without the thought crossing him that the God who has made of one blood all the nations of the earth may yet renew in them a common life, and that our increasing knowledge of the present and past history of the world, and the progress of civilization itself, may be the means which He has provided, working not always in the way which we expect—‘that His banished ones be not expelled from Him’.

§ 2. Natural religion, in the sense in which St Paul appeals to its witness, is confined within narrower limits. It is a feeling rather than a philosophy ; and rests not on arguments, but on impressions of God in nature. The Apostle, in the first chapter of the *Romans*, does not reason from first causes or from final causes ; abstractions like these would not have been understood by him. Neither is he taking an historical survey of the religions of mankind ; he touches, in a word only, on those who changed the glory of God into the ‘likeness of man, and birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things’ (*Rom.*, i, 23), as on the differences of nations, in *Acts*, xviii, 26. More truly may we describe Him in the language of the Psalmist, the very vacancy of which has a peculiar meaning : ‘He lifts up his eyes to the hills from whence cometh his salvation’. He wishes to inspire other men with that consciousness of God in all things which he himself feels : ‘in a dry and thirsty land where no water is’ he would raise their minds to think of Him ‘who gave them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons’ ; in the city of Pericles and Phidias he bids them turn from gilded statues and temples formed with hands, to the God who made of one blood all the nations of the earth, ‘who is not far from every one of us’. Yet it is observable that he also begins by connecting his own thoughts with theirs, quoting ‘their own poets’, and taking occasion, from an

inscription which he found in their streets, to declare 'the mystery which was once hidden, but now revealed'.

The appeal to the witness of God in nature has passed from the Old Testament into the New; it is one of the many points which the *Epistles* of St Paul and the *Psalms* and Prophets have in common. 'The invisible things from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made' is another way of saying 'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork'. Yet the conception of the Old Testament is not the same with that of the New: in the latter we seem to be more disengaged from the things of sense; the utterance of the former is more that of feeling, and less of reflection. One is the poetry of a primitive age, full of vivid immediate impressions; in the other Nature is more distant—the freshness of the first vision of earth has passed away. The Deity Himself, in the Hebrew Scriptures, has a visible form: as He appeared 'with the body of heaven in his clearness'; as He was seen by the prophet Ezekiel out of the midst of the fire and the whirlwind, 'full of eyes within and without, and the spirit of the living creature in the wheels'. But in the New Testament, 'no man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him'. And this difference leads to a further difference in His relation to His works. In what we term Nature, the prophet beheld only the covering cherubim that veil the face of God: as He moves, earth moves to meet Him; 'He maketh the winds His angels', 'the heavens also bow before Him'. His voice, as the Psalmist says, is heard in the storm: 'The Highest gives His thunder; at Thy chiding, O Lord, the foundations of the round world are discovered'. The wonders of creation are not ornaments or poetical figures, strewed over the pages of the Old Testament by the hand of the artist, but the frame in which it consists. And yet in this material garb the moral and spiritual nature of God is never lost sight of: in the conflict of the elements He is the free Lord over them; at His breath—the least exertion of His power—'they come and flee away'. He is spirit, not light—a person, not an element or principle; though creating all things by His word, and existing without reference to them, yet also, in His condescension, the God of the Jewish nation, and of individuals who serve Him. The terrible imagery in which the Psalmist delights to array His power is not inconsistent with the gentlest feelings of love and trust, such as are also expressed in the passage just now quoted: 'I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength'. God is in Nature

because He is near also to the cry of His servants. The heart of man expands in His presence ; he fears to die lest he should be taken from it. There is nothing like this in any other religion in the world. No Greek or Roman ever had the consciousness of love towards his God. No other sacred books can show a passage displaying such a range of feeling as the eighteenth or twenty-ninth Psalm—so awful a conception of the majesty of God, so true and tender a sense of His righteousness and loving-kindness. It is the same God who wields Nature, who also brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt ; who, even though the mother desert ' her sucking child ', will not ' forget the work of His hands '.

But the God of Nature in the Old Testament is not the God of storms or of battles only, but of peace and repose. Sometimes a sort of confidence fills the breast of the Psalmist, even in that land of natural convulsions : ' He hath set the round world so fast that it cannot be moved '. At other times the same peace seems to diffuse itself over the scenes of daily life : ' The hills stand round about Jerusalem, even so is the Lord round about them that fear Him '. ' He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : He leadeth me beside the still waters '. Then again the Psalmist wonders at the contrast between man and the other glories of creation : ' When I consider the heavens, the works of Thy hands, the moon and the stars that Thou hast ordained ; what is man that Thou art mindful of him ? or the son of man that Thou visitest him ? ' Yet these ' glories ' are the images also of a higher glory ; Jerusalem itself is transfigured into a city of the clouds, and the tabernacle and temple become the pavilion of God on high. And the dawn of day in the prophecies, as well as in the *Epistles*, is the light which is to shine ' for the healing of the nations '. There are other passages in which the thought of the relation of God to nature calls forth a sort of exulting irony, and the prophet speaks of God, not so much as governing the world, as looking down upon it and taking His pastime in it : ' It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the heavens, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers ' ; or ' He measureth the waters in the hollow of His hand ' ; or ' He taketh up the isles as a very little thing ' ; the feeling of which may be compared with the more general language of St Paul : ' We are the clay and He the potter '. The highest things on earth reach no farther than to suggest the reflection of their inferiority : ' Behold even the sun, and it shineth not ; and the moon is not pure in His sight '.

It is hard to say how far such meditations belong only to

particular ages, or to particular temperaments in our own. Doubtless, the influence of natural scenery differs with difference of climate, pursuits, education. 'The God of the hills is not the God of the valleys also'; that is to say, the aspirations of the human heart are roused more by the singular and uncommon, than by the quiet landscape which presents itself in our own neighbourhood. The sailor has a different sense of the vastness of the great deep and the infinity of the heaven above, from what is possible to another. Dwellers in cities, no less than the inhabitants of the desert, gaze upon the stars with different feelings from those who see the ever-varying forms of the seasons. What impression is gathered, or what lesson conveyed, seems like matter of chance or fancy. The power of these sweet influences often passes away when language comes between us and them. Yet they are not mere dreams of our own creation. He who has lost, or has failed to acquire, this interest in the beauty of the world around, is without one of the greatest of earthly blessings. The voice of God in Nature calls us away from selfish cares into the free air and the light of day. There, as in a world the face of which is not marred by human passion, we seem to feel 'that the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest'.

It is impossible that our own feeling towards Nature in the present day can be the same with that of the Psalmist; neither is that of the Psalmist the same with that of the Apostle; while, in the *Book of Job* and *Ecclesiastes* we seem to catch the echo of a strain different from either. To us, God is not in the whirlwind nor in the storm, nor in the earthquake, but in the still small voice. Is it not for the attempt to bring God nearer to us in the works of Nature than we can truly conceive Him to be, that a poet of our own age has been subjected to the charge of pantheism? God has removed Himself out of our sight, that He may give us a greater idea of the immensity of His power. Perhaps it is impossible for us to have the wider and the narrower conception of God at the same time. We cannot see Him equally in the accidents of the world, when we think of Him as identified with its laws. But there is another way into His presence through our own hearts. He has given us the more circuitous path of knowledge; He has not closed against us the door of faith. He has enabled us, not merely to gaze with the eye on the forms and colours of Nature, but in a measure also to understand its laws, to wander over space and time in the contemplation of its mechanism, and yet to return again to 'the meanest flower that breathes', for thoughts such as the other wonders of earth and sky are unable to impart

It is a simpler, not a lower, lesson which we gather from the Apostle. First, he teaches that in Nature there is something to draw us from the visible to the invisible. The world to the Gentiles also had seemed full of innumerable deities ; it is really full of the presence of Him who made it. Secondly, the Apostle teaches the universality of God's providence over the whole earth. He covered it with inhabitants, to whom He gave their times and places of abode, 'that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find him'. They are one family, 'His offspring', notwithstanding the varieties of race, language, religion. As God is one, even so man is one in a common human nature—in the universality of sin, no less than the universality of redemption. A third lesson is the connection of immorality and idolatry. They who lower the nature of God lower the nature of man also. Greek philosophy fell short of these lessons. Often as Plato speaks of the myths and legends of the gods, he failed to perceive the immorality of a religion of sense. Still less had any Greek imagined a brotherhood of all mankind, or a dispensation of God reaching backwards and forwards over all time. Its limitation was an essential principle of Greek life ; it was confined to a narrow spot of earth, and to small cities ; it could not include others besides Greeks ; its gods were not gods of the world, but of Greece.

Aspects of Nature in different ages have changed before the eye of man ; at times fruitful of many thoughts ; at other times either unheeded or fading into insignificance in comparison of the inner world. When the Apostle spoke of the visible things which 'witness of the divine power and glory', it was not the beauty of particular spots which he recalled ; his eye was not satisfied with seeing the fairness of the country any more than the majesty of cities. He did not study the flittings of shadows on the hills, or even the movements of the stars in their courses. The plainest passages of the book of Nature were, equally with the sublimest, the writing of a Divine hand. Neither was it upon scenes of earth that he was looking when he spoke of the 'whole creation groaning together until now'. Whatever associations of melancholy or pity may attach to places or states of the heavens, or to the condition of the inferior animals who seem to suffer for our sakes ; it is not in these that the Apostle traces the indications of a ruined world, but in the misery and distraction of the heart of man. And the prospect on which he loves to dwell is not that of the promised land, as Moses surveyed it far and wide from the top of Pisgah, but the human race itself, the great family in heaven and earth, of which Christ is the head, reunited to the

God who made it, when 'there shall be neither barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but all one in Christ', the Apostle himself also waiting for the fuller manifestation of the sons of God, and sometimes carrying his thoughts yet further to that mysterious hour, when 'the Son shall be subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all'.

When thoughts like these fill the mind, there is little room for reflection on the world without. Even the missionary in modern times hardly cares to go out of his way to visit a picturesque country or the monuments of former ages. He is 'determined to know one thing only, Christ crucified'. Of the beauties of creation, his chief thought is that they are the work of God. He does not analyze them by rules of taste, or devise material out of them for literary discourse. The Apostle, too, in the abundance of his revelations, has an eye turned inward on another world. It is not that he is dead to Nature, but that it is out of his way; not as in the Old Testament, the veil or frame of the Divine presence, but only the background of human nature and of revelation. When speaking of the heathen, it comes readily into his thoughts; it never seems to occur to him in connection with the work of Christ. He does not read mysteries in the leaves of the forest, or see the image of the cross in the forms of the tree, or find miracles of design in the complex structures of animal life. His thoughts respecting the works of God are simpler, and also deeper. The child and the philosopher alike hear a witness in the first chapter of the *Romans*, or in the discourse of the Apostle on Mars' hill, or at Lystra, which the mystic fancies of Neoplatonism, and the modern evidences of natural theology, fail to convey to them.

§ 3. In the common use of language natural religion is opposed to revealed. That which men know, or seem to know, of themselves, which if the written word were to be destroyed would still remain, which existed prior to revelation, and which might be imagined to survive it, which may be described as general rather than special religion, as Christianity rationalized into morality, which speaks of God, but not of Christ—of nature, but not of grace—has been termed natural religion. Philosophical arguments for the being of a God are comprehended under the same term. It is also used to denote a supposed primitive or patriarchal religion, whether based in a primeval revelation or not, from which the mythologies or idolatries of the heathen world are conceived to be offshoots.

The line has been sometimes sharply drawn between natural and revealed religion ; in other ages of the world, the two have been allowed to approximate, or be almost identified with each other. Natural religion has been often depressed with a view to the exaltation of revealed ; the feebleness of the one seeming to involve a necessity for the other. Natural religion has sometimes been regarded as the invention of human reason ; at other times, as the decaying sense of a primeval revelation. Yet natural and revealed religion, in the sense in which it is attempted to oppose them, are contrasts rather of words than of ideas. For who can say where the one begins and the other ends ? Who will determine how many elements of Scriptural truth enter into modern philosophy or the opinions of the world in general ? Who can analyze how much, even in a Christian country, is really of heathen origin ? Revealed religion is ever taking the form of the voice of nature within ; experience is ever modifying our application of the truths of Scripture. The ideal of Christian life is more easily distinguishable from the ideal of Greek and Roman, than the elements of opinion and belief which have come from a Christian source are from those which come from a secular or heathen one. Education itself tends to obliterate the distinction. The customs, laws, principles of a Christian nation may be regarded either as a compromise between the two, or as a harmony of them. We cannot separate the truths of Christianity from Jewish or heathen anticipations of them ; nor can we say how far the common sense or morality of the present day is indirectly dependent on the Christian religion.

And if, turning away from the complexity of human life in our own age to the beginning of things, we try to conceive revelation in its purity before it came into contact with other influences, or mingled in the great tide of political and social existence, we are still unable to distinguish between natural and revealed religion. Our difficulty is like the old Aristotelian question, how to draw the line between the moral and intellectual faculties. Let us imagine a first moment at which revelation came into the world ; there must still have been some prior state which made revelation possible : in other words, revealed religion presupposes natural. The mind was not a *tabula rasa*, on which the characters of truth had to be inscribed ; that is a mischievous notion, which only perplexes our knowledge of the origin of things, whether in individuals or in the race. If we say that this prior state is a Divine preparation for the giving of the Law of Moses, or the spread of Christianity, the difference becomes one of degree which admits of no sharp contrast. Revealed religion has already



taken the place of natural, and natural religion extended itself into the province of revealed. Many persons who are fond of discovering traces of revelation in the religions of the Gentile world, resent the intrusion of natural elements into Scripture or Christianity. Natural religion they are willing to see identified with revealed, but not revealed with natural; all Nature may be a miracle, but miracles are not reducible to the course of Nature. But here is only a play between words which derive their meaning from contrast; the phenomena are the same, but we read them by a different light. And sometimes it may not be without advantage to lay aside the two modes of expression, and think only of that 'increasing purpose which through the ages ran'. Religious faith strikes its roots deeper into the past, and wider over the world, when it acknowledges Nature as well as Scripture.

But although the opposition of natural and revealed religion is an opposition of abstractions, to which no facts really correspond, the term natural religion may be conveniently used to describe that aspect or point of view in which religion appears when separated from Judaism or Christianity. It will embrace all conceptions of religion or morality which are not consciously derived from the Old or New Testament. The favourite notion of a common or patriarchal religion need not be excluded. Natural religion, in this comprehensive sense, may be divided into two heads, which the ambiguity of the word nature has sometimes helped to confuse. First, (i) the religion of nature before revelation, such as may be supposed to have existed among the patriarchs, or to exist still among primitive peoples, who have not yet been enlightened by Christianity, or debased by idolatry; such (ii) more truly, as the religions of the Gentile world were and are. Secondly, the religion of nature in a Christian country; either the evidences of religion which are derived from a source independent of the written word, or the common sense of religion and morality, which affords a rule of life to those who are not the subjects of special Christian influences.

§i) Natural religion in the first sense is an idea and not a fact. The same tendency in man which has made him look fondly on a golden age, has made him look back also to a religion of nature. Like the memory of childhood, the thought of the past has a strange power over us; imagination lends it a glory which is not its own. What can be more natural than that the shepherd, wandering over the earth beneath the wide heavens, should ascend in thought to the throne of the Invisible? There is a refreshment to the fancy in thinking of the morning of the

world's day, when the sun arose pure and bright, ere the clouds of error darkened the earth. Everywhere, as a fact, the first inhabitants of earth of whom history has left a memorial are sunk in helpless ignorance. Yet there must have been a time, it is conceived, of which there are no memorials, earlier still; when the Divine image was not yet lost, when men's wants were few and their hearts innocent, ere cities had taken the place of fields, or art of nature. The revelation of God to the first father of the human race must have spread itself in an ever-widening circle to his posterity. We pierce through one layer of superstition to another, in the hope of catching the light beyond, like children digging to find the sun in the bosom of the earth.

The origin of an error so often illustrates the truth, that it is worth while to pause for an instant and consider the source of this fallacy, which in all ages has exerted a great influence on mankind, reproducing itself in many different forms among heathen as well as Christian writers. In technical language, it might be described as the fallacy of putting what is intelligible in the place of what is true. It is easy to draw an imaginary picture of a golden or a pastoral age, such as poetry has always described it. The mode of thought is habitual and familiar, the phrases which delineate it are traditional, handed on from one set of poets to another, repeated by one school of theologians to the next. It is a different task to imagine the old world as it truly was, that is, as it appears to us, dimly yet certainly, by the unmistakable indications of language and of mythology. It is hard to picture scenes of external nature unlike what we have ever beheld: but it is harder far so to lay aside ourselves as to imagine an inner world unlike our own, forms of belief, not simply absurd, but indescribable and unintelligible to us. No one, probably, who has not realized the differences of the human mind in different ages and countries, either by contact with heathen nations or the study of old language and mythology, with the help of such a parallel as childhood offers to the infancy of the world, will be willing to admit them in their full extent.

Instead of this difficult and laborious process, we readily conceive of man in the earliest stages of society as not different, but only less than we are. We suppose him deprived of the arts, unacquainted with the truths of Christianity, without the knowledge obtained from books, and yet only unlike us in the simplicity of his tastes and habitudes. We generalize what we are ourselves, and drop out the particular circumstances and details of our lives, and then suppose ourselves to have before us the dweller in Mesopotamia in the days of Abraham, or the patriarchs

going down to gather corn in Egypt. This imaginary picture of a patriarchal religion has had such charms for some minds, that they have hoped to see it realized on the wreck of Christianity itself. They did not perceive that they were deluding themselves with a vacant dream which has never yet filled the heart of man.

Philosophers have illustrated the origin of government by a picture of mankind meeting together in a large plain, to determine the rights of governors and subjects ; in like manner we may assist imagination, by conceiving the multitude of men with their tribes, races, features, languages, convoked in the plains of the East, to hear from some inspired legislator as Moses, or from the voice of God Himself, a revelation about God and Nature, and their future destiny ; such a revelation in the first day of the world's history as the day of judgment will be at the last. Let us fix our minds, not on the Giver of the revelation, but on the receivers of it. Must there not have been in them some common sense, or faculty, or feeling, which made them capable of receiving it ? Must there not have been an apprehension which made it a revelation to them ? Must they not all first have been of one language and one speech ? And, what is implied by this, must they not all have had one mental structure, and received the same impressions from external objects, the same lesson from Nature ? Or, to put the hypothesis in another form, suppose that by some electric power the same truth could have been made to sound in the ears and flash before the eyes of all, would they not have gone their ways, one to tents, another to cities ; one to be a tiller of the ground, another to be a feeder of sheep ; one to be a huntsman, another to be a warrior ; one to dwell in woods and forests, another in boundless plains ; one in valleys, one on mountains, one beneath the liquid heaven of Greece and Asia, another in the murky regions of the north ? And amid all this diversity of habits, occupations, scenes, climates, what common truth of religion could we expect to remain while man was man, the creature in a great degree of outward circumstances ? Still less reason would there be to expect the preservation of a primeval truth throughout the world, if we imagine the revelation made, not to the multitude of men, but to a single individual, and not committed to writing for above two thousand years.

(ii) The theory of a primitive tradition, common to all mankind, has only to be placed distinctly before the mind, to make us aware that it is the fabric of a vision. But, even if it were conceivable, it would be inconsistent with facts. Ancient history

says nothing of a general religion, but of particular national ones ; of received beliefs about places and persons, about animal life, about the sun, moon, and stars, about the Divine essence permeating the world, about gods in the likeness of men appearing in battles and directing the course of states, about the shades below, about sacrifices, purifications, initiations, magic, mysteries. These were the religions of nature, which in historical times have received from custom also a second nature. Early poetry shows us the same religions in a previous stage, while they are still growing, and fancy is freely playing around the gods of its own creation. Language and mythology carry us a step further back into a mental world yet more distant and more unlike our own. The world is a prison of sense, in which outward objects take the place of ideas ; in which morality is a fact of nature, and ' wisdom at one entrance quite shut out '. Human beings in that pre-historic age seem to have had only a kind of limited intelligence ; they were the slaves, as we should say, of association. They were rooted in particular spots, or wandered up and down upon the earth, confusing themselves and God and Nature, gazing timidly on the world around, starting at their very shadows, and seeing in all things a superhuman power at the mercy of which they were. They had no distinction of body and soul, mind and matter, physical and moral. Their conceptions were neither here nor there ; neither sensible objects, nor symbols of the unseen. Their gods were very near ; the neighbouring hill or passing stream, brute matter as we regard it, was to them a divinity, because it seemed inspired with a life like their own. They could not have formed an idea of the whole earth, much less of the God who made it. Their mixed modes of thought, their figures of speech, which are not figures, their personifications of nature, their reflections of the individual upon the world, and of the world upon the individual, the omnipresence to them of the sensuous and visible, indicate an intellectual state which it is impossible for us, with our regular divisions of thought, even to conceive. We must raze from the table of the mind their language, ere they could become capable of a universal religion.

But although we find no vestiges of a primeval revelation, and cannot imagine how such a revelation could have been possible consistently with those indications of the state of man which language and mythology supply, it is true, nevertheless, that the primitive peoples of mankind have a religious principle common to all. Religion, rather than reason, is the faculty of man in the earliest stage of his existence. Reverence for powers above him is the first principle which raises the individual out of

himself ; the germ of political order, and probably also of social life. It is the higher necessity of nature, as hunger and the animal passions are the lower. 'The clay' falls before the rising dawn ; it may stumble over stocks and stones ; but it is struggling upwards into a higher day. The worshipper is drawn as by a magnet to some object out of himself. He is weak and must have a god ; he has the feeling of a slave towards his master, of a child towards its parents, of the lower animals towards himself. The Being whom he serves is, like himself, passionate and capricious ; he sees him starting up everywhere in the unmeaning accidents of life. The good which he values himself he attributes to him ; there is no proportion in his ideas ; the great power of nature is the lord also of sheep and oxen. Sometimes, with childish joy, he invites the god to drink of his beverage or eat of his food ; at other times, the orgies which he enacts before him, lead us seriously to ask the question ' whether religion may not in truth have been a kind of madness '. He propitiates him and is himself soothed and comforted ; again he is at his mercy, and propitiates him again. So the dream of life is rounded to the poor human creature : incapable as he is of seeing his true Father, religion seems to exercise over him a fatal overpowering influence ; the religion of nature we cannot call it, for that would of itself lead to a misconception, but the religion of the place in which he lives, of the objects which he sees, of the tribe to which he belongs, of the animal forms which range in the wilds around him, mingling strangely with the witness of his own spirit that there is in the world a Being above him.

Out of this troubled and perplexed state of the human fancy the great religions of the world arose, all of them in different degrees affording a rest to the mind, and reducing to rule and measure the wayward impulses of human nature. All of them had a history in antecedent ages ; there is no stage in which they do not offer indications of an earlier religion which preceded them. Whether they came into being, like some geological formations, by slow deposits, or, like others, by the shock of an earthquake, that is, by some convulsion and settlement of the human mind, is a question which may be suggested, but cannot be answered. The Hindu Pantheon, even in the antique form in which the world of deities is presented in the *Vedas*, implies a growth of fancy and ceremonial which may have continued for thousands of years. Probably at a much earlier period than we are able to trace them, religions, like languages, had their distinctive characters with corresponding differences in the first rude constitution of society. As in the case of languages, it is a

fair subject of inquiry, whether they do not all mount up to some elementary type in which they were more nearly allied to sense ; a primeval religion, in which we may imagine the influence of Nature was analogous to the first impressions of the outward world on the infant's wandering eyesight, and the earliest worship may be compared with the first use of signs or stammering of speech. Such a religion we may conceive as springing from simple instinct ; yet an instinct higher, even in its lowest degree, than the instinct of the animal creation ; in which the fear of Nature combined with the assertion of sway over it, which had already a law of progress, and was beginning to set bounds to the spiritual chaos. Of this aboriginal state we only 'entertain conjecture' ; it is beyond the horizon, even when the eye is strained to the uttermost.

But if the first origin of the heathen religions is in the clouds, their decline, though a phenomenon with which we are familiar in history, or which in some parts of the world we are living witnesses, is also obscure to us. The kind of knowledge that we have of them is like our knowledge of the ways of animals ; we see and observe, but we cannot get inside them ; we cannot think or feel with their worshippers. Most or all of them are in a state of decay ; they have lost their life or creative power ; once adequate to the wants of man, they have ceased to be so for ages. Naturally we should imagine that the religion itself would pass away when its meaning was no longer understood ; that with the spirit, the letter too would die ; that when the circumstances of a nation changed, the rites of worship to which they had given birth would be forgotten. The reverse is the fact. Old age affords examples of habits which become insane and inveterate at a time when they have no longer an object ; that is an image of the antiquity of religions. Modes of worship, rules of purification, set forms of words, cling with a greater tenacity when they have no meaning or purpose. The habit of a week or a month may be thrown off ; not the habit of a thousand years. The hand of the past lies heavily on the present in all religions ; in the East it is a yoke which has never been shaken off. Empire, freedom, among the educated classes belief may pass away, and yet the routine of ceremonial continues ; the political glory of a religion may be set at the time when its power over the minds of men is most ineradicable.

One of our first inquiries in reference to the elder religions of the world is how we may adjust them to our own moral and religious ideas. Moral elements seem at first sight to be wholly wanting in them. In the modern sense of the term, they are

neither moral nor immoral, but natural ; they have no idea of right and wrong, as distinct from the common opinion or feeling of their age and country. No action in Homer, however dishonourable or treacherous, calls forth moral reprobation. Neither gods nor men are expected to present any ideal of justice or virtue ; their power or splendour may be the theme of the poet's verse, not their truth or goodness. The only principal on which the Homeric deities reward mortals, is in return for gifts and sacrifices, or from personal attachment. A later age made a step forwards in morality and backwards at the same time ; it acquired clearer ideas of right and wrong, but found itself encumbered with conceptions of fate and destiny. The vengeance of the Eumenides has but a rude analogy with justice ; the personal innocence of the victim whom the gods pursued is a part of the interest, in some instances, of Greek tragedy. Higher and holier thoughts of the Divine nature appear in Pindar and Sophocles, and philosophy sought to make religion and mythology the vehicles of moral truth. But it was no part of their original meaning.

Yet, in a lower sense, it is true that the heathen religions, even in their primitive form, are not destitute of morality. Their morality is unconscious morality, not 'man a law to himself', but 'man bound by the will of a superior being'. Ideas of right and wrong have no place in them, yet the first step has been made from sense and appetite into the ideal world. He who denies himself something, who offers up a prayer, who practises a penance, performs an act, not of necessity, nor of choice, but of duty ; he does not simply follow the dictates of passion, though he may not be able to give a reason for the performance of his act. He whose God comes first in his mind has an element within him which in a certain degree sanctifies his life by raising him above himself. He has some common interest with other men, some unity in which he is comprehended with them. There is a preparation for thoughts yet higher ; he contrasts the permanence of divine and the fleeting nature of human things ; while the generations of men pass away 'like leaves', the form of his God is unchanging, and grows not old.

Differences in modes of thought render it difficult for us to appreciate what spiritual elements lurked in disguise among the primitive peoples of mankind. Many allowances must be made before we judge them by our own categories. They are not to be censured for indecency because they had symbols which to after ages became indecent and obscene, Neither were they mere Fetish worshippers because they use sensuous expressions.

Religion, like language, in early ages takes the form of sense, but that form of sense is also the embodiment of thought. The stream and the animal are not adored by man in heathen countries because they are destitute of life or reason, but because they seem to him full of mystery and power. It was with another feeling than that of a worshipper of matter that the native of the East first prostrated himself before the rising sun, in whose beams his nature seemed to revive, and his soul to be absorbed. The most childish superstitions are often nothing more than misunderstood relics of antiquity. There are the remains of Fetishism in the charms and cures of Christian countries; no one regards the peasant who uses them as a Fetish worshipper. Many other confusions have their parallel among ourselves; if we only knew it. For indeed our own ideas in religion, as in everything else, seem clearer to us than they really are, because they are our own. To expect the heathen religions to conform to other modes of thought, is as if the inhabitant of one country were to complain of the inhabitant of another for not speaking the same language with him. Our whole attitude towards Nature is different from theirs: to us all is 'law'; to them it was all life and fancy, inconsecutive as a dream. Nothing is more deeply fixed to us than the dualism of body and soul, mind and matter; they knew of no such distinction. But we cannot infer from this a denial of the existence of mind or soul; because they use material images, it would be ridiculous to describe the Psalmist or the prophet Isaiah as materialists; whether in heathen poets or in the Jewish Scriptures, such language belongs to an intermediate state, which has not yet distinguished the spheres of the spiritual and the sensuous. Childhood has been often used as the figure of such a state, but the figure is only partially true, for the childhood of the human race is the childhood of grown-up men, and in the child of the nineteenth century there is a piece also of the man of the nineteenth century. Less obvious differences in speech and thought are more fallacious. The word 'God' means something as dissimilar among ourselves and the Greeks as can possibly be imagined; even in Greek alone the difference of meaning can hardly be exaggerated. It includes beings as unlike each other as the muscular, eating and drinking deities of Homer, and the abstract Being of Parmenides, or the Platonic idea of good. All religions of the world use it, however different their conceptions of God may be —polytheistic, pantheistic, monotheistic: it is universal, and also individual; or rather, from being universal, it has become individual, a logical process which has quickened and helped to develop the theological one. Other



words, such as prayer, sacrifice, expiation, in like manner vary in meaning with the religion of which they are the expression. The Homeric sacrifice is but a feast of gods and men, destitute of any sacrificial import. Under expiations for sin are included two things which to us are distinct, atonement for moral guilt and accidental pollution. Similar ambiguities occur in the ideas of a future life. The sapless ghosts in Homer are neither souls nor bodies, but a sort of shadowy beings. A like uncertainty extends in the Eastern religions to some of the first principles of thought and being : whether the negative is not also a positive ; whether the mind of man is not also God ; whether this world is not another ; whether privation of existence may not in some sense be existence still.

These are a few of the differences for which we have to allow in a comparison of our own and other times and countries. We must say to ourselves, at every step, human nature in that age was unlike the human nature with which we are acquainted, in language, in modes of thought, in morality, in its conception of the world. Yet it was more like than these differences alone would lead us to suppose. The feelings of men draw nearer than their thoughts ; their natural affections are more uniform than their religious systems. Marriage, burial, worship, are at least common to all nations. There never has been a time in which the human race was absolutely without social laws ; in which there was no memory of the past ; no reverence for a higher power. More defined religious ideas, where the understanding comes into play, grow more different ; it is by comparison they are best explained ; like natural phenomena, they derive their chief light from analogy with each other. Travelling in thought from China, by way of India, Persia, and Egypt, to the northern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, we distinguish a succession of stages in which the worship of Nature is developed ; in China as the rule or form of political life, almost grovelling on the level of sense ; in India rising into regions of thought and fancy, and allowing a corresponding play in the institutions and character of the people ; in Egypt wrapping itself in the mystery of antiquity, becoming the religion of death and of the past ; in Persia divided between light and darkness, good and evil, the upper and the under world ; in Phœnicia, fierce and licentious, imbued with the spirit of conquest and colonization. These are the primary strata of the religions of mankind, often shifting their position, and sometimes overlapping each other ; they are distinguished from the secondary strata, as the religions of nations from the inspirations of individuals. Thrown into the form of

abstraction, they express the various degrees of distinctness with which man realizes his own existence or that of a Divine Being and the relations between them. But they are also powers which have shaped the course of events in the world. The secret is contained in them, why one nation has been free, another a slave ; why one nation has dwelt like ants upon a hillock, another has swept over the earth ; why one nation has given up its life almost without a struggle, while another has been hewn limb from limb in the conflict with its conquerors. All these religions contributed to the polytheism of Greece ; some elements derived from them being absorbed in the first origin of the Greek religion and language, others acting by later contact, some also by contrast.

Nature through five cycles ran,  
And in the sixth she moulded man.

We may conclude this portion of our subject with a few remarks on the Greek and Roman religions, which have a peculiar interest to us for several reasons : first, because they have exercised a vast influence on modern Europe, the one through philosophy, the other through law, and both through literature and poetry ; secondly, because, almost alone of the heathen religions, they came into contact with early Christianity ; thirdly, because they are the religions of ancient, as Christianity is of modern civilization.

The religion of Greece is remarkable for being a literature as well as a religion. Its deities are 'nameless' to us before Homer ; to the Greek himself it began with the Olympic family. Whatever dim notions existed of chaos and primeval night—of struggles for ascendancy between the elder and younger gods, these fables are buried out of sight before Greek mythology begins. The Greek came forth at the dawn of day, himself a youth in the youth of the world, drinking in the life of nature at every pore. The form which his religion took was fixed by the Homeric poems, which may be regarded as standing in the same relation to the religion of Greece as sacred books to other forms of religion. It cannot be said that they aroused the conscience of men ; the more the Homeric poems are considered, the more evident it becomes that they have no inner life of morality like Hebrew prophecy, no Divine presence of good slowly purging away the mist that fills the heart of man. What they implanted, what they preserved in the Greek nation, was not the sense of truth or right, but the power of conception and expression—harmonies of language and thought which enabled man to clothe his ideas

in forms of everlasting beauty. They stamped the Greek world as the world of art ; its religion became the genius of art. And more and more in successive generations, with the co-operation of some political causes, the hand of art impressed itself on religion ; in poetry, in sculpture, in architecture, in festivals and dramatic contests, until in the artistic phase of human life the religious is absorbed. And the form of man, and the intellect of man, as if in sympathy with this artistic development, attained a symmetry and power of which the world has never seen the like.

And yet the great riddle of existence was not answered : its deeper mysteries were not explored. The strife of man with himself was healed only superficially ; there was beauty and proportion everywhere, but no 'true being'. The Jupiter Olympius of Phidias might seem worthy to preside over the Greek world which he summoned before him ; the Olympic victor might stand godlike in the fulness of manly vigour ; but where could the weak and mean appear ? what place was found for the slave or captive ? Could bereaved parents acquiesce in the 'sapless shades' of Homer, or the moral reflections of Thucydides ? Was there not some deeper intellectual or spiritual want which man felt, some taste of immortality which he had sometimes experienced, which made him dissatisfied with his earthly state ?

No religion that failed to satisfy these cries of nature could become the religion of mankind. Greek art and Greek literature, losing something of their original refinement, spread themselves over the Roman world ; except Christianity, they have become the richest treasure of modern Europe. But the religion of Greece never really grew in another soil, or beneath another heaven ; it was local and national : dependent on the fine and subtle perceptions of the Greek race ; though it amalgamated its deities with those of Egypt and Rome, its spirit never swayed mankind. It has a truer title to permanence and universality in the circumstance that it gave birth to philosophy.

The Greek mind passed, almost unconsciously to itself, from polytheism to monotheism. While offering up worship to the Dorian Apollo, performing vows to Esculapius, panic-stricken about the mutilation of the Hermæ, the Greek was also able to think of God as an idea, *Θεός* not *Ζεύς*. In this generalized or abstract form the Deity presided over daily life. Not a century after Anaxagoras had introduced the distinction of mind and matter, it was the belief of all philosophic inquirers that God was mind, or the object of mind. The Homeric gods were

beginning to be out of place; philosophy could not distinguish Apollo from Athene, or Leto from Here. Unlike the saints of the Middle Ages, they suggested no food for meditation; they were only beautiful forms, without individual character. By the side of religion and art, speculation had arisen and waxed strong, or rather it might be described as the inner life which sprang from their decay. The clouds of mythology hung around it; its youth was veiled in forms of sense; it was itself a new sort of poetry or religion. Gradually it threw off the garment of sense; it revealed a world of ideas. It is impossible for us to conceive the intensity of these ideas in their first freshness: they were not ideas, but gods, penetrating into the soul of the disciple, sinking into the mind of the human race; objects, not of speculation only, but of faith and love. To the old Greek religion, philosophy might be said to stand in a relation not wholly different from that which the New Testament bears to the Old; the one putting a spiritual world in the place of a temporal, the other an intellectual in the place of a sensuous; and to mankind in general it taught an everlasting lesson, not indeed that of the Gospel of Christ, but one in a lower degree necessary for man, enlarging the limits of the human mind itself, and providing the instruments of every kind of knowledge.

What the religion of Greece was to philosophy and art, that the Roman religion may be said to have been to political and social life. It was the religion of the family; the religion also of the empire of the world. Beginning in rustic simplicity, the traces of which it ever afterwards retained, it grew with the power of the Roman state, and became one with its laws. No fancy or poetry moulded the forms of the Roman gods; they are wanting in character and hardly distinguishable from one another. Not what they were, but their worship, is the point of interest about them. These inanimate beings occasionally said a patriotic word at some critical juncture of the Roman affairs, but they had no attributes or qualities; they are the mere impersonation of the needs of the state. They were easily identified in civilized and literary times with the Olympic deities, but the transformation was only superficial. Greece never conquered the religion of its masters. Great as was the readiness in later times to admit the worship of foreign deities, endless as were the forms of private superstition, these intrusions never weakened or broke the legal hold of the Roman religion. It was truly the 'established' religion. It represented the greatness and power of Rome. The deification of the Emperor, though disagreeable to the more spiritual and intellectual feelings of that

age of the world, was its natural development. While Rome lasted the Roman religion lasted ; like some vast fabric which the destroyers of a great city are unable wholly to demolish, it continued, though in ruins, after the irruption of the Goths, and has exercised, through the medium of the civil law, a power over modern Europe.

More interesting for us than the pursuit of this subject into further details is the inquiry, in what light the philosopher regarded the religious system within the circle of which he lived ; the spirit of which animated Greek and Roman poetry, the observance of which was the bond of states. In the age of the Antonines, more than six hundred years had passed away since the Athenian people first became conscious of the contrariety of the two elements ; and yet the wedge which philosophy had inserted in the world seemed to have made no impression on the deeply rooted customs of mankind. The ever-flowing stream of ideas was too feeble to overthrow the intrenchments of antiquity. The course of individuals might be turned by philosophy ; it was not intended to reconstruct the world. It looked on and watched, seeming, in the absence of any real progress, to lose its original force. Paganism tolerated ; it had nothing to fear. Socrates and Plato in an earlier, Seneca and Epictetus in a later age, acquiesced in this heathen world, unlike as it was to their own intellectual conceptions of a divine religion. No Greek or Roman philosopher was also a great reformer of religion. Some, like Socrates, were punctual in the observance of religious rites, paying their vows to the gods, fearful of offending against the letter as well as the spirit of divine commands ; they thought that it was hardly worth while to rationalize the Greek mythology, when there were so many things nearer home to do. Others, like the Epicureans, transferred the gods into a distant heaven, where they were no more heard of ; some, like the Stoics, sought to awaken a deeper sense of moral responsibility. There were devout men, such as Plutarch, who thought with reverence of the past, seeking to improve the old heathen faith, and also lamenting its decline ; there were scoffers, too, like Lucian, who found inexhaustible amusement in the religious follies of mankind. Others, like Herodotus in earlier ages, accepted with child-like faith the more serious aspect of heathenism, or contented themselves, like Thucydides, with ignoring it. The world, 'wholly given to idolatry', was a strange inconsistent spectacle to those who were able to reflect, which was seen in many points of view. The various feelings with which different classes of men regarded the statues, temples, sacrifices, oracles, and festivals of the gods

with which they looked upon the conflict of religions meeting on the banks of the Tiber, are not exhausted in the epigrammatic formula of the modern historian: 'All the heathen religions were looked upon by the vulgar as equally true, by the philosopher as equally false, by the magistrate as equally useful'.

Such was the later phase of the religion of nature, with which Christianity came into conflict. It had supplied some of the needs of men by assisting to build up the fabric of society and law. It had left room for others to find expression in philosophy or art. But it was a world divided against itself. It contained two nations or opinions 'struggling in its womb'; the nation or opinion of the many, and the nation or opinion of the few. It was bound together in the framework of law or custom, yet its morality fell below the natural feelings of mankind, and its religious spirit was confused and weakened by the admixture of foreign superstitions. It was a world of which it is not difficult to find traces that it was self-condemned. It might be compared to a fruit, the rind of which was hard and firm, while within it was soft and decaying. Within this outer rind or circle, for two centuries and a half, Christianity was working; at last it appeared without, itself the seed or kernel of a new organization. That when the conflict was over, and the world found itself Christian, many elements of the old religion still remained, and reasserted themselves in Christian forms; that the 'ghost of the dead Roman Empire' lingered 'about the grave thereof'; that Christianity accomplished only imperfectly what heathenism failed to do at all, is a result unlike pictures that are sometimes drawn, but sadly in accordance with what history teaches of mankind and of human nature.

§ 4, 5. Natural religion is not only concerned with the history of the religions of nature, nor does it only reflect that 'light of the Gentiles' which philosophy imparted; it has to do with the present as well as with the past, with Christian as well as heathen countries. Revealed religion passes into natural, and natural religion exists side by side with revealed; there is a truth independent of Christianity; and the daily life of Christian men is very different from the life of Christ. This general or natural religion may be compared to a wide-spread lake, shallow and motionless, rather than to a living water—the overflowing of the Christian faith over a professing Christian world, the level of which may be at one time higher or lower; it is the religion of custom or prescription, or rather the unconscious influence of religion on the minds of men in general; it includes also the

speculative idea of religion when taken off the Christian foundation. Natural religion, in this modern sense, has a relation both to philosophy and life. That is to say (4), it is a theory of religion which appeals to particular evidences for the being of a God, though resting, perhaps most safely, on the general conviction that 'this universal frame cannot want a mind'. But it has also a relation to life and practice (5), for it is the religion of the many; the average, as it may be termed, of religious feeling in a Christian land, the leaven of the Gospel hidden in the world. St Paul speaks of those 'who knowing not the law are a law unto themselves'. Experience seems to show that something of the same kind must be acknowledged in Christian as well as in heathen countries; which may be conveniently considered under the head of natural religion.

Arguments for the being of a God are of many kinds. There are arguments from final causes, and arguments from first causes, and arguments from ideas; logical forms, as they appear to be, in which different metaphysical schools mould their faith. Of the first sort the following may be taken as an instance: A person walking on the sea shore finds a watch or other piece of mechanism; he observes its parts, and their adaptation to each other; he sees the watch in motion, and comprehends the aim of the whole. In the formation of that senseless material he perceives that which satisfies him that it is the work of intelligence, or, in other words, the marks of design. And looking from the watch to the world around him, he seems to perceive innumerable ends, and innumerable actions tending to them, in the composition of the world itself, and in the structure of plants and animals. Advancing a step further, he asks himself the question, why he should not acknowledge the like marks of design in the moral world also; in passions and actions, and in the great end of life. Of all there is the same account to be given—'the machine of the world', of which God is the Maker.

This is the celebrated argument from final causes for the being of a God, the most popular of the arguments of natural religion, partly because it admits of much ingenious illustration, and also because it is tangible and intelligible. Ideas of a Supreme Being must be given through something, or it is impossible that we should know Him as He is. And the truest representation that we can form of God is, in one sense, that which sets forth His nature most vividly; yet another condition must also be remembered, viz. that this representation ought not only to be the most distinct, but the highest and holiest possible. Because we cannot see Him as He is, that is no reason for attributing to

Him the accidents of human personality. And, in using figures of speech, we are bound to explain to all who are capable of understanding, that we speak in a figure only, and to remind them, that names by which we describe the being or attributes of God need a correction in the silence of thought. Even logical categories may give as false a notion of the Divine nature in our own age, as graven images in the days of the patriarchs. However legitimate or perhaps necessary the employment of them may be, we must place ourselves not below, but above them.

( $\alpha$ ) In the argument from final causes, the work of the Creator is compared to a work of art. Art is a poor figure of nature ; it has no freedom or luxuriance. Between the highest work of art and the lowest animal or vegetable production, there is an interval which will never be spanned. The miracle of life derives no illustration from the handicraftsman putting his hand to the chisel, or anticipating in idea the form which he is about to carve. More truly might we reason, that what the artist is, the God of nature is not. For all the processes of nature are unlike the processes of art. If, instead of a watch, or some other piece of curious and exquisite workmanship, we think of a carpenter and a table, the force of the argument seems to vanish, and the illustration becomes inappropriate and unpleasing. The ingenuity and complexity of the structure, and not the mere appearance of design, makes the watch a natural image of the creation of the world.

( $\beta$ ) But not only does the conception of the artist supply no worthy image of the Creator and His work ; the idea of design which is given by it requires a further correction before it can be transferred to nature. The complication of the world around us is quite different from the complexity of the watch. It is not a regular and finite structure, but rather infinite in irregularity ; which instead of design often exhibits absence of design, such as we cannot imagine any architect of the world contriving ; the construction of which is far from appearing, even to our feeble intelligence, the best possible, though it, and all things in it, are very good. If we fix our minds on this very phrase ' the machine of the world ' , we become aware that it is unmeaning to us. The watch is separated and isolated from other matter ; dependent indeed on one or two general laws of nature, but otherwise cut off from things around. But nature, the more we consider it, the more does one part appear to be linked with another ; there is no isolation here ; the plants grow in the soil which has been preparing for them through a succession of geological eras, they are



fed by the rain and nourished by light and air ; the animals depend for their life on all inferior existences.

(γ) This difference between art and nature leads us to observe another defect in the argument from final causes—that, instead of putting the world together, it takes it to pieces. It fixes our minds on those parts of the world which exhibit marks of design, and withdraws us from those in which marks of design seem to fail. There are formations in nature, such as the hand, which have a kind of mechanical beauty, and show in a striking way, even to an uneducated person, the wonder and complexity of creation. In like manner we feel a momentary surprise in finding out, through the agency of a microscope, that the minutest creatures have their fibres, tissues, vessels. And yet the knowledge of this is but the most fragmentary and superficial knowledge of nature ; it is the wonder in which philosophy begins, very different from the comprehension of this universal frame in all its complexity and in all its minuteness. And from this elementary notion of nature, we seek to form an idea of the Author of nature. As though God were in the animal frame and not also in the dust to which it turns ; in the parts, and not equally in the whole ; in the present world, and not also in the antecedent ages which have prepared for its existence.

(δ) Again, this teleological argument for the being of God gives an erroneous idea of the moral government of the world. For it leads us to suppose that all things are tending to some end ; that there is no prodigality or waste, but that all things are, and are made, in the best way possible. Our faith must be tried to find a use for barren deserts, for venomous reptiles, for fierce wild beasts, nay, for the sins and miseries of mankind. Nor does 'there seem to be any resting place', until the world and all things in it are admitted to have some end impressed upon them by the hand of God, but unseen to us. Experience is cast aside while our meditations lead us to conceive the world under this great form of a final cause. All that is in nature is best ; all that is in human life is best. And yet every one knows instances in which nature seems to fail of its end—in which life has been cut down like a flower, and trampled under foot of man.

(ε) There is another way in which the argument from final causes is suggestive of an imperfect conception of the Divine Being. It presents God to us exclusively in one aspect, not as a man, much less as a spirit holding communion with our spirit, but only as an artist. We conceive of Him, as in the description of the poet, standing with compasses over sea and land, and designing the wondrous work. Does not the image tend to

make the spiritual creation an accident of the material? For although it is possible, as Bishop Butler has shown, to apply the argument from final causes, as a figure of speech, to the habits and feelings, this adaptation is unnatural, and open even to greater objections than its application to the physical world. For how can we distinguish true final causes from false ones? how can we avoid confusing what ought to be with what is—the fact with the law?

(§) If we look to the origin of the notion of a final cause, we shall feel still further indisposed to make it the category under which we sum up the working of the Divine Being in creation. As Aristotle, who probably first made a philosophical use of the term, says, it is transferred from mind to matter; in other words, it clothes facts in our ideas. Lord Bacon offers another warning against the employment of final causes in the service of religion: 'they are like the vestals consecrated to God, and are barren'. They are a figure of speech which adds nothing to our knowledge. When applied to the Creator, they are a figure of a figure; that is to say, the figurative conception of the artist embodied or idealized in his work, is made the image of the Divine Being. And no one really thinks of God in nature under this figure of human skill. As certainly as the man who found a watch or piece of mechanism on the sea-shore would conclude, 'here are marks of design, indications of an intelligent artist', so certainly, if he came across the meanest or the highest of the works of nature, would he infer, 'this was not made by man, nor by any human art'. He sees in a moment that the sea-weed beneath his feet is something different in kind from the productions of man. What should lead him to say, that in the same sense that man made the watch, God made the sea-weed? For the sea-weed grows by some power of life, and is subject to certain physiological laws, like all other vegetable or animal substances. But if we say that God created this life, or that where this life ends, there his creative power begins, our analogy again fails, for God stands in a different relation to animal and vegetable life from what the artist does to the work of His hands. And, when we think further of God, as a Spirit without body, creating all things by His word, or rather by His thought, in an instant of time, to whom the plan and execution are all one, we become absolutely bewildered in the attempt to apply the image of the artist to the Creator of the world.

These are some of the points in respect of which the argument from final causes falls short of that conception of the Divine nature which reason is adequate to form. It is the beginning of

our knowledge of God, not the end. It is suited to the faculties of children rather than of those who are of full age. It belongs to a stage of metaphysical philosophy, in which abstract ideas were not made the subject of analysis ; to a time when physical science had hardly learnt to conceive the world as a whole. It is a devout thought which may well arise in the grateful heart when contemplating the works of creation, but must not be allowed to impair that higher intellectual conception which we are able to form of a Creator, any more than it should be put in the place of the witness of God within.

Another argument of the same nature for the being of a God is derived from first causes, and may be stated as follows : All things that we see are the results or effects of causes, and these again the effects of other causes, and so on through an immense series. But somewhere or other this series must have a stop or limit ; we cannot go back from cause to cause without end. Otherwise the series will have no basis on which to rest. Therefore there must be a first cause, that is, God. This argument is sometimes strengthened by the further supposition that the world must have had a beginning, whence it seems to follow, that it must have a cause external to itself which made it begin ; a principle of rest, which is the source of motion to all other things, as ancient philosophy would have expressed it—hovering in this as in other speculations intermediate between the physical and metaphysical world.

The difficulty about this argument is much the same as that respecting the preceding. So long as we conceive the world under the form of cause and effect, and suppose the first link in the chain to be the same with those that succeed it, the argument is necessary and natural ; we cannot escape from it without violence to our reason. Our only doubt will probably be, whether we can pass from the notion of a first cause to that of an intelligent Creator. But when, instead of resting in the word ' cause ', we go on to the idea, or rather the variety of ideas which are signified by the word ' cause ', the argument begins to dissolve. When we say ' God is the cause of the world ', in what sense of the word cause is this ? Is it as life or mind is a cause, or the hammer or hand of the workman, or light or air, or any natural substance ? Is it in that sense of the word cause, in which it is almost identified with the effect, or in that sense in which it is wholly external to it ? Or when we endeavour to imagine or conceive a common cause of the world and all things in it, do we not perceive that we are using the word in none of these senses ; but in a new one, to which life, or mind, or many other words, would be at least

equally applicable? 'God is the life of the world'. That is a poor and somewhat unmeaning expression to indicate the relation of God to the world; yet life is a subtle and wonderful power, pervading all things, and in various degrees animating all things. 'God is the mind of the world'. That is still inadequate as an expression, even though mind can act where it is not, and its ways are past finding out. But when we say: 'God is the cause of the world', that can be scarcely said to express more than that God stands in some relation to the world touching which we are unable to determine whether He is in the world or out of it, 'immanent' in the language of philosophy, or 'transcendent'.

There are two sources from which these and similar proofs of the being of a God are derived: first, analogy; secondly, the logical necessity of the human mind. Analogy supplies an image, an illustration. It wins for us an imaginary world from the void and formless infinite. But whether it does more than this must depend wholly on the nature of the analogy. We cannot argue from the seen to the unseen, unless we previously know their relation to each other. We cannot say at random that another life is the double or parallel of this, and also the development of it; we cannot urge the temporary inequality of this world as a presumption of the final injustice of another. Who would think of arguing from the vegetable to the animal world, except in those points where we had already discovered a common principle? Who would reason that animal life must follow the laws of vegetation in those points which were peculiar to it? Yet many theological arguments have this fundamental weakness; they lean on faith for their own support; they lower the heavenly to the earthly, and may be used to prove anything.

The other source of these and similar arguments is the logical necessity of the human mind. A first cause, a beginning, an infinite Being limiting our finite natures, is necessary to our conceptions. 'We have an idea of God, there must be something to correspond to our idea', and so on. The flaw here is equally real, though not so apparent. While we dwell within the forms of the understanding and acknowledge their necessity, such arguments seem unanswerable. But once ask the questions: Whence this necessity?—was there not a time when the human mind felt no such necessity?—is the necessity really satisfied?—or is there not some further logical sequence in which I am involved which still remains unanswerable?, the whole argument vanishes at once, as the chimera of a metaphysical age. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have been peculiarly fertile in such arguments; the belief in which, whether they have

any value or not, must not be imposed upon us as an article of faith.

If we say again that 'our highest conception must have a true existence', which is the well-known argument of Anselm and Descartes for the being of God, still this is no more than saying, in a technical or dialectical form, that we cannot imagine God without imagining that He is. Of no other conception can it be said that it involves existence; and hence no additional force is gained by such a mode of statement. The simple faith in a Divine Being is cumbered, not supported, by evidences derived from a metaphysical system which has passed away. It is a barren logic that elicits the more meagre conception of existence from the higher one of Divinity. Better for philosophy, as well as faith, to think of God at once and immediately as 'Perfect Being'.

Arguments from first and final causes may be regarded as a kind of poetry of natural religion. There are some minds to whom it would be impossible to conceive of the relation of God to the world under any more abstract form. They, as well as all of us, may ponder in amazement on the infinite contrivances of creation. We are all agreed that none but a Divine power framed them. We differ only as to whether the Divine power is to be regarded as the hand that fashioned, or the intelligence that designed them, or an operation inconceivable to us which we dimly trace and feebly express in words.

That which seems to underlie our conception both of first and final causes, is the idea of law which we see not broken or intercepted, or appearing only in particular spots of nature, but everywhere and in all things. All things do not equally exhibit marks of design, but all things are equally subject to the operation of law. The highest mark of intelligence pervades the whole; no one part is better than another; it is all 'very good'. The absence of design, if we like so to turn the phrase, is a part of the design. Even the less comely parts, like the plain spaces in a building, have elements of use and beauty. He who has ever thought in the most imperfect manner of the universe which modern science unveils, needs no evidence that the details of it are incapable of being framed by anything short of a Divine power. Art, and nature, and science, these three—the first giving us the conception of the relation of parts to a whole; the second, of endless variety and intricacy, such as no art has ever attained; the third, of uniform laws which amid all the changes of created things remain fixed as at the first, reaching even to the heavens—are the witnesses of the Creator in the external world.

Nor can it weaken our belief in a Supreme Being, to observe that the same harmony and uniformity extend also to the actions of men. Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should give law and order to the spiritual, no less than the natural creation? That human beings do not 'thrust or break their ranks'; that the life of nations, like that of plants or animals, has a regular growth; that the same strata or stages are observable in the religions, no less than the languages of mankind, as in the structure of the earth, are strange reasons for doubting the Providence of God. Perhaps it is even stranger, that those who do not doubt should eye with jealousy the accumulation of such facts. Do we really wish that our conceptions of God should only be on the level of the ignorant; adequate to the passing emotions of human feeling, but to reason inadequate? That Christianity is the confluence of many channels of human thought does not interfere with its Divine origin. It is not the less immediately the word of God because there have been preparations for it in all ages, and in many countries.

The more we take out of the category of chance in the world either of nature or of mind, the more present evidence we have of the faithfulness of God. We do not need to have a chapter of accidents in life to enable us to realize the existence of a personal God, as though events which we can account for were not equally His work. Let not use or custom so prevail in our minds as to make this higher notion of God cheerless or uncomfortable to us. The rays of His presence may still warm us, as well as enlighten us. Surely He in whom we live and move and have our being is nearer to us than He would be if He interfered occasionally for our benefit.

'The curtain of the physical world is closing in upon us': What does this mean but that the arms of His intelligence are embracing us on every side? We have no more fear of nature; for our knowledge of the laws of nature has cast out fear. We know Him as He shows Himself in them, even as we are known of Him. Do we think to draw near to God by returning to that state in which nature seemed to be without law, when man cowered like the animals before the storm, and in the meteors of the skies and the motions of the heavenly bodies sought to read the purposes of God respecting himself? Or shall we rest in that stage of the knowledge of nature which was common to the heathen philosophers and to the Fathers of the Christian Church, or in that of two hundred years ago, ere the laws of the heavenly bodies were discovered, or of fifty years ago, before geology had established its truths on sure foundations, or of thirty years

ago, ere the investigation of old language had revealed the earlier stages of the history of the human mind. At which of these resting-places shall we pause to renew the covenant between Reason and Faith? Rather at none of them, if the first condition of a true faith be the belief in all true knowledge.

To trace our belief up to some primitive revelation, to entangle it in a labyrinth of proofs or analogies, will not infix it deeper or elevate its character. Why should we be willing to trust the convictions of the father of the human race rather than our own, the faith of primitive rather than of civilized times? Or why should we use arguments about the Infinite Being, which, in proportion as they have force, reduce him to the level of the finite; and which seem to lose their force in proportion as we admit that God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. The belief is strong enough without these fictitious supports; it cannot be made stronger with them. While Nature still presents to us its world of unexhausted wonders; while sin and sorrow lead us to walk by faith, and not by sight; while the soul of man departs this life knowing not whither it goes; so long will the belief endure of an Almighty Creator, from whom we came, to whom we return.

Why, again, should we argue for the immortality of the soul from the analogy of the seed and the tree, or the state of human beings before and after birth, when the ground of proof in the one case is wanting in the other, namely, experience. Because the dead acorn may a century hence become a spreading oak, no one would infer that the corrupted remains of animals will rise to life in new forms. The error is not in the use of such illustrations as figures of speech, but in the allegation of them as proofs or evidences after the failure of the analogy is perceived. Perhaps it may be said that in popular discourse they pass unchallenged; it may be a point of honour that they should be maintained, because they are in Paley or Butler. But evidences for the many which are not evidences for the few are treacherous props to Christianity. They are always liable to come back to us detected, and to need some other fallacy for their support.

Let it be considered, whether the evidences of religion should be separated from religion itself. The Gospel has a truth perfectly adapted to human nature; its origin and diffusion in the world have a history like any other history. But truth does not need evidences of the truth, nor does history separate the proof of facts from the facts themselves. It was only in the decline of philosophy the Greeks began to ask about the criterion of knowledge. What would be thought of a historian who should

collect all the testimonies on one side of some disputed question, and insist on their reception as a political creed? Such evidences do not require the hand of some giant infidel to pull them down; they fall the moment they are touched. But the Christian faith is in its holy place, uninjured by the fall; the truths of the existence of God, or of the immortality of the soul, are not periled by the observation that some analogies on which they have been supposed to rest are no longer tenable. There is no use in attempting to prove by the misapplication of the methods of human knowledge, what we ought never to doubt.

'There are two things', says a philosopher of the last century, 'of which it may be said, that the more we think of them, the more they fill the soul with awe and wonder—the starry heaven above, and the moral law within. I may not regard either as shrouded in darkness, or look for or guess at either in what is beyond, out of my sight. I see them right before me, and link them at once with the consciousness of my own existence. The former of the two begins with place, which I inhabit as a member of the outward world, and extends the connexion in which I stand with it into immeasurable space; in which are worlds upon worlds, and systems upon systems; and so on into the endless times of their revolutions, their beginning and continuance. The second begins with my invisible self; that is to say, my personality, and presents me in a world which has true infinity, but which the lower faculty of the soul can hardly scan; with which I know myself to be not only as in the world of sight, in an accidental connection, but in a necessary and universal one. The first glance at innumerable worlds annihilates any importance which I may attach to myself as an animal structure; whilst the matter out of which it is made must again return to the earth (itself a mere point in the universe), after it has been endued, one knows not how, with the power of life for a little season. The second glance exalts me infinitely as an intelligent being, whose personality involves a moral law, which reveals in me a life distinct from that of the animals, independent of the world of sense. So much at least I may infer from the regular determination of my being by this law, which is itself infinite, free from the limitations and conditions of this present life'.

So, in language somewhat technical, has Kant described two great principles of natural religion. 'There are two witnesses,' we may add in a later strain of reflection, 'of the being of God; the order of nature in the world, and the progress of the mind of man. He is not the order of nature, nor the progress of the mind, nor both together; but that which is above and beyond



them ; of which they, even if conceived in a single instant, are but the external sign, the highest evidences of God which we can conceive, but not God Himself. The first to the ancient world seemed to be the work of chance, or the personal operation of one or many Divine beings. We know it to be the result of laws endless in their complexity, and yet not the less admirable for their simplicity also. The second has been regarded, even in our own day, as a series of errors capriciously invented by the ingenuity of individual men. We know it to have a law of its own, a continuous order which cannot be inverted ; not to be confounded with, yet not wholly separate from, the law of nature and the will of God. Shall we doubt the world to be the creation of a Divine power, only because it is more wonderful than could have been conceived by 'them of old time' ; or human reason to be in the image of God, because it too bears the marks of an overruling law or intelligence ?

§ 5. Natural religion, in the last sense in which we are to consider it, carries us into a region of thought more practical, and therefore more important, than any of the preceding ; it comes home to us ; it takes in those who are near and dear to us ; even ourselves are not excluded from it. Under this name, or some other, we cannot refuse to consider a subject which involves the religious state of the greater portion of mankind, even in a Christian country. Every Sunday the ministers of religion set before us the ideal of Christian life ; they repeat and expand the words of Christ and His Apostles ; they speak of the approach of death, and of this world as a preparation for a better. It is good to be reminded of these things. But there is another aspect of Christianity which we must not ignore, the aspect under which experience shows it, in our homes and among our acquaintance, on the level of human things ; the level of education, habit, and circumstances on which men are, and on which they will probably remain while they live. This latter phase of religion it is our duty to consider, and not narrow ourselves to the former only.

It is characteristic of this subject that it is full of contradictions ; we say one thing at one time about it, another thing at another. Our feelings respecting individuals are different in their lifetime, and after their death, as they are nearly related to us, or have no claims on our affections. Our acknowledgment of sin in the abstract is more willing and hearty than the recognition of particular sins in ourselves, or even in others. We readily admit that 'the world lies in wickedness' ; where the

world is, or of whom it is made up, we are unable to define. Great men seem to be exempt from the religious judgment which we pass on our fellows ; it does not occur to persons of taste to regard them under this aspect ; we deal tenderly with them, and leave them to themselves and God. And sometimes we rest on outward signs of religion ; at other times we guard ourselves and others against trusting to such signs. And commonly we are ready to acquiesce in the standard of those around us, thinking it a sort of impertinence to interfere with their religious concerns ; at other times we go about the world as with a lantern, seeking for the image of Christ among men, and are zealous for the good of others, out of season or in season. We need not unravel further this tangled web of thoughts and feelings, which religion, and affection, and habit, and opinion weave. A few words will describe the fact out of which these contradictions arise. It is a side of the world from which we are apt to turn away, perhaps hoping to make things better by fancying them so, instead of looking at them as they really are.

It is impossible not to observe that innumerable persons—shall we say the majority of mankind ? who have a belief in God and immortality, have nevertheless hardly any consciousness of the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. They seem to live away from them in the routine of business or of society, ' the common life of all men ' ; not without a sense of right, and a rule of truth and honesty, yet insensible to what our Saviour meant by taking up the cross and following Him, or what St Paul meant by ' being one with Christ '. They die without any great fear or lively faith ; to the last more interested about concerns of this world than about the hope of another. In the Christian sense they are neither proud nor humble ; they have seldom experienced the sense of sin, they have never felt keenly the need of forgiveness. Neither on the other hand do they value themselves on their good deeds, or expect to be saved by their own merits. Often they are men of high moral character ; many of them have strong and disinterested attachments, and quick human sympathies ; sometimes a stoical feeling of uprightness, or a peculiar sensitiveness to dishonour. It would be a mistake to say they are without religion. They join in its public acts ; they are offended at profaneness or impiety ; they are thankful for the blessings of life, and do not rebel against its misfortunes. Such persons meet us at every turn. They are those whom we know and associate with ; honest in their dealings, respectable in their lives, decent in their conversation. The Scripture speaks to us of two classes represented

by the Church and the world, the wheat and the tares, the sheep and the goats, the friends and enemies of God. We cannot say in which of these two divisions we should find a place for them.

The picture is a true one, and, if we turn the light round, some of us may find in it a resemblance of ourselves no less than of other men. Others will include us in the same circle in which we are including them. What shall we say to such a state, common as it is to both us and them? The fact that we are considering is not the evil of the world, but the neutrality of the world, the indifference of the world, the inertness of the world. There are multitudes of men and women everywhere who have no peculiarly Christian feelings, to whom, except for the indirect influence of Christian institutions, the life and death of Christ would have made no difference, and who have, nevertheless, the common sense of truth and right almost equally with true Christians. You cannot say of them 'there is none that doeth good; no, not one'. The other tone of St Paul is more suitable: 'When the Gentiles that know not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these not knowing the law are a law unto themselves'. So of what we commonly term the world, as opposed to those who make a profession of Christianity, we must not shrink from saying: 'When men of the world do by nature whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, these not being conscious of the grace of God, do by nature what can only be done by His grace'. Why should we make them out worse than they are? We must cease to speak evil of them, ere they will judge fairly of the characters of religious men. That, with so little recognition of His personal relation to them, God does not cast them off, is a ground of hope rather than of fear—of thankfulness, not of regret.

Many strange thoughts arise at the contemplation of this intermediate world, which some blindness, or hardness, or distance in nature, separates from the love of Christ. We ask ourselves 'what will become of them after death?' 'For what state of existence can this present life be a preparation?' Perhaps they will turn the question upon us; and we may answer for ourselves and them, 'that we throw ourselves on the mercy of God'. We cannot deny that in the sight of God they may condemn us; their moral worth may be more acceptable to Him than our Christian feeling. For we know that God is not like some earthly sovereign, who may be offended at the want of attention which we show to Him. He can only estimate us always by our fulfilment of moral and Christian duties. When

the balance is struck, it is most probable, nay, it is quite certain, that many who are first will be last, and the last first. And this transfer will take place, not only among those who are within the gates of the Christian Church, but from the world also into the Church. There may be some among us who have given the cup of cold water to a brother, 'not knowing it was the Lord'. Some again may be leading a life in their own family which is 'not far from the kingdom of heaven'. We do not say that for ourselves there is more than one way; that way is Christ. But, in the case of others, it is right that we should take into account their occupation, character, circumstances, the manner in which Christianity may have been presented to them, the intellectual or other difficulties which may have crossed their path. We shall think more of the unconscious Christianity of their lives, than of the profession of it on their lips. So that we seem almost compelled to be Christian and Unchristian at once: Christian in reference to the obligations of Christianity upon ourselves; Unchristian, if indeed it be not a higher kind of Christianity, in not judging those who are unlike ourselves by our own standard.

Other oppositions have found their way into statements of Christian truth, which we shall sometimes do well to forget. Mankind are not simply divided into two classes; they pass insensibly from one to the other. The term world is itself ambiguous, meaning the world very near to us, and yet a long way off from us; which we contrast with the Church, and which we nevertheless feel to be one with the Church, and incapable of being separated. Sometimes the Church bears a high and noble witness against the world, and at other times, even to the religious mind, the balance seems to be even, and the world in its turn begins to bear witness against the Church. There are periods of history in which they both grow together. Little cause as there may be for congratulation in our present state, yet we cannot help tracing, in the last half-century, a striking amelioration in our own and some other countries, testified to by changes in laws and manners. Many reasons have been given for this change: the efforts of a few devoted men in the last, or the beginning of the present, century; a long peace; diffusion of education: increase of national wealth; changes in the principles of government; improvement in the lives of the ministers of religion. No one who has considered this problem will feel that he is altogether able to solve it. He cannot venture to say that the change springs from any bold aggression which the Church has made upon the vices of mankind; nor is it certain that any such effort would have produced the result. In the Apostle's

language it must still remain a mystery 'why mankind collectively often become better'; and not less so, 'why, when deprived of all the means and influences of virtue and religion, they do not always become worse'. Even for evil, Nature, that is, the God of Nature, has set limits; men do not corrupt themselves endlessly. Here, too, it is: 'Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further'.

Reflections of this kind are not a mere speculation; they have a practical use. They show us the world as it is, neither lighted up with the aspirations of hope and faith, nor darkened beneath the shadow of God's wrath. They teach us to regard human nature in a larger and more kindly way, which is the first step towards amending and strengthening it. They make us think of the many as well as the few; as ministers of the Gospel, warning us against preaching to the elect only, instead of seeking to do good to all men. They take us out of the straits and narrownesses of religion, into wider fields in which the analogy of faith is still our guide. They help us to reconcile nature with grace; they prevent our thinking that Christ came into the world for our sakes only, or that His words have no meaning when they are scattered beyond the limits of the Christian Church. They remind us that the moral state of mankind here, and their eternal state hereafter, are not wholly dependent on our poor efforts for their religious improvement; and that the average of men who seem often to be so careless about their own highest interest, are not when they pass away uncared for in His sight.

Doubtless, the lives of individuals that rise above this average are the salt of the earth. They are not to be con-founded with the many, because of these latter a place may be found in the counsels of Providence. Those who add the love of their fellow-creatures to the love of God, who make the love of truth the rule of both, bear the image of Christ until His coming again. And yet, probably, they would be the last persons to wish to distinguish themselves from their fellow-creatures. The Christian life makes all things kin; it does not stand out 'angular' against any part of mankind. And that humble spirit which the best of men have ever shown in reference to their brethren, is also the true spirit of the Church towards the world. If a tone of dogmatism and exclusiveness is unbecoming in individual Christians, is it not equally so in Christian communities? There is no need, because men will not listen to one motive, that we should not present them with another; there is no reason, because they will not hear the voice of the preacher, that they should be refused the blessings

of education; or that we should cease to act upon their circumstances, because we cannot awaken the heart and conscience. We are too apt to view as hostile to religion that which only takes a form different from religion, as trade, or politics, or professional life. More truly may religious men regard the world, in its various phases, as in many points a witness against themselves. The exact appreciation of the good as well as the evil of the world is a link of communion with our fellow-men; may it not also be, too, with the body of Christ? There are lessons of which the world is the keeper no less than the Church. Especially have earnest and sincere Christians reason to reflect, if ever they see the moral sentiments of mankind directed against them.

The God of peace rest upon you, is the concluding benediction of most of the *Epistles*. How can He rest upon us, who draw so many hard lines of demarcation between ourselves and other men; who oppose the Church and the world, Sundays and working days, revelation and science, the past and present, the life and state of which religion speaks and the life which we ordinarily lead? It is well that we should consider these lines of demarcation rather as representing aspects of our life than as corresponding to classes of mankind. It is well that we should acknowledge that one aspect of life or knowledge is as true as the other. Science and revelation touch one another: the past floats down in the present. We are all members of the same Christian world; we are all members of the same Christian Church. Who can bear to doubt this of themselves or of their family? What parent would think otherwise of his child—what child of his parent? Religion holds before us an ideal which we are far from reaching; natural affection softens and relieves the characters of those we love; experience alone shows men what they truly are. All these three must so meet as to do violence to none. If, in the age of the Apostles, it seemed to be the duty of the believers to separate themselves from the world and take up a hostile position, not less marked in the present age is the duty of abolishing in a Christian country what has now become an artificial distinction, and seeking by every means in our power, by fairness, by truthfulness, by knowledge, by love unfeigned, by the absence of party and prejudice, by acknowledging the good in all things, to reconcile the Church to the world, the one half of our nature to the other; drawing the mind off from speculative difficulties, or matters of party and opinion, to that which almost all equally acknowledge and almost equally rest short of—the life of Christ.

# The Law as the Strength of Sin

The strength of sin is the law.—1 *Cor.*, xv, 56.

THESE words occur parenthetically in the fifteenth chapter of the *First Epistle to the Corinthians*. They may be regarded as a summary of the seventh chapter of the *Romans*. The thought contained in them is also the undercurrent of several other passages in the *Epistles* of St Paul, as, for example, *Rom.*, v, 20; xiv, 22, 23; *Gal.*, ii, 17-21; *Col.*, ii, 14. The Apostle is speaking of that prior state out of which he passed into the liberty of the Gospel. When he asked himself what preceded Christ in his own life and in the dispensations of Providence, what he had once felt within warring against his soul, what he saw without contending against the cross, the answer to all was given in the same word, 'the Law'.

But the singular description of the law as the strength of sin goes further, and has a deeper meaning; for it seems to make the law the cause of sin. Here is the difficulty. The law may have been defective—adapted, as we should say, to a different state of society, enforcing in some passages the morality of a half-civilized age, such as could never render the practisers thereof perfect, powerless to create a new life either in the Jewish nation collectively, or in the individuals who composed the nation; yet this imperfection and 'unprofitableness' of the law are not what the Apostle means by the strength of sin. If we say, in the words of James, quoted in the *Acts*, that it was a burden too heavy for men to bear, still language like this falls short of the paradox, as it appears to us, of St Paul. There is no trace that the law was regarded by him as given 'because of the hardness of men's hearts', as our Saviour says; or that he is speaking of the law as corrupted by the Pharisees, or overlaid by Jewish traditions. The Apostle is not contrasting, as we are apt to do, Moses and the prophets with the additions of those who

sat in Moses's seat. The same law which is holy, and good, and just, is also the strength of sin.

There is another kind of language used respecting the law of Scripture which is very familiar, and seems to be as natural to our preconceived notions as the passage which we are now considering is irreconcilable with them. The law is described as the preparation of the Gospel; the first volume of the book, the other half of Divine Revelation. It is the veil on the face of Moses which obscured the excess of light, as the Apostle himself says in the *Epistle to the Corinthians*; or the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ, as in the *Galatians*; or the shadow of good things to come, as in the *Hebrews*. But all these figures of speech can only be cited here to point out how different the conception in them is from that which is implied in such words as 'The strength of sin is the law'. In these latter we have not the light shining more and more unto the perfect day, but the light and darkness; that is, the Gospel and the law opposed, as it were two hemispheres, dividing time and the world and the human heart.

Nor, again, if we consider the law in its immediate workings on the mind, as it might seem to be struggling within for mastery over the Gospel, as we may imagine Catholicism and Protestantism in the mind of Luther or of a modern convert, do we make a nearer approach to the solution of our difficulty. Even Luther, when denouncing the Pope as Antichrist, would not have spoken of the Catholic faith as the strength of sin. Still less would he have one instant described it as 'holy, just, and good', and in the next as deceiving and slaying him. The struggle between one religion and another, or, even without any conflict of creeds, between hope and despair, may trouble the conscience, may enfeeble the will, may darken the intellect; still no sober-minded man would think of attributing his sins to having passed through such a struggle.

Once more, parallels from heathen authors, such as '*Nitimur in vetitum semper*', and the witness of the heart against itself, 'that it is evil continually', have been quoted in illustration of the verse placed at the beginning of this essay. The aphorisms alluded to are really metaphorical expressions, intended by satirists and moralists to state forcibly that men are prone to err, not that law is provocative or the cause of sin. Mankind offend in various ways, and from different motives—ambition, vanity, selfishness, passion; but not simply from the desire to break the law, or to offend God. So, again, as we multiply laws, we may seem to multiply offences: the real truth is, that



as offences multiply the laws multiply also. To break the law for the sake of doing so, is not a crime or sin, but madness. Nor, again, will it do to speak of the perversity of the human will—of men, like children, doing a thing because, as we say in familiar language, they are told not to do it. This perversity consists simply in knowing the better and choosing the worse, in passion prevailing over reason. The better is not the cause of their choosing the worse, nor is reason answerable for the dictates of passion, which would be the parallel required.

All these, then, we must regard as half-explanations, which fail to reach the Apostle's meaning. When we ask what he can mean by saying that 'the law is the strength of sin', it is no answer to reply, that the law was imperfect or transient, that it could not take away sin, that it had been made of none effect by tradition, that its ceremonial observances were hypocritical and unmeaning; or that we, too, use certain metaphorical expressions, which, however different in sense, have a sound not unlike the words of the Apostle. We require an explanation that goes deeper, which does not pare away the force of the expression, such as can be gathered only from the Apostle himself, and the writings of his time. The point of view from which we regard things may begin to turn round; to understand the meaning of the law, we may have to place ourselves within the circle of its influences; to understand the nature of sin, we may be compelled to imagine ourselves in the very act of sinning: this inversion of our ordinary modes of thought may be the only means of attaining the true and natural sense of the Apostle's words.

We are commencing an inquiry which lacks the sustaining interest of controversy, the data of which are metaphysical reasonings and points of view which cannot be even imagined without a considerable effort of mind, and which there will be the more indisposition to admit, as they run counter to the popular belief that the Bible is a book easily and superficially intelligible. Such feelings are natural; we are jealous of those who wrap up in mystery the Word of life, who carry us into an atmosphere which none else can breathe. We cannot be too jealous of Kant or Fichte, Schelling or Hegel, finding their way into the interpretation of Scripture. As jealous should we be also of any patristic or other system which draws away its words from their natural meaning. Still the Scripture has difficulties not brought but found there, a few words respecting which will pave the way for the inquiry on which we are entering.

The Bible is at once the easiest and the hardest of books. The easiest, in that it gives us plain rules for moral and religious duties which he that runs can read, an example that everyone can follow, a work that anybody may do. But it is the hardest also, in that it is fragmentary, written in a dead language, and referring to times and actions of which in general we have no other record, and, above all, using modes of thought and often relating to spiritual states, which amongst ourselves have long ceased to exist, or the influence of institutions which have passed away. Who can supply the external form of the primitive Church of the first century, whether in its ritual or discipline, from the brief allusions of the Gospels and Epistles? Who can imagine the mind of the first believers, as they sat 'with their lamps-lighted and their loins girded', waiting for the reappearance of the Lord? Who describe the prophesyings or speaking with tongues, or interpretation of tongues? Who knows the spirit of a man who consciously recognizes in his ordinary life the inward workings of a Divine power? The first solution of such difficulties is to admit them, to acknowledge that the world in which we live is not the world of the first century, and that the first Christians were not like ourselves.

Nor is this difficulty less, but greater, in reference to words which are common to us and to them, which are used by both with a certain degree of similarity, and with a sort of analogy to other words which puts us off our guard, and prevents our perceiving the real change of meaning. Such is the case with the words church, priest, sacrifice, and in general with words taken from the Mosaic dispensation; above all, with the word 'law'. Does not common sense teach us that whatever St Paul meant by law, he must have meant something hard to us to understand, to whom the law has no existence, who are Europeans, not Orientals? to whom the law of the land is no longer the immediate direct law of God, and who can form no idea of the entanglements and perplexities which the attempt to adapt the law of Mount Sinai to an altered world must have caused to the Jew? Is it not certain that whenever we use the word 'law' in its theological acceptance, we shall give it a meaning somewhat different from that of the Apostle? We cannot help doing so. Probably we may sum it up under the epithet 'moral or ceremonial', or raise the question to which of these the Apostle refers, forgetting that they are distinctions which belong to us, but do not belong to him. The study of a few pages of the Mishna, which mounts up nearly to the time of the Apostles, would reveal to us how very far our dim indefinite

notion of the 'law' falls short of that intense life and power and sacredness which were attributed to it by a Jew of the first century; as well as how little conception he had of the fundamental distinctions which theologians have introduced respecting it.

But the consideration of these difficulties does not terminate with themselves; they lead us to a higher idea of Scripture; they compel us to adapt ourselves to Scripture, instead of adapting Scripture to ourselves. In the ordinary study of the sacred volume, the chief difficulty is the accurate perception of the connexion. The words lie smoothly on the page; the road is trite and worn. Only just here and there we stumble over an impediment; as it were a stone lying not loose, but deeply embedded in the soil; which is the indication of a world below just appearing on the surface. Such are many passages in the *Epistles* of St Paul. There is much that we really understand, much that we appear to understand, which has, indeed, a deceitful congruity with words and thoughts of our own day. Some passages remain intractable. From these latter we obtain the pure ore; here, if anywhere, are traces of the peculiar state and feelings of the Church of the Apostles, such as no after age could invent, or even understand. It is to these we turn, not for a rule of conduct, but for the inner life of Apostles and Churches; rejecting nothing as designedly strange or mysterious, satisfied with no explanation that does violence to the language, not suffering our minds to be diverted from the point of the difficulty, comparing one difficulty with another; seeking the answer, not in ourselves and in the controversies of our own day, but in the Scripture and the habits of thought of the age; collecting every association that bears upon it, and gathering up each fragment that remains, that nothing be lost; at the same time acknowledging how defective our knowledge really is, not merely in that general sense in which all human knowledge is feeble and insufficient, but in the particular one of our actual ignorance of the facts and persons and ways of thought of the age in which the Gospel came into the world.

The subject of the present essay is suggestive of the following questions; 'What did St Paul mean by the law, and what by sin?' 'Is the Apostle speaking from the experience of his own heart and the feelings of his age and country, or making an objective statement for mankind in general, of what all men do or ought to feel?' 'Is there anything in his circumstances, as a convert from the law to the Gospel, that gives the words a peculiar force?' And lastly, we may inquire what application

may be made of them to ourselves ; whether, ' now that the law is dead to us, and we to the law ', the analogy of faith suggests anything, either in our social state or in our physical constitution or our speculative views, which stands in the same relation to us that the law did to the first converts ?

First, then, as has been elsewhere remarked, the law includes in itself different and contradictory aspects. It is at once the letter of the book of the law, and the image of law in general. It is alive, and yet dead ; it is holy, just, and good, and yet the law of sin and death. It is without and within at the same time ; a power like that of conscience is ascribed to it, and yet he who is under its power feels that he is reaching towards something without him which can never become a part of his being. In its effect on individuals it may be likened to a sword entering into the soul, which can never knit together with flesh and blood. In relation to the world at large, it is a prison in which men are shut up. As the Jewish nation is regarded also as an individual ; as the kingdom of heaven is sometimes outward and temporal, sometimes inward and spiritual, used in reference either to the spread of the Gospel, or the second coming of Christ ; as the parables of Christ admit of a similar double reference ; in like manner, the law has its ' double senses '. It is national and individual at once ; the law given on Mount Sinai, and also a rule of conduct. It is the schoolmaster unto Christ, and yet the great enemy of the Gospel ; added to make men transgress, and yet affording the first knowledge of truth and holiness ; applying to the whole people and to the world of the past, and also to each living man ; though a law, and therefore concerned with actions only, terrible to the heart and conscience, requiring men to perform all things, and enabling them to accomplish nothing.

This ambiguity in the use of the word ' law ' first occurs in the Old Testament itself. In the prophecies and psalms, as well as in the writings of St Paul, the law is in a great measure ideal. When the Psalmist spoke of ' meditating in the law of the Lord ', he was not thinking of the five books of Moses. The law which he delighted to contemplate was not written down (as well might we imagine that the Platonic idea was a treatise on philosophy) ; it was the will of God, the truth of God, the justice and holiness of God. In later ages the same feelings began to gather around the volume of the law itself. The law was ideal still ; but with this idealism were combined the reference to its words, and the literal enforcement of its precepts. That it was the law of God was a solemn thought to those who violated the least of its commandments ; and yet its commandments were often such as in

a changed world it was impossible to obey. It needed interpreters before it could be translated into the language of daily life. Such a law could have little hold on practice ; but it had the greatest on ideas. It was the body of truth, the framework of learning and education, the only and ultimate appeal in all controversies. Even its entire disuse did not prevent the Rabbis from discussing with animosity nice questions of minute detail. In Alexandria especially, which was far removed from Jerusalem and the scenes of Jewish history, such an idealizing tendency was carried to the uttermost. Whether there was a temple or not, whether there were sacrifices or not, whether there were feasts or not, mattered little ; there was the idea of a temple, the idea of feasts, the idea of sacrifices. Whether the Messiah actually came or not mattered little, while he was discernible to the mystic in every page of the law. The Jewish religion was beginning to rest on a new basis which, however visionary it may seem to us, could not be shaken any more than the clouds of heaven, even though one stone were not left upon another.

This idealizing tendency of his age we cannot help tracing in St Paul himself. As to the Jew of Alexandria the law became an ideal rule of truth and right, so to St Paul after his conversion it became an ideal form of evil. As there were many Antichrists, so also there were many laws, and none of them absolutely fallen away from their Divine original. In one point of view, the fault was all with the law ; in another point of view, it was all with human nature ; the law ideal and the law actual, the law as it came from God and the law in its consequences to man, are ever crossing each other. It was the nature of the law to be good and evil at once ; evil, because it was good ; like the pillar of cloud and fire, which was its image, light by night and darkness by day,—light and darkness in successive instants.

But, as the law seems to admit of a wider range of meaning than we should at first sight have attributed to it, so also the word 'sin' has a more extended sense than our own use of it implies. Sin with us is a definite act or state. Any crime or vice considered in reference to God may be termed sin ; or, according to another use of it, which is more general and abstract, sin is the inherent defect of human nature, or that evil state in which, even without particular faults or vices, we live. None of these senses includes that peculiar aspect in which it is regarded by St Paul. Sin is with him inseparable from the consciousness of sin. It is not only the principle of evil, working blindly in the human heart, but the principle of discord and dissolution piercing asunder the soul and spirit. He who has felt its power

most is not the perpetrator of the greatest crimes, a Caligula or Nero; but he who has suffered most deeply from the spiritual combat, who has fallen into the abyss of despair, who has the sentence of death in himself, who is wringing his hands and crying aloud in his agony; 'O wretched man that I am!' Sin is not simply evil, but intermediate between evil and good, implying always the presence of God within, light revealing darkness, life in the corruption of death; it is the soul reflecting upon itself in the moment of commission of sin. If we are surprised at St Paul regarding the law—holy, just, and good as it was—as almost sin, we must remember that sin itself, if the expression may be excused, as a spiritual state, has a good element in it. It is the voice of despair praying to God, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' It approximates to the law at the very instant in which it is repelled from it.

There are physical states in which the body is exquisitely sensitive to pain, which are not the sign of health, but of disease. So also there are mental states in which the sense of sin and evil, and the need of forgiveness, press upon us with an unusual heaviness. Such is the state which the Scriptures describe by the words, 'they were pricked to the heart', when whole multitudes in sympathy with each other felt the need of a change, and in the extremity of their suffering were saved, looking on the Lord Jesus. No such spiritual agonies occur in the daily life of all men. Crimes and vices and horrid acts there are, but not that of which the Apostle speaks. That which he sums up in a moment of time, which may be compared to the last struggle when we are upon the confines of two worlds, of which we are so intensely conscious that it is impossible for us permanently to retain the consciousness of it, is 'Sin'.

As there could be no sin if we were wholly unconscious of it, as children or animals are in a state of innocence, as the heathen world we ourselves regard as less guilty or responsible than those who have a clearer light in the dispensation of the Gospel, so in a certain point of view sin may be regarded as the consciousness of sin. It is this latter which makes sin to be what it is, which distinguishes it from crime or vice, which links it with our personality. The first state described by the Roman satirist:

*At stupet hic vitio et fibris increvit opimum  
Pingue; caret culpa; nescit quid perdat,*

is the reverse of what the Apostle means by the life of sin. In ordinary language, vices, regarded in reference to God, are termed sins; and we attempt to arouse the child or savage to a right

sense of his unconscious acts by so terming them. But, in the Apostle's language, consciousness is presupposed in the sin itself; not reflected on it from without. That which gives it the nature of sin is *conscientia peccati*. As Socrates, a little inverting the ordinary view and common language of mankind, declared all virtue to be knowledge: so the language of St Paul implies all sin to be the knowledge of sin. *Conscientia peccati peccatum ipsum est*.

It is at this point the law enters, not to heal the wounded soul, but to enlarge its wound. The law came in that the offence might abound. Whatever dim notion of right and wrong pre-existed; whatever sense of physical impurity may have followed, in the language of the *Book of Job*, one born in sin; whatever terror the outpouring of the vials of God's wrath, in the natural world, may have infused into the soul—all this was heightened and defined by the law of God. In comparison with this second state, it might be said of the previous one, 'Sin is not imputed where there is no law', and man 'was alive without the law once; but when the law came sin revived, and he died'. The soul condemned itself, it was condemned by the law, it is in the last stage of decay and dissolution.

If from the Apostle's ideal point of view we regard the law, not as the tables given on Mount Sinai, or the books of Moses, but as the law written on the heart, the difficulty is, not how we are to identify the law with the consciousness of sin, but how we are to distinguish them. They are different aspects of the same thing, related to each other as positive and negative, two poles of human nature turned towards God, or away from Him. In the language of metaphysical philosophy, we say that 'the subject is identical with the object'; in the same way sin implies the law. The law written on the heart, when considered in reference to the subject, is simply the conscience. The conscience, in like manner, when conceived of objectively, as words written down in a book, as a rule of life which we are to obey, becomes the law. For the sake of clearness we may express the whole in a sort of formula. 'Sin = the consciousness of sin = the law'. From this last conclusion the Apostle only stops short from the remembrance of the Divine original of the law, and the sense that what made it evil to him was the fact that it was in its own nature good.

Wide, then, as might at first have seemed to be the interval between the law and sin, we see that they have their meeting point in the conscience. Yet their opposition and identity have a still further groundwork or reflection in the personal character and life of the Apostle.

I. The spiritual combat, in the seventh chapter of the *Epistle to the Romans*, which terminates with the words: 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our lord', is the description, in a figure, of the Apostle's journey to Damascus. Almost in a moment he passed from darkness to light. Nothing could be more different or contrasted than his after and his former life. In his own language he might be described as cut in two by the sword of the Spirit; his present and previous states were like good and evil, light and darkness, life and death. It accords with what we know of human feelings, that this previous state should have a kind of terror for him, and should be presented to his mind, not as it appeared at the time when he 'thought, verily, that he ought to do many things against Jesus of Nazareth', but as it afterwards seemed, when he counted himself to be the least of the Apostles, because twenty years before he had persecuted the Church of God; when he was amazed at the goodness of God in rescuing the chief of sinners. The life which he had once led was 'the law'. He thought of it, indeed, sometimes as the inspired word, the language of which he was beginning to invest with a new meaning; but more often as an ideal form of evil, the chain by which he had been bound, the prison in which he was shut up. And long after his conversion the shadow of the law seemed to follow him at a distance, and threatened to overcast his heaven; when, with a sort of inconsistency for one assured of 'the crown', he speaks of the trouble of the spirit which overcame him, and of the sentence of death in himself.

II. In another way the Apostle's personal history gives a peculiar aspect to his view of the law. On every occasion, at every turn of his life, on his first return to Jerusalem, when preaching the Gospel in Asia and Greece, in the great struggle between Jewish and Gentile Christians—his persecutors were the Jews, his great enemy the law. Is it surprising that this enmity should have been idealized by him? that the law within and the law without should have blended in one? that his own remembrances of the past should be identified with that spirit of hatred and fanaticism which he saw around him? Not only when he looked back to his past life, and 'the weak and beggarly elements' to which he had been in bondage, but also when he saw the demoniac spirit which, under the name of Judaism, arrayed itself against the truth, might he repeat the words—'the strength of sin is the law'. And, placing these words side by side with other expressions of the Apostle's, such as: 'We wrestle



not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places', we can understand how heretics of the second century, who regarded the law and the Old Testament as the work of an evil principle, were induced to attach themselves specially to St Paul.

III. The Gospel of St Paul was a spirit, not a law; it nowhere enjoined the observance of feasts and sacrifices, and new moons and sabbaths, but was rather antagonistic to them; it was heedless of externals of any kind, except as a matter of expediency and charity. It was a Gospel which knew of no distinction of nations or persons; in which all men had the offer of 'grace, mercy, and peace from the Lord Jesus Christ'; which denounced the oldness of the letter; which contrasted 'the tables of stone with fleshly tables of the heart'; which figured Christ taking the handwriting of ordinances and nailing them to his cross; which put faith in the place of works, and even prohibited circumcision. Such a Gospel was in extreme antagonism to the law. Their original relation was forgotten; the opposition between them insensibly passed into an opposition of good and evil. And yet a new relation sprang up also. For the law, too, witnessed against itself; and, to the Apostle interpreting its words after the manner of his age, became the allegory of the Gospel.

IV. Once more; it has been observed elsewhere (see note on the Imputation of the Sin of Adam), that the place which the law occupies in the teaching of St Paul is analogous to that which the doctrine of original sin holds in later writings. It represents the state of wrath and bondage out of which men pass into the liberty of the children of God. It is the state of nature to the Jew; it is also a law of sin to him; he cannot help sinning, and this very impotency is the extremity of guilt and despair. Similar expressions respecting original sin are sometimes used among ourselves; though not wholly parallel, they may nevertheless assist in shadowing forth the Apostle's meaning.

V. Yet it is not, however, to the life of the Apostle, or to the circle of theological doctrines, that we need confine ourselves for illustration of the words, 'the strength of sin is the law'. Morality also shows us many ways in which good and evil meet together, and truth and error seem inseparable from each other. We cannot do anything good without some evil consequences indirectly flowing from it; we cannot express any truth without involving ourselves to some degree of error; or occasionally conveying an impression to others wholly erroneous. Human characters and human ideas are always mixed and limited; good

and truth ever drag evil and error in their train. Good itself may be regarded as making evil to be what it is, if, as we say, they are relative terms, and the disappearance of the one would involve the disappearance of the other. And there are many things, in which not only may the old adage be applied ;—‘*Corruptio optimi pessima*’, but in which the greatest good is seen to be linked with the worst evil, as, for example, the holiest affections with the grossest sensualities, or a noble ambition with crime and unscrupulousness ; even religion seems sometimes to have a dark side, and readily to ally itself with immorality or with cruelty.

Plato’s kingdom of evil (*Rep.*, I) is not unlike the state into which the Jewish people passed during the last few years before the taking of the city. Of both it might be said, in St Paul’s language, ‘the law is the strength of sin.’ A kingdom of pure evil, as the Greek philosopher observed, there could not be ; it needs some principle of good to be the minister of evil ; it can only be half wicked, or it would destroy itself. We may say the same of the Jewish people. Without the law it never could have presented an equally signal example either of sin or of vengeance. The nation, like other nations, would have yielded quietly to the power of Rome ; ‘it would have died the death of all men’. But the spirit which said ; ‘We have a law, and by our law he ought to die’, recoiled upon itself ; the intense fanaticism which prevented men from seeing the image of love and goodness in that divine form, bound together for destruction a whole people, to make them a monument to after ages of a religion that has outlived itself.

VI. The law and the Gospel may be opposed, according to a modern distinction, as positive and moral. Moral precepts are distinguished from positive, as precepts the reasons of which we see from those the reasons of which we do not see. Moral precepts may be regarded as the more general, while positive precepts fill up the details of the general principle, and apply it to circumstances. Every positive precept involves not merely a moral obligation to obey it so far as it is just, but a moral law, which is its ultimate basis. It will often happen that what was at first just and right may in the course of ages become arbitrary and tyrannical, if the enforcement of it continue after the reason for it has ceased. Or, as it may be expressed more generally, the positive is ever tending to become moral, and the moral to become positive ; the positive to become moral, in so far as that which was at first a mere external command has acquired such authority, and so adapted itself to the hearts of men, as to have an internal witness to it, as in the

case of the fourth commandment ; the moral to become positive, where a law has outlived itself, and the state of society to which it was adapted and the feelings on which it rested have passed away.

The latter was the case with the Jewish law. It had once been moral, and it had become positive. Doubtless, for the minutest details, the colours of the sanctuary, the victims offered in sacrifice, there had once been reasons ; but they had been long since forgotten, and if remembered would have been unintelligible. New reasons might be given for them ; the oldness of the letter might be made to teach a new lesson after the lapse of a thousand years ; but in general the law was felt to be ' a burden that neither they nor their fathers were able to bear '. Side by side with it another religion had sprung up, the religion of the prophets first, and of the zealots afterwards ; religions most different indeed from each other, yet equally different from the law ; in the first of which the voice of God in man seemed to cry aloud against sacrifice and offering, and to proclaim the only true offering, to do justice and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God ; while in the second of them the national faith took the form of a fanatical patriotism. And yet the law still remained as a body of death, with its endless routine of ceremonial, its numberless disputes, its obsolete commands, never suffering the worshipper to be free, and enforcing its least detail with the curses of the book of the law and the terrors of Mount Sinai.

Much of this burden would have been taken off, had there existed among the Jews the distinction which is familiar to ourselves of a moral and ceremonial law. They would then have distinguished between the weightier matters of the law and the ' tithe of mint, anise, and cumin '. Such distinctions are great ' peace-makers ' : they mediate between the present and the past. But in Judaism all was regarded as alike of Divine authority, all subjected the transgressor to the same penalty. ' He who offended in one point was guilty of all ' ; the least penalty was, in a figure, ' death ', and there was no more for the greatest offences. The infringement of any positive command tortured the conscience with a fearful looking for of judgment ; the greatest moral guilt could do no more. Such a religion could only end in hypocrisy and inhumanity, in verily believing that the law demanded His death, in whom only the ' law was fulfilled '.

Let us imagine, in contrast with this, the Gospel with its spiritualizing humanizing influences, soothing the soul of man, the source of joy, and love, and peace. It is a supernatural

power, with which the elements themselves bear witness, endowed with a fulness of life, and imparting life to all who receive it. It is not a law to which the will must submit, but an inward principle which goes before the will; it is also a moral principle to which the heart and conscience instantly assent, which gives just what we want, and seems to set us right with the world, with ourselves, and with God. Yet, in a figure, it is a law also; but in a very different sense from that of Moses; a law within, and not without us: a law of the Spirit of life, not of death; of freedom, not of slavery: of blessing, not of cursing; of mercy, not of vengeance; a law which can be obeyed, not one to which, while it exacts punishment, obedience is impossible. When we look upon this picture, and upon that, is it strange that one who was filled with the mind of Christ should have regarded the law as the strength of sin?

Of what has been said, the sum is as follows; When St Paul speaks of 'the law as the strength of sin,' he uses the term law partly for law in general, but more especially for the burden of the Jewish law on the conscience; when he speaks of sin, he means chiefly the consciousness of sin, of which it may be truly said: 'Where there is no law, there is no transgression; and sin is not imputed where there is no law'. Thirdly, he speaks of the law from his own spiritual experience of 'fears within, and of fightings without'; and from a knowledge of his own countrymen, who 'please not God, but are contrary to all men'. Fourthly, he conceives the law as an ideal form of evil, analogous to original sin in the language of a later theology. Lastly, if there be anything apparently contradictory or to us unintelligible in his manner of speaking of the law, we must attribute this to the modes of thought of his age, which blended many things that are to us separate. Had St Paul distinguished between the law and conscience, or between the law and morality, or between the moral and ceremonial portions of the law itself, or between the law in its first origin and in the practice of his own age, he would perhaps have confined the law to a good sense, or restricted its use to the books of Moses, and not have spoken of it in one verse as 'holy, just, and good' and in the next as being the means of deceiving and slaying him.

In another sense than that in which the Apostle employs the words 'the law is dead to us, and we to the law'. The lapse of ages has but deepened the chasm which separates Judaism from Christianity. Between us and them there is a gulf fixed, so that few are they who pass from them to us, nor do any go from us

to them. The question remains, What application is it possible for us to make of that which has preceded? Is there anything in the world around standing in the same relation to us that the law did to the contemporaries of St Paul?

One answer that might be given is, 'the Roman Catholic Church'. The experience of Luther seems indeed not unlike that struggle which St Paul describes. But, whatever resemblance may be found between Romanism and the ancient Jewish religions, whether in their ceremonial or sacrificial character, or in the circumstance of their both resting on outward and visible institutions, and so limiting the worship of spirit and truth, it cannot be said that Romanism stands in the same relation to us individually, that the law did to the Apostle St Paul. The real parallels are more general, though less obvious. The law St Paul describes as without us, but not in that sense in which an object of sense is without us; though without us it exercises an inward power; it drives men to despair; it paralyzes human nature; it causes evil by its very justice and holiness. It is like a barrier which we cannot pass; a chain wherewith a nation is bound together; a rule which is not adapted to human feelings, but which guides them into subjection to itself.

It has been already remarked that a general parallel to 'the law as the strength of sin' is to be found in that strange blending of good and evil, of truth and error, which is the condition of our earthly existence. But there seem also to be cases in which the parallel is yet closer; in which good is not only the accidental cause of evil, but the limiting principle which prevents man from working out to the uttermost his individual and spiritual nature. In some degree, for example, society may exercise the same tyranny over us, and its conventions be stumbling-blocks to us of the same kind as the law to the contemporaries of St Paul; or, in another way, the thought of self and the remembrance of our past life may 'deceive and slay us'. As in the description of the seventh chapter of the *Romans*; 'It was I, and it was not I; and who can deliver me from the influence of education and the power of my former self?' Or faith and reason, reason and faith may seem mutually to limit each other, and to make the same opposition in speculation that the law and the flesh did to the Apostle in practice. Or, to seek the difficulty on a lower level, while fully assured of the truths of the Gospel, we may seem to be excluded from them by our mental or bodily constitution, which no influences of the Spirit or power of habit may be capable of changing.

I. The society even of a Christian country—and the same

remark applies equally to a Church—is only to a certain extent based upon Christian principle. It rests neither on the view that all mankind are evil, nor that they are all good, but on certain motives, supposed to be strong enough to bind mankind together; on institutions handed down from former generations; on tacit compacts between opposing parties and opinions. Every government must tolerate, and therefore must to a certain degree sanction, contending forms of faith. Even in reference to those more general principles of truth and justice which, in theory at least, equally belong to all religions, the government is limited by expediency, and seeks only to enforce them so far as is required for the preservation of society. Hence arises a necessary opposition between the moral principles of the individual and the political principles of a state. A good man may be sensitive for his faith, zealous for the honour of God, and for every moral and spiritual good; the statesman has to begin by considering the conditions of human society. Aristotle raises a famous question, whether the good citizen is the good man? We have rather to raise the question, whether the good man is the good citizen? If matters of state are to be determined by abstract principles of morality and religion, if, for the want of such principles, whole nations are to be consigned to the vengeance of heaven, if the rule is to be not 'my kingdom is not of this world' but 'we ought to obey God rather than man', there is nothing left but to supersede civil society, and found a religious one in its stead.

It is no imaginary spectre that we are raising, but one that acts powerfully on the minds of religious men. Is it not commonly said by many, that the government is unchristian, that the legislature is unchristian, that all governments and all legislatures are the enemies of Christ and His Church? Herein to them is the fixed evil of the world; not in vice, or in war, or in injustice, or in falsehood; but simply in the fact that the constitution of their country conforms to the laws of human society. It is not necessary to suppose that they will succeed in carrying out their principles, or that a civilized nation will place its liberties in the keeping of a religious party. But, without succeeding, they do a great deal of harm to themselves and to the world. For they draw the mind away from the simple truths of the Gospel to manifestations of opinion and party spirit; they waste their own power to do good; some passing topic of theological controversy drains their life. We may not 'do evil that good may come' they say: and 'what is morally wrong cannot be politically right'; and with this

misapplied 'syllogism of the conscience' they would make it impossible, in the mixed state of human affairs, to act at all, either for good or evil. He who seriously believes that not for our actual sins, but for some legislative measure of doubtful expediency, the wrath of God is hanging over his country, is in so unreal a state of mind as to be scarcely capable of discerning the real evils by which we are surrounded. The remedies of practical ills sink into insignificance compared with some point in which the interests of religion appear to be, but are not, concerned.

But it is not only in the political world that imaginary forms of evil present themselves, and we are haunted by ideas which can never be carried out in practice; the difficulty comes nearer home to most of us in our social life. If governments and nations appear unchristian, the appearance of society itself is in a certain point of view still more unchristian. Suppose a person acquainted with the real state of the world in which we live and move, and neither morosely depreciating nor unduly exalting human nature, to turn to the image of the Christian Church in the New Testament, how great would the difference appear! How would the blessing of poverty contrast with the real, even the moral advantages of wealth! the family of love, with distinctions of ranks! the spiritual, almost supernatural, society of the first Christians, with our world of fashion, of business, of pleasure! the community of goods, with our meagre charity to others! the prohibition of going to law before the heathen, with our endless litigation before judges of all religions! the cross of Christ, with our ordinary life! How little does the world in which we live seem to be designed for the tabernacle of immortal souls! How large a portion of mankind, even in a civilized country, appears to be sacrificed to the rest, and to be without the means of moral and religious improvement! How fixed, and steadfast, and regular do dealings of money and business appear! how transient and passing are religious objects! Then, again, consider how society, sometimes in self-defence, sets a false stamp on good and evil; as in the excessive punishment of the errors of women, compared with Christ's conduct to the woman who was a sinner. Or when men are acknowledged to be in the sight of God equal, how strange it seems that one should heap up money for another, and be dependent on him for his daily life. Susceptible minds, attaching themselves, some to one point some to another, may carry such reflections very far, until society itself appears evil, and they desire some primitive patriarchal mode of life. They are tired of conventionalities;

they want, as they say, to make the Gospel a reality; to place all men on a religious, social, and political equality. In this, as in the last case, 'they are kicking against the pricks'; what they want is a society which has not the very elements of a social state; they do not perceive that the cause of the evil is human nature itself, which will not cohere without mixed motives and received forms and distinctions, and that Providence has been pleased to rest the world on a firmer basis than is supplied by the fleeting emotions of philanthropy, viz. self-interest. We are not, indeed, to sit with our arms folded, and acquiesce in human evil. But we must separate the accidents from the essence of this evil; questions of taste, things indifferent, or customary, or necessary, from the weightier matters of oppression, falsehood, vice. The ills of society are to be struggled against in such a manner as not to violate the conditions of society; the precepts of Scripture are to be applied, but not without distinctions of times and countries; Christian duties are to be enforced, but not identified with political principles. To see the world—not as it ought to be, but as it is—to be on a level with the circumstances in which God has placed them, to renounce the remote and impossible for what is possible and in their reach; above all, to begin within—these are the limits which enthusiasts should set to their aspirations after social good. It is a weary thing to be all our life long warring against the elements, or, like the slaves of some eastern lord, using our hands in a work which can only be accomplished by levers and machines. The physician of society should aid nature instead of fighting against it; he must let the world alone as much as he can; to a certain degree, he will even accept things as they are in the hope of bettering them.

II. Mere weakness of character will sometimes afford an illustration of the Apostle's words. If there are some whose days are 'bound each to each by natural piety', there are others on whom the same continuous power is exercised for evil as well as good; they are unable to throw off their former self; the sins of their youth lie heavy on them; the influence of opinions which they have ceased to hold discolours their minds. Or it may be that their weakness takes a different form, viz., that of clinging to some favourite resolve, or of yielding to some fixed idea which gets dominion over them, and becomes the limit of all their ideas. A common instance of this may be found in the use made by many persons of conscience. Whatever they wish or fancy, whatever course of action they are led to by some influence obvious to others, though unobserved by themselves,



immediately assumes the necessary and stereotyped form of the conscientious fulfilment of a duty. To every suggestion of what is right and reasonable, they reply only with the words: 'their consciences will not allow it'. They do what they think right; they do not observe that they never seem to themselves to do otherwise. No voice of authority, no opinion of others, weighs with them when put in the scale against the dictates of what they term conscience. As they get older, their narrow ideas of right acquire a greater tenacity; the world is going on, and they are as they were. A deadening influence lies on their moral nature, the peculiarity of which is, that, like the law, it assumes the appearance of good, differing from the law only in being unconscious. Conscience, one may say, putting their own character into the form of a truth or commandment, 'has deceived and slain them'.

Another form of conscience yet more closely resembles the principle described in the seventh chapter of the *Romans*. There is a state in which man is powerless to act, and is nevertheless, clairvoyant of all the good and evil of his own nature. He places the good and evil principle before him, and is ever oscillating between them. He traces the labyrinth of conflicting principles in the world, and is yet further perplexed and entangled. He is sensitive to every breath of feeling, and incapable of the performance of any duty. Or take another example: it sometimes happens that the remembrance of past suffering, or the consciousness of sin, may so weigh a man down as fairly to paralyze his moral power. He is distracted between what he is and what he was; old habits and vices, and the new character which is being fashioned in him. Sometimes the balance seems to hang equal; he feels the earnest wish and desire to do rightly, but cannot hope to find pleasure and satisfaction in a good life; he desires heartily to repent, but can never think it possible that God should forgive. 'It is I, and it is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me'. 'I have, and have never ceased to have, the wish for better things, even amid haunts of infamy and vice'. In such language, even now, though with less fervour than in 'the first spiritual chaos of the affections', does the soul cry out to God: 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death'?

III. There is some danger of speculative difficulties presenting the same hindrance and stumbling-block to our own generation, that the law is described as doing to the contemporaries of St Paul. As the law was holy, just, and good, so many of these difficulties are true, and have real grounds:

all of them, except in cases where they spring from hatred and opposition to the Gospel, are at least innocent. And yet, by undermining received opinions, by increasing vanity and egotism, instead of strengthening the will and fixing the principles, their promulgation may become a temporary source of evil; so that, in the words of the Apostle, it may be said of them that, taking occasion by the truth, they deceive and slay men. What then? is the law sin? is honest inquiry wrong? God forbid! it is we ourselves who are incapable of receiving the results of inquiry; who will not believe unless we see; who demand a proof that we cannot have; who begin with appeals to authority, and tradition, and consequences, and, when dissatisfied with these, imagine that there is no other foundation on which life can repose but the loose and sandy structure of our individual opinions. Persons often load their belief in the hope of strengthening it; they escape doubt by assuming certainty. Or they believe 'under an hypothesis'; their worldly interests lead them to acquiesce; their higher intellectual convictions rebel. Opinions, hardly won from study and experience, are found to be at variance with early education, or natural temperament. Opposite tendencies grow together in the mind; appearing and reappearing at intervals. Life becomes a patchwork of new and old cloth, or like a garment which changes colour in the sun.

It is true that the generation to which we belong has difficulties to contend with, perhaps greater than those of any former age; and certainly different from them. Some of these difficulties arise out of the opposition of reason and faith; the critical inquiries of which the Old and New Testament have been the subject, are a trouble to many; the circumstance that, while the Bible is the word of life for all men, such inquiries are open only to the few, increases the irritation. The habit of mind which has been formed in the study of Greek or Roman history may be warned off the sacred territory, but cannot really be prevented from trespassing; still more impossible is it to keep the level of knowledge at one point in Germany, at another in England. Geology, ethnology, historical and metaphysical criticism, assail in succession not the Scriptures themselves, but notions and beliefs which in the minds of many good men are bound up with them. The eternal strain to keep theology where it is while the world is going on, specious reconcilements, political or ecclesiastical exigencies, recent attempts to revive the past, and the reaction to which they have given birth, the contrast that everywhere arises of old and new, all add to the confusion. Probably, no other age has been to the same extent the subject

of cross and contradictory influences. What can be more unlike than the tone of sermons and of newspapers? or the ideas of men on art, politics, and religion, now, and half a generation ago? The thoughts of a few original minds, like wedges, pierce into all received and conventional opinions and are almost equally removed from either. The destruction of 'shams', that is, the realization of things as they are amid all the conventions of thought and speech and action, is also an element of unsettlement. The excess of self-reflection again, is not favourable to strength or simplicity of character. Everyone seems to be employed in decomposing the world, human nature, and himself. The discovery is made that good and evil are mixed in a far more subtle way than at first sight would have appeared possible; and that even extremes of both meet in the same person. The mere analysis of moral and religious truth, the fact that we know the origin of many things which the last generation received on authority, is held by some to destroy their sacredness. Lastly, there are those who feel that all the doubts of sceptics put together, fall short of that great doubt which has insinuated itself into their minds, from the contemplation of mankind—saying one thing and doing another.

It is foolish to lament over these things; it would be still more foolish to denounce them. They are the mental trials of the age and country in which God has placed us. If they seem at times to exercise a weakening or unsettling influence, may we not hope that increasing love of truth, deeper knowledge of ourselves and other men, will, in the end, simplify and not perplex the path of life. We may leave off in mature years where we began in youth, and receive not only the kingdom of God, but the world also, as 'little children'. The analysis of moral and religious truth may correct its errors without destroying its obligations. Experience of the illusions of religious feeling at a particular time should lead us to place religion on a foundation which is independent of feeling. Because the Scripture is no longer held to be a book of geology or ethnology, or a supernatural revelation of historical facts, it will not cease to be the law of our lives, exercising an influence over us, different in kind from the ideas of philosophical systems, or the aspirations of poetry or romance. Because the world (of which we are a part) is hypocritical and deceitful, and individuals go about dissecting their neighbours' motives and lives, that is a reason for cherishing a simple and manly temper of mind, which does not love men the less because it knows human nature more; which pierces the secrets of the heart, not by any process of

anatomy, but by the light of an eye from which the mists of selfishness are dispersed.

IV. The relation in which science stands to us may seem to bear but a remote resemblance to that in which the law stood to the Apostle St Paul. Yet the analogy is not fanciful, but real. Traces of physical laws are discernible everywhere in the world around us ; in ourselves also, whose souls are knit together with our bodies, whose bodies are a part of the material creation. It seems as if nature came so close to us as to leave no room for the motion of our will ; instead of the inexhaustible grace of God enabling us to say, in the language of the Apostle ; ' I can do all things through Christ that strengthened me ', we become more and more the slaves of our own physical constitution. Our state is growing like that of a person whose mind is over-sensitive to the nervous emotions of his own bodily frame. And as the self-consciousness becomes stronger and the contrast between faith and experience more vivid, there arises a conflict between the spirit and the flesh, nature and grace, not unlike that of which the Apostle speaks. No one who, instead of hanging to the past, will look forward to the future, can expect that natural science should stand in the same attitude towards revelation fifty years hence as at present. The faith of mankind varies from age to age ; it is weaker, or it may be stronger, at one time than at another. But that which never varies or turns aside, which is always going on and cannot be driven back, is knowledge based on the sure ground of observation and experiment, the regular progress of which is itself matter of observation. The stage at which the few have arrived is already far in advance of the many, and if there were nothing remaining to be discovered, still the diffusion of the knowledge that we have, without new addition, would exert a great influence on religious and social life. Still greater is the indirect influence which science exercises through the medium of the arts. In one century a single invention has changed the face of Europe : three or four such inventions might produce a gulf between us and the future far greater than the interval which separates ancient from modern civilization. Doubtless God has provided a way that the thought of Him should not be banished from the hearts of men. And habit, and opinion, and prescription may ' last our time ', and many motives may conspire to keep our minds off the coming change. But if ever our present knowledge of geology, of languages, of the races and religions of mankind, of the human frame itself, shall be regarded as the starting-point of a goal which has been almost reached, supposing too the progress of

science to be accompanied by a corresponding development of the mechanical arts, we can hardly anticipate, from what we already see, the new relation that will then arise between reason and faith. Perhaps the very opposition between them may have died away. At any rate experience shows that religion is not stationary when all other things are moving onward.

Changes of this kind pass gradually over the world ; the mind of man is not suddenly thrown into a state for which it is unprepared. No one has more doubts than he can carry ; the way of life is not found to stop and come to an end in the midst of a volcano, or on the edge of a precipice. Dangers occur, not from the disclosure of any new, or hitherto unobserved, facts, for which, as for all other blessings, we have reason to be thankful to God ; but from our concealment or denial of them, from the belief that we can make them other than they are ; from the fancy that some *a priori* notion, some undefined word, some intensity of personal conviction, is the weapon with which they are to be met. New facts, whether bearing on Scripture, or on religion generally, or on morality, are sure to win their way ; the tide refuses to recede at any man's bidding. And there are not wanting signs that the increase of secular knowledge is beginning to be met by a corresponding progress in religious ideas. Controversies are dying out ; the lines of party are fading into one another ; niceties of doctrine are laid aside. The opinions respecting the inspiration of Scripture, which are held in the present day by good and able men, are not those of fifty years ago ; a change may be observed on many points, a reserve on still more. Formulas of reconciliation have sprung up : ' the Bible is not a book of science ', ' the inspired writers were not taught supernaturally what they could have learned from ordinary sources ', resting-places in the argument at which travellers are the more ready to halt, because they do not perceive that they are only temporary. For there is no real resting-place but in the entire faith, that all true knowledge is a revelation of the will of God. In the case of the poor and suffering, we often teach resignation to the accidents of life ; it is not less plainly a duty of religious men, to submit to the progress of knowledge. That is a new kind of resignation, in which many Christians have to school themselves. When the difficulty may seem, in anticipation, to be greatest, they will find, with the Apostle, that there is a way out : ' The truth has made them free '.

## On Righteousness by Faith

No doctrine in later times has been looked at so exclusively through the glass of controversy as that of justification. From being the simplest it has become the most difficult ; the language of the heart has lost itself in a logical tangle. Differences have been drawn out as far as possible, and then taken back and reconciled. The extreme of one view has more than once produced a reaction in favour of the other. Many senses have been attributed to the same words, and simple statements carried out on both sides into endless conclusions. New formulas of conciliation have been put in the place of old-established phrases, and have soon died away, because they had no root in language or in the common sense or feeling of mankind. The difficulty of the subject has been increased by the different degrees of importance attached to it: while to some it is an '*articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ*', others have never been able to see in it more than a verbal dispute.

This perplexity on the question of righteousness by faith is partly due to the character of the age in which it began to revive. Men felt at the Reformation the need of a spiritual religion, and could no longer endure the yoke which had been put upon their fathers. The heart rebelled against the burden of ordinances ; it wanted to take a nearer way to reconciliation with God. But when the struggle was over, and individuals were seeking to impart to others the peace which they had found themselves, they had no simple or natural expression of their belief. They were alone in a world in which the human mind had been long enslaved. It was necessary for them to go down into the land of the enemy, and get their weapons sharpened before they could take up a position and fortify their camp.

In other words, the Scholastic Logic had been for six centuries previous the great instrument of training the human

mind ; it had grown up with it, and become a part of it. Neither would it have been more possible for the Reformers to have laid it aside than to have laid aside the use of language itself. Around theology it lingers still, seeming reluctant to quit a territory which is peculiarly its own. No science has hitherto fallen so completely under its power ; no other, is equally unwilling to ask the meaning of terms ; none has been so fertile in reasonings and consequences. The change of which Lord Bacon was the herald has hardly yet reached it ; much less could the Reformation have anticipated the New Philosophy.

The whole mental structure of that time rendered it necessary that the Reformers, no less than their opponents, should resort to the scholastic methods of argument. The difference between the two parties did not lie here. Perhaps it may be said with truth that the Reformers were even more schoolmen than their opponents, because they dealt more with abstract ideas, and were more concentrated on a single topic. The whole of Luther's teaching was summed up in a single article, 'Righteousness by Faith'. That was to him the Scriptural expression of a spiritual religion. But this, according to the manner of that time, could not be left in the simple language of St Paul. It was to be proved from Scripture first, then isolated by definition ; then it might be safely drawn out into remote consequences.

And yet, why was this ? Why not repeat, with a slight alteration of the words rather than the meaning of the Apostle, Neither justification by faith nor justification by works, but 'a new creature' ? Was there not yet 'a more excellent way' to oppose things to words—the life, and spirit, and freedom of the Gospel, to the deadness, and powerlessness, and slavery of the Roman Church ? So it seems natural to us to reason, looking back after an interval of three centuries on the weary struggle ; so absorbing to those who took part in it once, so distant now either to us or them. But so it could not be. The temper of the times, and the education of the Reformers themselves, made it necessary that one dogmatic system should be met by another. The scholastic divinity had become a charmed circle, and no man could venture out of it, though he might oppose or respond within it.

And thus justification by faith, and justification by works, became the watchword of two parties. We may imagine ourselves at that point in the controversy when the Pelagian dispute had been long since hushed, and that respecting Predestination had not yet begun ; when men were not differing about original

sin, and had not begun to differ about the Divine decrees. What Luther sought for was to find a formula which expressed most fully the entire, unreserved, immediate dependence of the believer on Christ. What the Catholic sought for was so to modify this formula as not to throw dishonour on the Church by making religion a merely personal or individual matter ; or on the lives of holy men of old, who had wrought out their salvation by asceticism ; or endanger morality by appearing to undervalue good works. It was agreed by all, that men are saved through Christ—not of themselves, but of the grace of God, was equally agreed since the condemnation of Pelagius—that faith and works imply each other, was not disputed by either. A narrow space is left for the combat, which has to be carried on within the outworks of an earlier creed, in which, nevertheless, great subtlety of human thought and the greatest differences of character admit of being displayed.

On this narrow ground the first question that naturally arises is, how faith is to be defined ? is it to include love and holiness, or to be separated from them ? If the former, it seems to lose its apprehensive dependent nature, and to be scarcely distinguishable from works ; if the latter, the statement is too refined for the common sense of mankind ; though made by Luther, it could scarcely be retained even by his immediate followers. Again, is it an act or a state ? are we to figure it as a point, or as a line ? Is the whole of our spiritual life anticipated in the beginning, or may faith no less than works, justification equally with sanctification, be conceived of as going on to perfection ? Is justification an objective act of Divine mercy, or a subjective state of which the believer is conscious in himself ? Is the righteousness of faith imputed or inherent, an attribution of the merits of Christ, or a renewal of the human heart itself ? What is the test of a true faith ? And is it possible for those who are possessed of it to fall away ? How can we exclude the doctrine of human merit consistently with Divine justice ? How do we account for the fact that some have this faith, and others are without it, this difference being apparently independent of their moral state ? If faith comes by grace, is it imparted to few or to all ? And in what relation does the whole doctrine stand to Predestinarianism on the one hand, and to the Catholic or Sacramental theory on the other ?

So at many points the doctrine of righteousness by faith touches the metaphysical questions of subject and object, of necessity and freedom, of habits and actions, and of human consciousness, like a magnet drawing to itself philosophy, as it has



once drawn to itself the history of Europe. There were distinctions also of an earlier date, with which it had to struggle, of deeper moral import than their technical form would lead us to suppose, such as that of congruity and condignity, in which the analogy of Christianity is transferred to heathenism, and the doer of good works before justification is regarded as a shadow of the perfected believer. Neither must we omit to observe that, as the doctrine of justification by faith had a close connexion with the Pelagian controversy, carrying the decision of the Church a step further, making Divine Grace not only the source of human action, but also requiring the consciousness or assurance of grace in the believer himself: so it puts forth its roots in another direction, attaching itself to Anselm as well as Augustine, and comprehending the idea of satisfaction; not now, as formerly, of Christ offered in the sacrifice of the Mass, but of one sacrifice, once offered for the sins of men, whether considered as an expiation by suffering, or implying only a reconciliation between God and man, or a mere manifestation of the righteousness of God.

Such is the whole question, striking deep, and spreading far and wide with its offshoots. It is not our intention to enter on the investigation of all these subjects, many of which are interesting as phases of thought in the history of the Church, but have no bearing on the interpretation of St Paul's *Epistles*, and would be out of place here. Our inquiry will embrace two heads: (1) What did St Paul mean by the expression 'righteousness of faith', in that age ere controversies about his meaning arose; and (2) What do we mean by it, now that such controversies have died away, and the interest in them is retained only by the theological student, and the Church and the world are changed, and there is no more question of Jew or Gentile, circumcision or uncircumcision, and we do not become Christians, but are so from our birth. Many volumes are not required to explain the meaning of the Apostle; nor can the words of eternal life be other than few and simple to ourselves.

There is one interpretation of the *Epistles* of St Paul which is necessarily in some degree false; that is, the interpretation put upon them by later controversy. When the minds of men are absorbed in a particular circle of ideas they take possession of any stray verse, which becomes the centre of their world. They use the words of Scripture, but are incapable of seeing that they have another meaning and are used in a different connection from that in which they employ them. Sometimes there is a degree of similarity in the application which tends to conceal the

difference. Thus Luther and St Paul both use the same term, 'justified by faith'; and the strength of the Reformer's words is the authority of St Paul. Yet, observe how far this agreement is one of words: how far of things. For Luther is speaking solely of individuals, St Paul also of nations; Luther of faith absolutely, St Paul of faith as relative to the law. With St Paul faith is the symbol of the universality of the Gospel. Luther excludes this or any analogous point of view. In St Paul there is no opposition of faith and love; nor does he further determine righteousness by faith as meaning a faith in the blood or even in the death of Christ; nor does he suppose consciousness or assurance in the person justified. But all these are prominent features of the Lutheran doctrine. Once more: the faith of St Paul has reference to the evil of the world of sight; which was soon to vanish away, that the world in which faith walks might be revealed; but no such allusion is implied in the language of the Reformer. Lastly; the change in the use of the substantive 'righteousness' to 'justification' is the indication of a wide difference between St Paul and Luther; the natural, almost accidental, language of St Paul having already passed into a technical formula.

These contrasts make us feel that St Paul can only be interpreted by himself, not from the systems of modern theologians, nor even from the writings of one who had so much in common with him as Luther. It is the spirit and feeling of St Paul which Luther represents, not the meaning of his words. A touch of nature in both 'makes them kin'. And without bringing down one to the level of the other, we can imagine St Paul returning that singular affection, almost like an attachment to a living friend, which the great Reformer felt towards the Apostle. But this personal attachment or resemblance in no way lessens the necessary difference between the preaching of Luther and of St Paul, which arose in some degree perhaps from their individual character, but chiefly out of the different circumstances and modes of thought of their respective ages. At the Reformation we are at another stage of the human mind, in which system and logic and the abstractions of Aristotle have a kind of necessary force, when words have so completely taken the place of things, that the minutest distinctions appear to have an intrinsic value.

It has been said (and the remark admits of a peculiar application, to theology), that few persons know sufficient of things to be able to say whether disputes are merely verbal or not. Yet, on the other hand, it must be admitted that, whatever accidental advantage theology may derive from system and definition, mere accurate statements can never form the substance of our belief.

No one doubts that Christianity could be in the fullest sense taught to a child or a savage, without any mention of justification or satisfaction or predestination. Why should we not receive the Gospel as 'little children?' Why should we not choose the poor man's part in the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven? Why elaborate doctrinal abstractions which are so subtle in their meaning as to be in great danger of being lost in their translation from one language to another? which are always running into consequences inconsistent with our moral nature, and the knowledge of God derived from it? which are not the prevailing usage of Scripture, but technical terms which we have gathered from one or two passages, and made the key-notes of our scale? The words satisfaction and predestination nowhere occur in Scripture; the word regeneration only twice, and but once in a sense at all similar to that which it bears among ourselves; the word justification twice only, and nowhere as a purely abstract term.

But although language and logic have strangely transfigured the meaning of Scripture, we cannot venture to say that all theological controversies are questions of words. If from their winding mazes we seek to retrace our steps, we still find differences which have a deep foundation in the opposite tendencies of the human mind, and the corresponding division of the world itself. That men of one temper of mind adopt one expression rather than another may be partly an accident; but the adoption of an expression by persons of marked character makes the difference of words a reality also. That can scarcely be thought a matter of words which cut in sunder the Church, which overthrew princes, which made the line of demarcation between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the Apostolic age, and is so, in another sense, between Protestant and Catholic at the present day. And in a deeper way of reflection than this, if we turn from the Church to the individual, we seem to see around us opposite natures and characters, whose lives really exhibit a difference corresponding to that of which we are speaking. The one incline to morality, the other to religion; the one to the sacramental, the other to the spiritual; the one to multiplicity in outward ordinances, the other to simplicity; the one consider chiefly the means, the other the end; the one desire to dwell upon doctrinal statements, the other need only the name of Christ; the one turn to ascetic practices, to lead a good life, and to do good to others, the other to faith, humility, and dependence on God. We may sometimes find the opposite attributes combine with each other (there have ever been cross divisions on this article of belief in the Christian world; the great body of the

Reformed Churches, and a small minority of Roman Catholics before the Reformation, being on the one side ; and the whole Roman Catholic Church since the Reformation, and a section of the Protestant Episcopalians, and some lesser communions, on the other) ; still, in general, the first of these characters answers to that doctrine which the Roman Church sums up in the formula of justification by works ; the latter is that temper of mind which finds its natural dogmatic expression in the words ' We are justified by faith '.

These latter words have been carried out of their original circle of ideas into a new one by the doctrines of the Reformation. They have become hardened, stiffened, sharpened by the exigencies of controversy, and torn from what may be termed their context in the Apostolical age. To that age we must return ere we can think in the Apostle's language. His conception of faith, although simpler than our own, has nevertheless a peculiar relation to his own day ; it is at once wider, and also narrower, than the use of the word among ourselves—wider in that it is the symbol of the admission of the Gentiles into the Church, but narrower also in that it is the negative of the law. Faith is the proper technical term which excludes the law ; being what the law is not, as the law is what faith is not. No middle term connects the two, or at least none which the Apostle admits, until he has first widened the breach between them to the uttermost. He does not say : ' Was not Abraham our father justified by works (as well as by faith), when he had offered up Isaac his son on the altar ? ' but only : ' What saith the Scripture ? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness '.

The Jewish conception of righteousness was the fulfilment of the Commandments. He who walked in all the precepts of the law blameless, like Daniel in the Old Testament, or Joseph and Nathaniel in the New, was righteous before God. ' What shall I do to inherit eternal life ? Thou knowest the Commandments. Do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness. All these have I kept from my youth up '. This is a picture of Jewish righteousness as it presents itself in its most favourable light. But it was a righteousness which comprehended the observance of ceremonial details as well as moral precepts, which confused questions of a new moon or a sabbath, with the weightier matters of common honesty or filial duty. It might be nothing more than an obedience to the law as such, losing itself on the surface of religion, in casuistical distinctions about meats and drinks, or vows or forms of oaths, or purifications, without any attempt to make clean that which is within.

It might also pierce inward to the dividing asunder of the soul. Then was heard the voice of conscience crying: 'All these things cannot make the doers thereof perfect'. When every external obligation was fulfilled, the internal began. Actions must include thoughts and intentions—the Seventh Commandment extends to the adultery of the heart; in one word, the law must become a spirit (See *Essay on the Law as the Strength of Sin*).

But to the mind of St Paul the spirit presented itself not so much as a higher fulfilment of the law, but as antagonistic to it. From this point of view, it appeared not that man could never fulfil the law perfectly, but that he could never fulfil it at all. What God required was something different in kind from legal obedience. What man needed was a return to God and nature. He was burdened, straitened, shut out from the presence of his Father—a servant, not a son; to whom, in a spiritual sense, the heaven was become as iron, and the earth brass. The new righteousness must raise him above the burden of ordinances, and bring him into a living communion with God. It must be within, and not without him—written not on tables of stone, but on fleshly tables of the heart. But inward righteousness was no peculiar privilege of the Israelites; it belonged to all mankind. And the revelation of it, as it satisfied the need of the individual soul, vindicated also the ways of God to man; it showed God to be equal in justice and mercy to all mankind.

As the symbol of this inward righteousness, St Paul found an expression—righteousness by faith—derived from those passages in the Old Testament which spoke of Abraham being justified by faith. It was already in use among the Jews; but it was the Apostle who stamped it first with a permanent and universal import. The faith of St Paul was not the faith of the Patriarchs only, who believed in the promises made to their descendants; it entered within the veil—out of the reach of ordinances—beyond the evil of this present life; it was the instrument of union with Christ, in whom all men were one; whom they were expecting to come from heaven. The Jewish nation itself was too far gone to be saved as a nation: individuals had a nearer way. The Lord was at hand; there was no time for a long life of laborious service. As at the last hour, when we have to teach men rather how to die than how to live, the Apostle could only say to those who would receive it: 'Believe; all things are possible to him that believes'.

Such are some of the peculiar aspects of the Apostle's doctrine of righteousness by faith. To our own minds it has become a

later stage or a particular form of the more general doctrine of salvation through Christ, of the grace of God to man, or of the still more general truth of spiritual religion. It is the connecting link by which we appropriate these to ourselves—the hand which we put out to apprehend the mercy of God. It was not so to the Apostle. To him grace and faith and the Spirit are not parts of a doctrinal system, but different expressions of the same truth. ‘Beginning in the Spirit’ is another way of saying ‘Being justified by faith’. He uses them indiscriminately, and therefore we cannot suppose that he could have laid any stress on distinctions between them. Even the apparently precise antithesis of the prepositions *ἐν*, *διὰ* varies in different passages. Only in reference to the law, faith, rather than grace, is the more correct and natural expression. It was Christ or not Christ, the Spirit or not the Spirit, faith and the law, that were the dividing principles: not Christ through faith, as opposed to Christ through works; or the Spirit as communicated through grace, to the Spirit as independent of grace.

Illusive as are the distinctions of later controversies as guides to the interpretation of Scripture, there is another help, of which we can hardly avail ourselves too much—the interpretation of fact. To read the mind of the Apostle, we must read also the state of the world and the Church by which he was surrounded. Now, there are two great facts which correspond to the doctrine of righteousness by faith, which is also the doctrine of the universality of the Gospel: first, the vision which the Apostle saw on the way to Damascus; secondly, the actual conversion of the Gentiles by the preaching of the Apostle. Righteousness by faith, admission of the Gentiles, even the rejection and restoration of the Jews, are—himself under so many different points of view. The way by which God had led him was the way also by which he was leading other men. When he preached righteousness by faith, his conscience also bore him witness that this was the manner in which he had himself passed from darkness to light, from the burden of ordinances to the power of an endless life. In proclaiming the salvation of the Gentiles, he was interpreting the world as it was; their admission into the Church had already taken place before the eyes of all mankind; it was a purpose of God that was actually fulfilled, not waiting for some future revelation. Just as when doubts are raised respecting his Apostleship, he cut them short by the fact that he was an Apostle, and did the work of an Apostle; so, in adjusting the relations of Jew and Gentile, and justifying the ways of God, the facts, read aright, are the basis of the doctrine which he teaches. All that

he further shows is, that these facts were in accordance with the Old Testament, with the words of the Prophets, and the dealings of God with the Jewish people. And the Apostles at Jerusalem, equally with himself, admitted the success of his mission as an evidence of its truth.

But the faith which St Paul preached was not merely the evidence of things not seen, in which the Gentiles also had part, nor only the reflection of 'the violence' of the world around him, which was taking the kingdom of heaven by force. The source, the hidden life, from which justification flows, in which it lives, is—Christ. It is true that we nowhere find in the *Epistles* the expression 'justification by Christ' exactly in the sense of modern theology. But, on the other hand, we are described as dead with Christ, we live with Him, we are members of His body, we follow Him in all the stages of His being. All this is another way of expressing 'We are justified by faith'. That which takes us out of ourselves and links us with Christ, which anticipates in an instant the rest of life, which is the door of every heavenly and spiritual relation, presenting us through a glass with the image of Christ crucified, is faith. The difference between our own mode of thinking and that of the Apostle is mainly this—that to him Christ is set forth more as in a picture, and less through the medium of ideas or figures of speech; and that while we conceive the Saviour more naturally as an object of faith, to St Paul He is rather the indwelling power of life which is fashioned in him, the marks of whose body he bears, the measure of whose sufferings he fills up.

When in the Gospel it is said 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved', this is substantially the same truth as 'We are justified by faith'. It is another way of expressing, 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ'. Yet we may note two points of difference, as well as two of resemblance, in the manner in which the doctrine is set forth in the Gospel as compared with the manner of the *Epistles* of St Paul. First, in the omission of any connexion between the doctrine of faith in Christ, and the admission of the Gentiles. The Saviour is within the borders of Israel; and accordingly little is said of the 'sheep not of this fold', or the other husbandmen who shall take possession of the vineyard. Secondly, there is in the words of Christ no antagonism or opposition to the law, except so far as the law itself represented an imperfect or defective morality, or the perversions of the law had become inconsistent with every moral principle. Two points of resemblance have also to be remarked between the

faith of the *Gospels* and of the *Epistles*. In the first place, both are accompanied by forgiveness of sins. As our Saviour to the disciple who affirms his belief says : ' Thy sins be forgiven thee ' ; so St Paul, when seeking to describe, in the language of the Old Testament, the state of justification by faith, cites the words of David : ' Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin '. Secondly, they have both a kind of absoluteness which raises them above earthly things. There is a sort of omnipotence attributed to faith, of which the believer is made a partaker. ' Whoso hath faith as a grain of mustard seed, and shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done unto him ' is the language of our Lord. ' I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me ', are the words of St Paul.

Faith, in the view of the Apostle, has a further aspect, which is freedom. That quality in us which in reference to God and Christ is faith, in reference to ourselves and our fellow-men is Christian liberty. ' With this freedom Christ has made us free ' ; ' where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty '. It is the image also of the communion of the world to come. ' The Jerusalem that is above is free ', and ' the creature is waiting to be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God '. It applies to the Church as now no longer confined in the prison-house of the Jewish dispensation ; to the grace of God, which is given irrespectively to all ; to the individual, the power of whose will is now loosed ; to the Gospel, as freedom from the law, setting the conscience at rest about questions of meats and drinks, and new moons and sabbaths ; and, above all to the freedom from the consciousness of sin : in all these senses the law of the spirit of life is also the law of freedom.

In modern language, assurance has been deemed necessary to the definition of a true faith. There is a sense, too, in which final assurance entered into the conception of the faith of the *Epistles*. Looking at men from without, it was possible for them to fall away finally ; it was possible also to fall without falling away ; as St John says, there is a sin unto death, and there is a sin not unto death. But looking inwards into their hearts and consciences, their salvation was not a matter of probability ; they knew whom they had believed, and were confident that He who had begun the good work in them would continue it unto the end. All calculations respecting the future were to them lost in the fact that they were already saved ; to use a homely expression, they had no time to inquire whether the state to which they were called was permanent and final. The



same intense faith which separated them from the present world, had already given them a place in the world to come. They had not to win the crown—it was already won : this life, when they thought of themselves in relation to Christ, was the next ; as their union with Him seemed to them more true and real than the mere accidents of their temporal existence.

A few words will briefly recapitulate the doctrine of righteousness by faith as gathered from the *Epistles* of St Paul.

Faith, then, according to the Apostle, is the spiritual principle whereby we go out of ourselves to hold communion with God and Christ ; not like the faith of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, clothing itself in the shadows of the law ; but opposed to the law, and of a nature purely moral and spiritual. It frees man from the flesh, the law, the world, and from himself also ; that is, from his sinful nature, which is the meeting of these three elements in his spiritual consciousness. And to be ' justified ' is to pass into a new state ; such as that of the Christian world when compared with the Jewish or Pagan ; such as that which St Paul had himself felt at the moment of his conversion ; such as that which he reminds the Galatian converts they had experienced, ' before whose eyes Jesus Christ was evidently set forth crucified ' ; an inward or subjective state, to which the outward or objective act of calling, on God's part, through the preaching of the Apostle, corresponded ; which, considered on a wider scale, was the acceptance of the Gentiles and of every one who feared God ; corresponding in like manner to the eternal purpose of God ; indicated in the case of the individual by his own inward assurance ; in the case of the world at large, testified by the fact ; accompanied in the first by the sense of peace and forgiveness, and implying to mankind generally the last final principle of the Divine Government—' God concluded all under sin that He might have mercy upon all '.

We acknowledge that there is a difference between the meaning of justification by faith to St Paul and to ourselves. Eighteen hundred years cannot have passed away, leaving the world and the mind of man, or the use of language, the same as it was. Times have altered, and Christianity, partaking of the social and political progress of mankind, receiving, too, its own intellectual development, has inevitably lost its simplicity. The true use of philosophy is to rest on this simplicity ; to undo the perplexities which the love of system or past philosophies, or the imperfection of language or logic, have made ; to lighten the burden which the traditions of ages have imposed upon us. To understand St Paul we found it necessary to get rid of definitions

and deductions, which might be compared to a mazy undergrowth of some noble forest, which we must clear away ere we can wander in its ranges. And it is necessary for ourselves also to return from theology to Scripture ; to seek a truth to live and die in—not to be the subject of verbal disputes, which entangle the religious sense in scholastic refinements. The words of eternal life are few and simple : ‘ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved ’.

Remaining, then, within the circle of the New Testament, which we receive as a rule of life for ourselves, no less than for the early Church, we must not ignore the great differences by which we are distinguished from those for whom it was written. Words of life and inspiration, heard by them with rapture for the first time, are to us words of fixed and conventional meaning ; they no longer express feelings of the heart, but ideas of the head. Nor is the difference less between the state of the world then and now ; not only of the outward world in which we live but of that inner world which we ourselves are. The law is dead to us, and we to the law ; and the language of St Paul is relative to what has passed away. The transitions of meaning in the use of the word law tend also to a corresponding variation in the meaning of faith. We are not looking for the immediate coming of Christ, and do not anticipate, in a single generation the end of human things, or the history of a life in the moment of baptism or conversion. To us time and eternity have a fixed boundary, between them there is a gulf which we cannot pass ; we do not mingle in our thoughts earth and heaven. Last of all, we are in a professing Christian world, in which religion, too, has become a sort of business ; moreover, we see a long way off truths of which the first believers were eye-witnesses. Hence it has become difficult for us to conceive the simple force of such expressions as ‘ dead with Christ ’, ‘ if ye then be risen with Christ ’—which are repeated in prayers or sermons, but often convey no distinct impression to the minds of the hearers.

The neglect of these differences between ourselves and the first disciples has sometimes led to a distortion of doctrine and a perversion of life ; where words had nothing to correspond to them, views of human nature have been invented to suit the supposed meaning of St Paul. Thus, for example, the notion of legal righteousness is indeed a fiction as applied to our own times. Nor, in truth, is the pride of human nature, or the tendency to rebel against the will of God, or to attach an undue value to good works, better founded. Men are evil in all sorts of ways : they deceive themselves and others ; they walk by the

opinion of others, and not by faith; they give way to their passions; they are imperious and oppressive to one another. But if we look closely, we perceive, that most of their sins are not consciously against God; the pride of rank, or wealth, or power, or intellect, may be shown towards their brethren, but no man is proud towards God. No man does wrong for the sake of rebelling against God. The evil is not that men are bound under a curse by the ever-present consciousness of sin, but that sins pass unheeded by; not that they wantonly offend God, but that they know Him not. So, again, there may be a false sense of security towards God, as is sometimes observed on a death-bed, when mere physical weakness seems to incline the mind to patience and resignation; yet this more often manifests itself in a mistaken faith, than in a reliance on good works. Or, to take another instance, we are often surprised at the extent to which men who are not professors of religion seem to practise Christian virtues; yet their state, however we may regard it, has nothing in common with legal or self-righteousness.

And besides theories of religion at variance with experience, which have always a kind of unsoundness, the attempt of men to apply Scripture to their own lives in the letter rather than in the spirit, has been very injurious in other ways to the faith of Christ. Persons have confused the accidental circumstances or language of the Apostolic times with the universal language or morality and truth. They have reduced human nature to very great straits; they have staked salvation upon the right use of a word; they have enlisted the noblest feelings of mankind in opposition to their 'Gospel'. They have become mystics in the attempt to follow the Apostles, who were not mystics. Narrowness in their own way of life has led to exclusiveness in their judgments on other men. The undue stress which they have laid on particular precepts or texts of Scripture has closed their minds against its general purpose; the rigidity of their own rules has rendered it impossible that they should grow freely to 'the stature of the perfect man'. They have ended in a verbal Christianity, which has preserved words when the meaning of them had changed, taking the form, while it quenched the life, of the Gospel.

Leaving the peculiar and relative aspect of the Pauline doctrine, as well as the scholastic and traditional one, we have again to ask the meaning of justification by faith. We may divide the subject, first, as it may be considered in the abstract; and, secondly, as personal to ourselves.

I. Our justification may be regarded as an act on God's part.

It may be said that this act is continuous, and commensurate with our whole lives ; that although ' known unto God are all his works from the beginning ', yet that, speaking as men, and translating what we term the acts of God into human language, we are ever being more and more justified, as in theological writers we are said also to be more and more sanctified. At first sight it seems that to deny this involves an absurdity ; it may be thought a contradiction to maintain that we are justified at once, but sanctified all our life long. Yet perhaps this latter mode of statement is better than the other, because it presents two aspects of the truth instead of one only ; it is also a nearer expression of the inward consciousness of the soul itself. For must we not admit that it is the unchangeable will of God that all mankind should be saved ? Justification in the mind of the believer is the perception of this fact, which always was. It is not made more a fact by our knowing it for many years or our whole life. And this is the witness of experience. For he who is justified by faith does not go about doubting in himself or his future destiny, but trusting in God. From the first moment that he turns earnestly to God he believes that he is saved ; not from any confidence in himself, but from an overpowering sense of the love of God and Christ.

II. It is an old problem in philosophy : What is the beginning of our moral being ? What is that prior principle which makes good actions produce good habits ? Which of those actions raises us above the world of sight ? Plato would have answered, the contemplation of the idea of good. Some of ourselves would answer, by the substitution of a conception of moral growth for the mechanical theory of habits. Leaving out of sight our relation to God, we can only say, that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, with powers which we are unable to analyze. It is a parallel difficulty in religion which is met by the doctrine of righteousness by faith. We grow up spiritually, we cannot tell how ; not by outward acts, nor always by energetic effort, but stilly and silently, by the grace of God descending upon us, as the dew falls upon the earth. When a person is apprehensive and excited about his future state, straining every nerve lest he should fall short of the requirements of God, overpowered with the memory of his past sins—that is not the temper of mind in which he can truly serve God, or work out his own salvation. Peace must go before as well as follow after ; a peace, too, not to be found in the necessity of law (as philosophy has sometimes held), but in the sense of the love of God to His creatures. He has no right to this peace, and yet he has it ; in the consciousness

of his new state there is more than he can reasonably explain. At once and immediately the Gospel tells him that he is justified by faith, that his pardon is simultaneous with the moment of his belief, that he may go on his way rejoicing to fulfil the duties of life ; for, in human language, God is no longer angry with him.

III. Thus far, in the consideration of righteousness by faith, we have obtained two points of view, in which, though regarded in the abstract only, the truth of which these words are the symbol has still a meaning ; first, as expressing the unchangeableness of the mercy of God ; and, secondly, the mysteriousness of human action. As we approach nearer, we are unavoidably led to regard the gift of righteousness rather in reference to the subject than to the object, in relation to man rather than God. What quality, feeling, temper, habit in ourselves answers to it ? It may be more or less conscious to us, more of a state and less of a feeling, showing itself rather in our lives than our lips. But for these differences we can make allowance. It is the same faith still, under various conditions and circumstances, and sometimes taking different names.

IV. The expression 'righteousness by faith' indicates the personal character of salvation ; it is not the tale of works that we do, but we ourselves who are accepted of God. Who can bear to think of his own actions as they are seen by the eye of the Almighty ? Looking at their defective performance, analyzing them into the secondary motives out of which they have sprung, do we seem to have any ground on which we can stand ; is there anything which satisfies ourselves ? Yet, knowing that our own works cannot abide the judgment of God, we know also that His love is not proportioned to them. He is a Person who deals with us as persons over whom He has an absolute right, who have nevertheless an endless value to Him. When He might exact all, He forgives all ; 'the kingdom of heaven' is like not only to a Master taking account with his Servants, but to a Father going out to meet his returning Son. The symbol and mean of this personal relation of man to God is faith ; and the righteousness which consists not in what we do, but in what we are, is the righteousness of faith.

V. Faith may be spoken of in the language of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, as the substance of things unseen. But what are the things unseen ? Not only an invisible world ready to flash though the material at the appearance of Christ ; not angels, or powers of darkness, or even God Himself 'sitting', as the Old Testament described, 'on the circle of the heavens' ; but the kingdom of truth and justice, the things that are within,

of which God is the centre, and with which men everywhere by faith hold communion. Faith is the belief in the existence of this kingdom ; that is, in the truth and justice and mercy of God, who disposes all things—not, perhaps, in our judgment for the greatest happiness of His creatures, but absolutely in accordance with our moral notions. And that this is not seen to be the case here, makes it a matter of faith that it will be so in some way that we do not at present comprehend. He that believes on God believes, first, that He is ; and, secondly, that He is the Rewarder of them that seek Him.

VI. Now, if we go on to ask what gives this assurance of the truth and justice of God, the answer is, the life and death of Christ, who is the Son of God, and the Revelation of God. We know what He Himself has told us of God, and we cannot conceive perfect goodness separate from perfect truth ; nay, this goodness itself is the only conception we can form of God, if we confess that the mere immensity of the material world tends to suggest, that the Almighty is not a natural or even a supernatural power, but a Being of whom the reason and conscience of man have a truer conception than imagination in its highest flights. He is not in the storm, nor in the thunder, nor in the earthquake, but 'in the still small voice'. And this image of God as He reveals Himself in the heart of man is 'Christ in us the hope of Glory' ; Christ as He once was upon earth in His sufferings rather than His miracles—the image of goodness and truth and peace and love.

We are on the edge of a theological difficulty ; for who can deny that the image of that goodness may fade from the mind's eye after so many centuries, or that there are those who recognize the idea and may be unable to admit the fact ? Can we say that this error of the head is also a corruption of the will ? The lives of such unbelievers in the facts of Christianity would sometimes refute our explanation. And yet it is true that Providence has made our spiritual life dependent on the belief in certain truths, and those truths run up into matters of fact, with the belief in which they have ever been associated ; it is true, also, that the most important moral consequences flow from unbelief. We grant the difficulty : no complete answer can be given to it on this side the grave. Doubtless God has provided a way that the sceptic no less than the believer shall receive his due ; He does not need our timid counsels for the protection of the truth. If among those who have rejected the facts of the Gospel history some have been rash, hypercritical, inflated with the pride of intellect, or secretly alienated by sensuality from

the faith of Christ—there have been others, also, upon whom we may conceive to rest a portion of that blessing which comes to such as 'have not seen and yet have believed'.

VII. In the *Epistles* of St Paul, and yet more in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, the relation of Christ to mankind is expressed under figures of speech taken from the Mosaic dispensation: He is the sacrifice for the sins of men, 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world'; the Antitype of all the types, the fulfilment in His own person of the Jewish law. Such words may give comfort to those who think of God under human imagery, but they seem to require explanation when we rise to the contemplation of Him as the God of truth, without parts or passions, who knows all things, and cannot be angry with any, or see them other than they truly are. What is indicated by them, to us 'who are dead to the law' is, that God has manifested Himself in Christ as the God of mercy; who is more ready to hear than we to pray; who has forgiven us almost before we ask Him; who has given us His only Son, and how will He not with Him also give us all things? They intimate, on God's part, that He is not extreme to mark what is done amiss; in human language, 'He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities': on our part, that we say to God: 'Not of ourselves, but of Thy grace and mercy, O Lord'. Not in the fulness of life and health, nor in the midst of business, nor in the schools of theology; but in the sick chamber, where are no more earthly interests, and in the hour of death, we have before us the living image of the truth of justification by faith, when man acknowledges, on the confines of another world, the unprofitableness of his own good deeds, and the goodness of God even in afflicting him, and his absolute reliance not on works of righteousness that he has done, but on the Divine mercy.

VIII. A true faith has been sometimes defined to be not a faith in the unseen merely, or in God or Christ, but a personal assurance of salvation. Such a feeling may be only the veil of sensualism; it may be also the noble confidence of St Paul. 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord'. It may be an emotion, resting on no other ground except that we believe; or, a conviction deeply rooted in our life and character. Scripture and reason alike seem to require this belief in our own salvation: and yet to assume that we are at the end of the race may make us lag in our course. Whatever danger

there is in the doctrine of the Divine decrees, the danger is nearer home, and more liable to influence practice, when our faith takes the form of personal assurance. How then, are we to escape from the dilemma, and have a rational confidence in the mercy of God ?

IX. This confidence must rest, first, on a sense of the truth and justice of God, rising above perplexities of fact in the world around us, or the tangle of metaphysical or theological difficulties. But although such a sense of the truth or justice of God is the beginning of our peace, yet a link of connexion is wanting before we can venture to apply to ourselves that which we acknowledge in the abstract. The justice of God may lead to our condemnation as well as to our justification. Are we then, in the language of the ancient tragedy, to say that no one can be counted happy before he dies, or that salvation is only granted when the end of our course is seen ? Not so ; the Gospel encourages us to regard ourselves, as already saved ; for we have communion with Christ and appropriate His work by faith. And this appropriation means nothing short of the renunciation of self and the taking up of the cross of Christ in daily life. Whether such an imitation or appropriation of Christ is illusive or real—a new mould of nature or only an outward and superficial impression, is a question not to be answered by any further theological distinction but by an honest and good heart searching into itself. Then only, when we surrender ourselves into the hands of God, when we ask Him to show us to ourselves as we truly are, when we allow ourselves in no sin, when we attribute nothing to our own merits, when we test our faith, not by the sincerity of an hour, but of months and years, we learn the true meaning of that word in which, better than any other, the nature of righteousness by faith is summed up—peace.

‘ And now abideth faith, hope, and love, these three ; but the greatest of these is love ’. There seems to be a contradiction in love being the ‘ greatest ’, when faith is the medium of acceptance. Love, according to some, is preferred to faith, because it reaches to another life ; when faith and hope are swallowed up in sight, love remains still. Love, according to others, has the first place, because it is Divine as well as human ; it is the love of God to man, as well as of man to God. Perhaps, the order of precedence is sufficiently explained by the occasion ; to a Church torn by divisions the Apostle says : ‘ that the first of Christian graces is love ’. Another thought, however, is suggested by these words, which has a bearing on our present subject. It is this, that in using the received terms of theology, we



must also acknowledge their relative and transient character. Christian truth has many modes of statement ; love is the more natural expression to St John, faith to St Paul. The indwelling of Christ or of the Spirit of God, grace, faith, hope, love, are not parts of a system, but powers or aspects of the Christian life. Human minds are different, and the same mind is not the same at different times ; and the best of men nowadays have but a feeble consciousness of spiritual truths. We ought not to dim that consciousness by insisting on a single formula ; and therefore while speaking of faith as the instrument of justification, because faith indicates the apprehensive, dependent character of the believer's relation to Christ, we are bound also to deny that the Gospel is contained in any word, or the Christian life inseparably linked to any one quality. We must acknowledge the imperfection of language and thought, and seek rather to describe than to define the work of God in the soul, which has as many forms as the tempers, capacities, circumstances, and accidents of our nature.

## On Atonement and Satisfaction

Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not . . . then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.—*Ps.*, xc, 6-8.

THE doctrine of the Atonement has often been explained in a way at which our moral feelings revolt. God is represented as angry with us for what we never did ; He is ready to inflict a disproportionate punishment on us for what we are ; He is satisfied by the sufferings of His Son in our stead. The sin of Adam is first imputed to us ; then the righteousness of Christ. The imperfection of human law is transferred to the Divine ; or rather a figment of law which has no real existence. The death of Christ is also explained by the analogy of the ancient rite of sacrifice. He is a victim laid upon the altar to appease the wrath of God. The institutions and ceremonies of the Mosaical religion are applied to Him. He is further said to bear the infinite punishment of infinite sin. When He had suffered or paid the penalty, God is described as granting Him the salvation of mankind in return.

I shall endeavour to show (1) that these conceptions of the work of Christ have no foundation in Scripture ; (2) that their growth may be traced in ecclesiastical history ; (3) that the only sacrifice, atonement, or satisfaction, with which the Christian has to do, is a moral and spiritual one ; not the pouring out of blood upon the earth, but the living sacrifice ' to do thy will, O God ' ; in which the believer has part as well as his Lord ; about the meaning of which there can be no more question in our day than there was in the first ages.

§ 1. It is difficult to concentrate the authority of Scripture on points of controversy. For Scripture is not doctrine but teaching ; it arises naturally out of the circumstances of the writers ; it is not intended to meet the intellectual refinements of modern times. The words of our Saviour : ' My kingdom is not of this

world' admit of a wide application, to systems of knowledge, as well as to systems of government and politics. The 'bread of life' is not an elaborate theology. The revelation which Scripture makes to us of the will of God does not turn upon the exact use of language. ('Lo, O man, he hath showed thee what he required of thee; to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God'). The books of Scripture were written by different authors, and in different ages of the world; we cannot, therefore, apply them with the minuteness and precision of a legal treatise. The Old Testament is not on all points the same with the New; for 'Moses allowed of some things for the hardness of their hearts'; nor the Law with the Prophets, for there were 'proverbs in the house of Israel' that were reversed; nor does the Gospel, which is simple and universal, in all respects agree with the Epistles which have reference to the particular state of the first converts; nor is the teaching of St James, who admits works as a coefficient with faith in the justification of man, absolutely identical with that of St Paul, who asserts righteousness by faith only; nor is the character of all the *Epistles* of St Paul, written as they were at different times amid the changing scenes of life, precisely the same; nor does he himself claim an equal authority for all his precepts. No theory of inspiration can obliterate these differences; or rather, none can be true which does not admit them. The neglect of them reduces the books of Scripture to an unmeaning unity, and effectually seals up their true sense. But if we acknowledge this natural diversity of form, this perfect humanity of Scripture, we must, at any rate in some general way, adjust the relation of the different parts to one another before we apply its words to the establishment of any doctrine.

Nor again is the citation of a single text sufficient to prove a doctrine; nor must consequences be added on, which are not found in Scripture, nor figures of speech reasoned about, as though they conveyed exact notions. An accidental similarity of expression is not to be admitted as an authority; nor a mystical allusion, which has been gathered from Scripture, according to some method which in other writings the laws of language and logic would not justify. When engaged in controversy with Roman Catholics, about the doctrine of purgatory, or transubstantiation, or the authority of the successors of St Peter, we are willing to admit these principles. They are equally true when the subject of inquiry is the atoning work of Christ. We must also distinguish the application of a passage

in religious discourse from its original meaning. The more obvious explanation which is received in our own day, or by our own branch of the Church, will sometimes have to be set aside for one more difficult, because less familiar, which is drawn from the context. Nor is it allowable to bar an interpretation of Scripture from a regard to doctrinal consequences. Further, it is necessary that we should make allowance for the manner in which ideas were represented in the ages at which the books of Scripture were written which cannot be so lively to us as to contemporaries. Nor can we deny that texts may be quoted on both sides of a controversy, as for example, in the controversy respecting predestination. For in religious, as in other differences there is often truth on both sides.

The drift of the preceding remarks is not to show that there is any ambiguity or uncertainty in the witness of Scripture to the great truths of morality and religion. Nay, rather the universal voice of the Old Testament and the New proclaims that there is one God of infinite justice, goodness, and truth : and the writers of the New Testament agree in declaring that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the Saviour of the world. There can never, by any possibility, be a doubt that our Lord and St Paul taught the doctrine of a future life, and of a judgment, at which men would give an account of the deeds done in the body. It is no matter for regret that the essentials of the Gospel are within the reach of a child's understanding. But this clearness of Scripture about the great truths of religion does not extend to the distinctions and developments of theological systems ; it rather seems to contrast with them. It is one thing to say that 'Christ is the Saviour of the world', or that 'we are reconciled to God through Christ', and another thing to affirm that the Levitical or heathen sacrifices typified the death of Christ ; or that the death of Christ has a sacrificial import, and is an atonement or satisfaction for the sins of men. The latter positions involve great moral and intellectual difficulties ; many things have to be considered, before we can allow that the phraseology of Scripture is to be caught up and applied in this way. For we may easily dress up in the externals of the New Testament a doctrine which is really at variance with the Spirit of Christ and his Apostles, and we may impart to this doctrine, by the help of living tradition, that is to say, custom and religious use, a sacredness yet greater than is derived from such a fallacious application of Scripture language. It happens almost unavoidably (and our only chance of guarding against the illusion is to be aware of it) that we are more

under the influence of rhetoric in theology than in other branches of knowledge; our minds are so constituted that what we often hear we are ready to believe, especially when it falls in with previous convictions or wants. But he who desires to know whether the statements above referred to have any real objective foundation in the New Testament, will carefully weigh the following considerations: Whether there is any reason for interpreting the New Testament by the analogy of the Old? Whether the sacrificial expressions which occur in the New Testament, and on which the question chiefly turns, are to be interpreted spiritually or literally? Whether the use of such expressions may not be a figurative mode of the time, which did not necessarily recall the thing signified any more than the popular use of the term 'Sacrifice' among ourselves? He will consider further whether this language is employed vaguely, or definitely? Whether it is the chief manner of expressing the work of Christ, or one among many? Whether it is found to occur equally in every part of the New Testament; for example in the *Gospels* as well as in the *Epistles*? Whether the more frequent occurrence of it in particular books, as for instance, in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, may not be explained by the peculiar object or circumstances of the writer? Whether other figures of speech, such as death, life, resurrection with Christ, are not equally frequent, which have never yet been made the foundation of any doctrine? Lastly, whether this language of sacrifice is not applied to the believer as well as to his Lord, and whether the believer is not spoken of as sharing the sufferings of his Lord?

I. All Christians agree that there is a connexion between the Old Testament and the New: '*Novum Testamentum in vetere latet; Vetus Testamentum in novo patet*': 'I am not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil'. But, respecting the nature of the revelation or fulfilment which is implied in these expressions, they are not equally agreed. Some conceive the Old and New Testaments to be 'double one against the other'; the one being the type, and the other the antitype, the ceremonies of the Law, and the symbols and imagery of the Prophets, supplying to them the forms of thought and religious ideas of the Gospel. Even the history of the Jewish people has been sometimes thought to be an anticipation or parallel of the history of the Christian world; many accidental circumstances in the narrative of Scripture being likewise taken as an example of the Christian life. The relation between the Old and New Testaments has been regarded by others from a different point

of view, as a continuous one, which may be described under some image of growth or development ; the facts and ideas of the one leading on to the facts and ideas of the other ; and the two together forming one record of 'the increasing purposes which through the ages ran'. This continuity, however, is broken at one point, and the parts separate and reunite like ancient and modern civilization, though the connexion is nearer, and of another kind ; the Messiah, in whom the hopes of the Jewish people centre, being the first-born of a new creation, the Son of Man and the Son of God. It is necessary, moreover, to distinguish the connexion of fact from that of language and idea ; because the Old Testament is not only the preparation for the New, but also the figure and expression of it. Those who hold the first of these two views, viz., the reduplication of the Old Testament in the New, rest their opinion chiefly on two grounds. First, it seems incredible to them, and repugnant to their conception of a Divine revelation, that the great apparatus of rites and ceremonies, with which, even at this distance of time, they are intimately acquainted, should have no inner and symbolical meaning ; that the Jewish nation for many ages should have carried with it a load of forms only ; that the words of Moses which they 'still hear read in the synagogue every Sabbath Day' and which they often read in their own households, should relate only to matters of outward observance ; just as they are unwilling to believe that the prophecies, which they also read, have no reference to the historical events of modern times. And, secondly, they are swayed by the authority of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, the writer of which has made the Old Testament the allegory of the New.

It will be considered hereafter what is to be said in answer to the last of these arguments. The first is perhaps sufficiently answered, by the analogy of other ancient religions. It would be ridiculous to assume a spiritual meaning in the Homeric rites and sacrifices ; although they may be different in other respects, have we any more reason for inferring such a meaning in the Mosaic ? Admitting the application which is made of a few of them by the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* to be their original intention, the great mass would still remain unexplained, and yet they are all alike contained in the same Revelation. It may seem natural to us to suppose that God taught His people like children by the help of outward objects. But no *a priori* supposition of this kind, no fancy, however natural, of a symmetry or coincidence which may be traced between the Old Testament and the New, nor the frequent

repetition of such a theory in many forms, is an answer to the fact. That fact is the silence of the Old Testament itself. If the sacrifices of the Mosaical religion were really symbolical of the death of Christ, how can it be accounted for that no trace of this symbolism appears in the books of Moses themselves? that prophets and righteous men of old never gave this interpretation to them? that the lawgiver is intent only on the sign, and says nothing of the thing signified? No other book is ever supposed to teach truths about which it is wholly silent. We do not imagine the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to be a revelation of the Platonic or Socratic philosophy. The circumstance that these poems received this or some other allegorical explanation from a school of Alexandrian critics, does not incline us to believe that such an explanation is a part of their original meaning. The human mind does not work in this occult manner; language was not really given men to conceal their thoughts; plain precepts or statements do not contain hidden mysteries.

It may be said that the Levitical rites and offerings had a meaning, not for the Jews, but for us, 'on whom the ends of the world are come'. Moses, David, Isaiah, were unacquainted with this meaning; it was reserved for those who lived after the event to which they referred had taken place to discover it. Such an afterthought may be natural to us, who are ever tracing a literary or mystical connexion between the Old Testament and the New; it would have been very strange to us, had we lived in the ages before the coming of Christ. It is incredible that God should have instituted rites and ceremonies, which were to be observed as forms by a whole people throughout their history, to teach mankind fifteen hundred years afterwards, uncertainly and in a figure, a lesson which Christ taught plainly and without a figure. Such an assumption confuses the application of Scripture with its original meaning; the use of language in the New Testament with the facts of the Old. Further, it does away with all certainty in the interpretation of Scripture. If we can introduce the New Testament into the Old, we may with equal right introduce Tradition or Church History into the New.

The question here raised has a very important bearing on the use of the figures of atonement and sacrifice in the New Testament. For if it could be shown that the sacrifices which were offered up in the Levitical worship were anticipatory only; that the law too declared itself to be 'a shadow of good things to come'; that Moses had himself spoken 'of the reproach of Christ'; in that case the slightest allusion in the New

Testament to the customs or words of the law would have a peculiar interest. We should be justified in referring to them as explanatory of the work of Christ, in studying the Levitical distinctions respecting offerings with a more than antiquarian interest, in 'disputing about purifying' and modes of expiation. But if not; if, in short, we are only reflecting the present on the past, or perhaps confusing both together, and interpreting Christianity by Judaism, and Judaism by Christianity; then the sacrificial language of the New Testament loses its depth and significance, or rather acquires a higher, that is, a spiritual one.

II. Of such an explanation, if it had really existed when the Mosaic religion was still a national form of worship, traces would occur in the writings of the Psalmists and the Prophets; for these furnish a connecting link between the Old Testament and the New. But this is not the case; the Prophets are, for the most part, unconscious of the law, or silent respecting its obligations.

In many places, their independence of the Mosaic religion passes into a kind of opposition to it. The inward and spiritual truth asserts itself, not as an explanation of the ceremonial observance, but in defiance of it. The 'undergrowth of morality' is putting forth shoots in spite of the deadness of the ceremonial hull. *Isaiah*, i, 13: 'Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting'. *Micah*, vi, 6: 'Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, or bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil'. *Psalms*, l, 10: 'All the beasts of the forests are mine, and so are the cattle upon a thousand hills: If I were hungry I would not tell thee'. We cannot doubt that in passages like these we are bursting the bonds of the Levitical or ceremonial dispensation.

The spirit of prophecy, speaking by *Isaiah*, does not say 'I will have mercy as well as sacrifice', but 'I will have mercy and not (or rather than) sacrifice'. In the words of the Psalmist: 'Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not; then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God'; 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit'; or again: 'A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth': or again, according to the image of both *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah* (*Is.*, liii, 7; *Jer.*, xi, 19), which seems to have



passed before the vision of John the Baptist (*John*, i, 36): 'He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb'. These are the points at which the Old and New Testaments most nearly touch, the (*τύποι*) types or ensamples of the one which we find in the other, the pre-notions or preparations with which we pass from Moses and the Prophets to the Gospel of Christ.

III. It is hard to imagine that there can be any truer expression of the Gospel than the words of Christ Himself, or that any truth omitted by Him is essential to the Gospel. 'The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant greater than his Lord'. The philosophy of Plato was not better understood by his followers than by himself, nor can we allow that the *Gospel* is to be interpreted by the *Epistles*, or that the Sermon on the Mount is only half Christian and needs the fuller inspiration or revelation of St Paul, or the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. There is no trace in the words of our Saviour of any omission or imperfection; there is no indication in the *Epistles* of any intention to complete or perfect them. How strange would it have seemed in the Apostle St Paul, who thought himself unworthy 'to be called an Apostle because he persecuted the Church of God', to find that his own words were preferred in after ages to those of Christ Himself!

There is no study of theology which is likely to exercise a more elevating influence on the individual, or a more healing one on divisions of opinion, than the study of the words of Christ Himself. The heart is its own witness to them; all Christian sects acknowledge them; they seem to escape or rise above the region or atmosphere of controversy. The form in which they exhibit the Gospel to us is the simplest and also the deepest; they are more free from details than any other part of Scripture, and they are absolutely independent of personal and national influences. In them is contained the expression of the inner life, of mankind, and of the Church; there, too, the individual beholds, as in a glass, the image of a goodness which is not of this world. To rank their authority below that of Apostles and Evangelists is to give up the best hope of reuniting Christendom in itself, and of making Christianity a universal religion.

And Christ Himself hardly even in a figure uses the word 'sacrifice'; never with the least reference to His own life or death. There are many ways in which our Lord describes His relation to His Father and to mankind. His disciples are to be one with Him, even as He is one with the Father; whatsoever things He seeth the Father do He doeth. He says: 'I am the

resurrection and the life'; or: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life'; and: 'No man cometh unto the Father but by me'. and again: 'Whatsoever things ye shall ask in my name shall be given you'; and once again: 'I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter'. Most of His words are simple, like 'a man talking to his friends'; and their impressiveness and beauty partly flow from this simplicity. He speaks of His 'decease too which he should accomplish at Jerusalem', but not in sacrificial language. 'And now I go my way to him that sent me'; and: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends'. Once indeed He says: 'The bread that I give is my flesh, which I give for the salvation of the world'; to which He Himself adds: 'The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are truth', a commentary which should be applied not only to these but to all other figurative expressions which occur in the New Testament. In the words of institution of the Lord's Supper, He also speaks of His death as in some way connected with the remission of sins. But among all the figures of speech under which He describes His work in the world, the vine, the good shepherd, the door, the light of the world, the bread of life, the water of life, the corner-stone, the temple, none contains any sacrificial allusion.

The parables of Christ have a natural and ethical character. They are only esoteric in as far as the hardness or worldliness of men's hearts prevents their understanding or receiving them. There is a danger of our making them mean too much rather than too little, that is, of winning a false interest for them by applying them mystically or taking them as a thesis for dialectical or rhetorical exercise. For example, if we say that the guest who came to the marriage supper without a wedding-garment represents a person clothed in his own righteousness instead of the righteousness of Christ, that is an explanation of which there is not a trace in the words of the parable itself. That is an illustration of the manner in which we are not to gather doctrines from Scripture. For there is nothing which we may not in this way superinduce on the plainest lessons of our Saviour.

Reading the parables, then, simply and naturally, we find in them no indication of the doctrine of atonement or satisfaction. They form a very large portion of the sayings which have been recorded of our Saviour while He was on earth; and they teach a great number of separate lessons. But there is no hint contained in them of that view of the death of Christ which is sometimes regarded as the centre of the Gospel. There is no 'difficulty in the nature of things' which prevents the father going

out to meet the prodigal son. No other condition is required of the justification of the publican except the true sense of his own unworthiness. The work of those labourers who toiled for one hour only in the vineyard is not supplemented by the merits and deserts of another. The reward for the cup of cold water is not denied to those who are unaware that he to whom it is given is the Lord. The parables of the Good Samaritan, of the Fig-tree, of the Talents, do not recognize the distinction of faith and works. Other sayings and doings of our Lord while He was on earth imply the same unconsciousness or neglect of the refinements of later ages. The power of the Son of Man to forgive sins is not dependent on the satisfaction which He is to offer for them. The Sermon on the Mount, which is the extension of the law to thought as well as action, and the two great commandments in which the law is summed up, are equally the expression of the Gospel. The mind of Christ is in its own place, far away from the oppositions of modern theology. Like that of the prophets, His relation to the law of Moses is one of neutrality; He has another lesson to teach which comes immediately from God. 'The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat—' or: 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts—' or: 'Which of you hath an ox or an ass—' or: 'Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within'. He does not say: 'Behold in me the true Sacrifice'; or: 'I that speak unto you am the victim and priest'. He has nothing to do with legal and ceremonial observances. There is a sort of natural irony with which He regards the world around Him. It was as though He would not have touched the least of the Levitical commandments; and yet 'not one stone was to be left upon another' as the indirect effect of His teaching. So that it would be equally true: 'I am not come to destroy the law but to fulfil'; and 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again'. 'My kingdom is not of this world', yet it shall subdue the kingdoms of this world; and, the Prince of Peace will not 'bring peace on earth, but a sword'.

There is a mystery in the life and death of Christ; that is to say, there is more than we know or are perhaps capable of knowing. The relation in which He stood both to His Father and to mankind is imperfectly revealed to us; we do not fully understand what may be termed in a figure His inner mind or consciousness. Expressions occur which are like flashes of this inner self, and seem to come from another world. There are also mixed modes which blend earth and heaven. There are circumstances in our Lord's life, too, of a similar nature, such as the

transfiguration, or the agony in the garden, of which the Scripture records only the outward fact. Least of all do we pretend to fathom the import of His death. He died for us, in the language of the *Gospels*, in the same sense that He lived for us ; He ' bore our sins ' in the same sense that ' He bore our diseases ' (*Matt.*, viii, 17). He died by the hands of sinners as a malefactor, the innocent for the guilty, Jesus instead of Barabbas, because it was necessary ' that one man should die for that nation, and not for that nation only ' ; as a righteous man laying down his life for his friends, as a hero to save his country, as a martyr to bear witness to the truth. He died as the Son of God, free to lay down His life ; confident that He would have power to take it again. More than this is meant ; and more than human speech can tell. But we do not fill up the void of our knowledge by drawing out figures of speech into consequences at variance with the attributes of God. No external mode of describing or picturing the work of Christ realizes its inward nature. Neither will the reproduction of our own feelings in a doctrinal form supply any objective support or ground of the Christian faith.

IV. Two of the General *Epistles* and two of the *Epistles* of St Paul have no bearing on our present subject. These are the *Epistles of St James* and *St Jude*, and the two *Epistles to the Thessalonians*. Their silence, like that of the *Gospels*, is at least a negative proof that the doctrine of Sacrifice or Satisfaction is not a central truth of Christianity. The remainder of the New Testament will be sufficiently considered under two heads : 1st, the remaining *Epistles* of St Paul ; and, 2ndly, the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. The difficulties which arise respecting these are the same as the difficulties which apply in a less degree to one or two passages in the *Epistles of St Peter* and *St John*, and in the *Book of Revelation*.

It is not to be denied that the language of Sacrifice and Substitution occurs in the *Epistles* of St Paul. Instances of the former are furnished by *Rom.*, iii, 23, 25 ; *1 Cor.*, v, 7 ; of the latter by *Gal.*, ii, 20 ; iii, 13.

*Romans*, iii, 23-25 : ' For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God ; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith by His blood, to declare His righteousness '.

*1 Cor.*, v, 7 : ' Christ our passover is sacrificed [for us] ; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness ; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth '.

These two passages are a fair example of a few others. About the translation and explanation of the first of them interpreters differ. But the differences are not such as to affect our present question. For that question is a general one, viz. whether these, and similar sacrificial expressions, are passing figures of speech, or appointed signs or symbols of the death of Christ. On which it may be observed :

First : That these expressions are not the peculiar or characteristic modes in which the Apostle describes the relation of the believer to his Lord. For one instance of the use of sacrificial language, five or six might be cited of the language of identity or communion, in which the believer is described as one with his Lord in all the stages of His life and death. But this language is really inconsistent with the other. For if Christ is one with the believer, He cannot be regarded strictly as a victim who takes his place. And the stage of Christ's being which coincides, and is specially connected by the Apostle, with the justification of man, is not His death, but his resurrection (*Rom.*, iv, 25).

Secondly : These sacrificial expressions, as also the vicarious ones of which we shall hereafter speak, belong to the religious language of the age. They are found in Philo ; and the Old Testament itself had already given them a spiritual or figurative application. There is no more reason to suppose that the word 'sacrifice' suggested the actual rite in the Apostolic age than in our own. It was a solemn religious idea, not a fact. The Apostles at Jerusalem saw the smoke of the daily sacrifice ; the Apostle St Paul beheld victims blazing on many altars in heathen cities (he regarded them as the tables of devils). But there is no reason to suppose that they led him to think of Christ, or that the bleeding form on the altar suggested the sufferings of his Lord.

Therefore, thirdly, We shall only be led into error by attempting to explain the application of the word to Christ from the original meaning of the thing. That is a question of Jewish or classical archæology, which would receive a different answer in different ages and countries. Many motives or instincts may be traced in the worship of the first children of men. The need of giving or getting rid of something ; the desire to fulfil an obligation or expiate a crime ; the consecration of a part that the rest may be holy ; the Homeric feast of gods and men, of the living with the dead ; the mystery of animal nature, of which the blood was the symbol ; the substitution, in a few instances, of the less for the greater ; in later ages, custom adhering to the old rituals when the meaning of them has passed away—these seem to be true explanations of the ancient sacrifices. (Human

sacrifices, such as those of the old Mexican peoples or the traditional ones in pre-historic Greece, may be left out of consideration, as they appear to spring from some monstrous and cruel perversion of human nature). But these explanations have nothing to do with our present subject. We may throw an imaginary light back upon them (for it is always easier to represent former ages like our own than to realize them as they truly were); they will not assist us in comprehending the import of the death of Christ, or the nature of the Christian religion. They are in the highest degree opposed to it, at the other end of the scale of human development, as 'the weak and beggarly elements' of sense and fear to the spirit whereby we cry *Abba Father*; almost, may we not say, as the instinct of animals to the reasoning faculties of man. For sacrifice, is not, like prayer, one of the highest, but one of the lowest acts of religious worship. It is the antiquity, not the religious import of the rite, which first gave it a sacredness. In modern times, the associations which are conveyed by the word are as far from the original idea as those of the cross itself. The death of Christ is not a sacrifice in the ancient sense (any more than the cross is to Christians the symbol of infamy); but what we mean by the word 'sacrifice' is the death of Christ.

Fourthly: This sacrificial language is not used with any definiteness or precision. The figure varies in different passages; Christ is the Paschal Lamb, or the Lamb without spot, as well as the sin-offering; the priest as well as the sacrifice. It is applied not only to Christ, but to the believer who is to present his body a living sacrifice; and the offering of which St Paul speaks in one passage is 'the offering up of the Gentiles'. Again, this language is everywhere broken by moral and spiritual applications into which it dissolves and melts away. When we read of 'sacrifice', or 'purification', or 'redemption', these words isolated may for an instant carry our thoughts back to the Levitical ritual. But when we restore them to their context—a sacrifice which is a 'spiritual sacrifice', or a 'spiritual and mental service', a purification which is a 'purging from dead works to serve the living God', a redemption 'by the blood of Christ from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers'—we see that the association offers no real help; it is no paradox to say that we should rather forget than remember it. All this tends to show that these figures of speech are not the eternal symbols of the Christian faith, but shadows only which lightly come and go, and ought not to be fixed by definitions, or made the foundation of doctrinal systems.

Fifthly: Nor is any such use of them made by any of the writers of the New Testament. It is true that St Paul occasionally, and the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* much more frequently, use sacrificial language. But they do not pursue the figure into details or consequences; they do not draw it out in logical form. Still less do they inquire, as modern theologians have done, into the objective or transcendental relation in which the sacrifice of Christ stood to the will of the Father. St Paul says: 'We thus judge that if One died, then all died, and He died for all, that they which live shall not henceforth live to themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again'. But words like these are far indeed from expressing a doctrine of atonement or satisfaction.

Lastly: The extent to which the Apostle employs figurative language in general, may be taken as a measure of the force of the figure in particular expressions. Now there is no mode of speaking of spiritual things more natural to him than the image of death. Of the meaning of this word, in all languages, it may be said that there can be no doubt. Yet no one supposes that the sense which the Apostle gives to it is other than a spiritual one. The reason is, that the word has never been made the foundation of any doctrine. But the circumstance that the term 'sacrifice' has passed into the language of theology, does not really circumscribe or define it. It is a figure of speech still, which is no more to be interpreted by the Mosaic sacrifices than spiritual death by physical. Let us consider again other expressions of St Paul: 'I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus'. 'Who hath taken the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and nailed it to His cross'. 'Filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His body's sake, which is the Church'. The occurrence of these and many similar expressions is a sufficient indication that the writer in whom they occur is not to be interpreted in a dry or literal manner.

Another class of expressions, which may be termed the language of substitution or vicarious suffering, are also occasionally found in St Paul. Two examples of them, both of which occur in the *Epistle to the Galatians*, will indicate their general character.

*Gal.*, ii, 20: 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me'. iii, 13: 'Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us'.

This use of language seems to originate in what was termed

before the language of identity. First: 'I am crucified with Christ', and secondly: 'Not I, but Christ liveth in me'. The believer, according to St Paul, follows Christ until he becomes like Him. And this likeness is so complete and entire, that all that he was or might have been is attributed to Christ, and all that Christ is is attributed to him. With such life and fervour does St Paul paint the intimacy of the union between the believer and Christ: They two are 'One Spirit'. To build on such expressions a doctrinal system is the error of 'rhetoric turned logic'. The truth of feeling which is experienced by a few is not to be handed over to the head as a form of doctrine for the many.

The same remark applies to another class of passages, in which Christ is described as dying 'for us', or 'for our sins'. Upon which it may be further observed, first, that in these passages the preposition used is not *avri* but *ὑπέρ*; and, secondly, that Christ is spoken of as living and rising again, as well as dying, for us; whence we infer that He died for us in the same sense that He lived for us. Of what is meant, perhaps the nearest conception we can form is furnished by the example of a good man taking upon himself, or, as we say, identifying himself with, the troubles and sorrows of others. Christ Himself has sanctioned the comparison of a love which lays down life for a friend. Let us think of one as sensitive to moral evil as the gentlest of mankind to physical suffering; of one whose love identified him with the whole human race as strongly as the souls of men are ever knit together by individual affections.

Many of the preceding observations apply equally to the *Epistle to the Hebrews* and to the *Epistles* of St Paul. But the *Epistle to the Hebrews* has features peculiar to itself. It is a more complete transfiguration of the law, which St Paul, on the other hand, applies by way of illustration, and in fragments only. It has the interest of an allegory, and, in some respects, admits of a comparison with the *Book of Revelation*. It is full of sacrificial allusions, derived, however, not from the actual rite, but from the description of it in the books of Moses. Probably at Jerusalem, or the vicinity of the actual temple, it would not have been written.

From this source chiefly, and not from the *Epistles* of St Paul, the language of sacrifice has passed into the theology and sermons of modern times. The *Epistle to the Hebrews* affords a greater apparent foundation for the popular or Calvinistical doctrines of atonement and satisfaction, but not perhaps a greater real one. For it is not the mere use of the terms 'sacrifice' or



'blood', but the sense in which they were used, that must be considered. It is a fallacy, though a natural one, to confuse the image with the thing signified, like mistaking the colour of a substance for its true nature.

Long passages might be quoted from the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, which describe the work of Christ in sacrificial language. Some of the most striking verses are the following: ix, 11-4: 'Christ, being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God'. x, 12: 'This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God'.

That these and similar passages have only a deceitful resemblance to the language of those theologians who regard the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ as the central truth of the Gospel, is manifest from the following considerations:

1. The great number and variety of the figures. Christ is Joshua, who gives the people rest (iv, 8); Melchisedec, to whom Abraham paid tithes (v, 6; vii, 6); the high priest going into the most holy place after he had offered sacrifice, which sacrifice He Himself is, passing through the veil, which is His flesh.

2. The inconsistency of the figures: an inconsistency partly arising from their ceasing to be figures and passing into moral notions, as in ch. ix, 14: 'the blood of Christ, who offered Himself without spot to God, shall purge your conscience from dead works'; partly from the confusion of two or more figures, as in the verse following: 'And for this cause He is the mediator of the New Testament', where the idea of sacrifice forms a transition to that of death and a testament, and the idea of a testament blends with that of a covenant.

3. The author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* dwells on the outward circumstance of the shedding of the blood of Christ. St Paul in the *Epistle to the Galatians* makes another application of the Old Testament, describing our Lord as enduring the curse which befell 'One who hanged on a tree'. Imagine for an instant that this latter had been literally the mode of our Lord's death. The figure of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* would cease to have any

meaning ; yet no one supposes that there would have been any essential difference in the work of Christ.

4. The atoning sacrifice of which modern theology speaks, is said to be the great object of faith. The author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* also speaks of faith, but no such expression as faith in the blood, or sacrifice, or death of Christ is made use of by him, or is found anywhere else in Scripture. The faith of the patriarchs is not faith in the peculiar sense of the term, but the faith of those who confess that they are 'strangers and pilgrims', and 'endure seeing him that is invisible'.

Lastly : The Jewish Alexandrian character of the *Epistle* must be admitted as an element of the inquiry. It interprets the Old Testament after a manner then current in the world, which we must either continue to apply or admit that it was relative to that age and country. It makes statements which we can only accept in a figure, as, for example, in ch. xi : 'that Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt'. It uses language in double senses, as, for instance, the two meanings of *διαθήκη* and of *ἡ πρώτη* in ch. viii, 13 ; ix, 1 ; and the connexion which it establishes between the Old Testament and the New, is a verbal or mystical one, not a connexion between the temple and offerings at Jerusalem and the offering up of Christ, but between the ancient ritual and the tabernacle described in the book of the law.

Such were the instruments which the author of this great *Epistle* (whoever he may have been) employed, after the manner of his age and country, to impart the truths of the Gospel in a figure to those who esteemed this sort of figurative knowledge as a kind of perfection (*Heb.*, vi, 1). 'Ideas must be given through something'; nor could mankind in those days, any more than our own, receive the truth except in modes of thought that were natural to them. The author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* is writing to those who lived and moved in the atmosphere, as it may be termed, of Alexandrian Judaism. Therefore he uses the figures of the law, but he also guards against their literal acceptance. Christ is a priest, but a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec ; He is a sacrifice, but He is also the end of sacrifices, and the sacrifice which He offers is the negation of sacrifices, 'to do Thy will, O God'. Everywhere he has a 'how much more', 'how much greater', for the new dispensation in comparison with the old. He raises the Old Testament to the New, first by drawing forth the spirit of the New Testament from the Old, and secondly by applying the words of the Old Testament in a higher sense than they at first had. The

former of these two methods of interpretation is moral and universal, the latter local and temporary. But if we who are not Jews like the persons to whom the *Epistle to the Hebrews* is addressed, and who are taught by education to receive words in their natural and *prima facie* meaning, linger around the figure instead of looking forward to the thing signified, we do indeed make 'Christ the minister' of the Mosaic religion. For there is a Judaism not only of outward ceremonies or ecclesiastical hierarchies, or temporal rewards and punishments, but of ideas also, which impedes the worship of spirit and truth.

The sum of what has been said is as follows :

Firstly : That our Lord never describes His own work in the language of atonement or sacrifice.

Secondly : That this language is a figure of speech borrowed from the Old Testament, yet not to be explained by the analogy of the Levitical sacrifices ; occasionally found in the writings of St Paul ; more frequently in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* ; applied to the believer at least equally with his Lord, and indicating by the variety and uncertainty with which it is used that it is not the expression of any objective relation in which the work of Christ stands to His Father, but only a mode of speaking common at a time when the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law were passing away and beginning to receive a spiritual meaning.

Thirdly : That nothing is signified by this language, or at least nothing essential, beyond what is implied in the teaching of our Lord Himself. For it cannot be supposed that there is any truer account of Christianity than is to be found in the words of Christ.

§ 2. Theology sprang up in the first ages independently of Scripture. This independence continued afterwards ; it has never been wholly lost. There is a tradition of the nineteenth century, as well as of the fourth or fourteenth, which comes between them. The mystical interpretation of Scripture has further parted them ; to which may be added the power of system : doctrines when framed into a whole cease to draw their inspiration from the text. Logic has expressed 'the thoughts of many hearts' with a seeming necessity of form ; this form of reasoning has led to new inferences. Many words and formulas have also acquired a sacredness from their occurrence in liturgies and articles, or the frequent use of them in religious discourse. The true interest of the theologian is to restore these formulas to their connexion in Scripture, and to their place in ecclesiastical history. The standard of Christian truth is not a logical clearness or sequence, but the simplicity of the mind of Christ.

The history of theology is the history of the intellectual life of the Christian Church. All bodies of Christians, Protestant as well as Catholic, have tended to imagine that they are in the same stage of religious development as the first believers. But the Church has not stood still any more than the world; we may trace the progress of doctrine as well as the growth of philosophical opinion. The thoughts of men do not pass away without leaving an impress, in religion, any more than in politics or literature. The form of more than one article of faith in our own day is assignable to the effort of mind of some great thinker of the Nicene or medieval times. The received interpretations of texts of Scripture may not unfrequently be referred to the application of them first made in periods of controversy. Neither is it possible in any reformation of the Church to return exactly to the point whence the divergence began. The pattern of Apostolical order may be restored in externals; but the threads of the dialectical process are in the mind itself, and cannot be disposed of at once. It seems to be the nature of theology that while it is easy to add one definition of doctrine to another, it is hard to withdraw from any which have been once received. To believe too much is held to be safer than to believe too little, and the human intellect finds a more natural exercise in raising the superstructure than in examining the foundations. On the other hand, it is instructive to observe that there has always been an under-current in theology, the course of which has turned towards morality, and not away from it. There is a higher sense of truth and right now than in the Nicene Church—after than before the Reformation. The laity in all Churches have moderated the extremes of the clergy. There may also be remarked a silent correction in men's minds of statements which have not ceased to appear in theological writings.

The study of the doctrinal development of the Christian Church has many uses. First, it helps us to separate the history of a doctrine from its truth, and indirectly also the meaning of Scripture from the new reading of it, which has been given in many instances by theological controversy. It takes us away from the passing movement, and out of our own particular corner into a world in which we see religion on a larger scale and in truer proportions. It enables us to interpret one age to another, to understand our present theological position by its antecedents in the past; and perhaps to bind all together in the spirit of charity. Half the intolerance of opinion among Christians arises from ignorance; in history as in life, when we know others we get to like them. Logic too ceases to take us by force and make

us believe. There is a pathetic interest and a kind of mystery in the long continuance and intensity of erroneous ideas on behalf of which men have been ready to die, which nevertheless were no better than the dreams or fancies of children. When we make allowance for differences in modes of thought, for the state of knowledge, and the conditions of the ecclesiastical society, we see that individuals have not been altogether responsible for their opinions; that the world has been bound together under the influence of the past; moreover, good men of all persuasions have been probably nearer to one another than they supposed, in doctrine as well as in life. It is the attempt to preserve or revive erroneous opinions in the present age, not their existence in former ages, that is to be reprobated. Lastly, the study of the history of doctrine is the end of controversy. For it is above controversy, of which it traces the growth, clearing away that part which is verbal only, and teaching us to understand that other part which is fixed in the deeper differences of human nature.

The history of the doctrine of the atonement may be conveniently divided into four periods of unequal length, each of which is marked by some peculiar features. First, the Patristic period, extending to the time of Anselm, in which the doctrine had not attained to a perfect or complete form, but each one applied for himself the language of Scripture. Secondly, the Scholastic period, beginning with Anselm, who may be said to have defined anew the conceptions of the Christian world respecting the work of Christ, and including the great schoolmen who were his successors. Thirdly, the century of the Reformation, embracing what may be termed the after-thoughts of Protestantism, when men began to reason in that new sphere of religious thought which had been called into existence in the great struggle. 'Fragments of the great banquet' of the schoolmen survive throughout the period, and have floated down the stream of time to our own age. Fourthly, the last hundred years, during which the doctrine of the atonement has received a new development from the influences of German philosophy<sup>1</sup>, as well as from the speculations of English and American writers.

1. The characteristics of the first period may be summed up as follows. All the Fathers agreed that man was reconciled to God through Christ, and received in the Gospel a new and divine life. Most of them also spoke of the death of Christ as a ransom or sacrifice. When we remember that in the first age of the Church the New Testament was exclusively taught through the

<sup>1</sup>In the following pages I have derived great assistance from the excellent work of Baur, *Ueber die Versöhnungslehre*.

Old, and that many of the first teachers, who were unacquainted with our present *Gospels*, had passed their lives in the study of the Old Testament Scriptures, we shall not wonder at the early diffusion of this sort of language. Almost every application of the types of the law which has been made since, is already found in the writings of Justin Martyr. Nor, indeed, on general grounds, is there any reason why we should feel surprise at such a tendency in the first ages. For in all Churches, and at all times of the world's history, the Old Testament has tended to take the place of the New, the law of the Gospel; the handmaid has become the mistress; and the development of the Christian priesthood has developed also the idea of a Christian sacrifice.

The peculiarity of the primitive doctrine did not lie here, but in the relation in which the work of Christ was supposed to stand to the powers of evil. In the first ages we are beset with shadows of an under world, which hover on the confines of Christianity. From Origen downwards, with some traces of an earlier opinion of the same kind, perhaps of Gnostic origin, it was a prevailing though not quite universal belief among the Fathers, that the death of Christ was a satisfaction, not to God, but to the devil. Man, by having sinned, passed into the power of the Evil One, who acquired a real right over him which could not be taken away without compensation. Christ offered Himself as this compensation, which the devil eagerly accepted, as worth more than all mankind. But the deceiver was in turn deceived; thinking to triumph over the humanity, he was himself triumphed over by the Divinity of Christ. This theory was characteristically expressed under some such image as the following: 'that the devil snatching at the bait of human flesh, was hooked by the Divine nature, and forced to disgorge what he had already swallowed'. It is common in some form to Origen, Augustine, Ambrose, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory the Great, Isidore of Seville, and much later writers; and there are indications of it in Irenæus (*Adv. Hæc.*, v, i, 1). The meaning of this transaction with the devil it is hardly possible to explain consistently. For a real possession of the soul of Christ was not thought of; an imaginary one is only an illusion. In either case the absolute right which is assigned to the devil over man, and which requires this satisfaction, is as repugnant to our moral and religious ideas, as the notion that the right could be satisfied by a deception. This strange fancy seems to be a reflection or anticipation of Manicheism within the Church. The world, which had been hitherto a kingdom of evil, of which the devil was the lord, was to be exorcised and taken out of his power by the death of Christ.

But the mythical fancy of the transaction with the devil was not the whole, nor even the leading conception, which the Fathers had of the import of the death of Christ. It was the negative, not the positive, side of the doctrine of redemption which they thus expressed; nobler thoughts also filled their minds. Origen regards the death of Christ as a payment to the devil, yet also as an offering to God; this offering took place not on earth only, but also in heaven; God is the high priest who offered. Another aspect of the doctrine of the atonement is presented by the same Father, under the Neo-Platonist form of the *λόγος* (word), who reunites with God, not only man, but all intelligences. Irenæus speaks, in language more human and more like St Paul, of Christ 'coming to save all, and therefore passing through all the ages of man; becoming an infant among infants, a little one among little ones, a young man among young men, an elder with the aged (?), that each in turn might be sanctified, until He reached death, that He should be the first-born from the dead' (ii, 22, 147). The great Latin Father, though he believed equally with Origen in the right and power of the devil over man, delights also to bring forward the moral aspect of the work of Christ. 'The entire life of Christ', he says, 'was an instruction in morals' (*De Ver. Rel.*, c. 16). 'He died in order that no man might be afraid of death' (*De Fide et Symbolo*, c. 5). 'The love which He displayed in His death constrains us to love Him and each other in return' (*De Cat. Rud.*, c. 4). Like St Paul, Augustine contrasts the second Adam with the first, the man of righteousness with the man of sin (*De Ver. Relig.*, c. 26). Lastly, he places the real nature of redemption in the manifestation of the God-man.

Another connexion between ancient and modern theology is supplied by the writings of Athanasius. The view taken by Athanasius of the atoning work of Christ has two characteristic features: First, it is based upon the doctrine of the Trinity—God only can reconcile man with God. Secondly, it rests on the idea of a debt which is paid, not to the devil, but to God. This debt is also due to death, who has a sort of right over Christ, like the right of the devil in the former scheme. If it be asked in what this view differs from that of Anselm, the answer seems to be, chiefly in the circumstance that it is stated with less distinctness; it is *a* form, not *the* form, which Athanasius gave to the doctrine. In the conception of the death of Christ as a debt, he is followed, however, by several of the Greek fathers. Rhetoric delighted to represent the debt as more than paid; the payment was 'even as the ocean to a drop in comparison with the sins of men' (Chrys., on *Rom. Hom.*, x, 17). It is pleasing further to

remark that a kind of latitudinarianism was allowed by the Fathers themselves. Gregory of Nazianzen (*Orat.*, xxxiii, p. 536) numbers speculations about the sufferings of Christ among those things on which it is useful to have correct ideas, but not dangerous to be mistaken. On the whole the doctrine of the Fathers of the first four centuries may be said to oscillate between two points of view, which are brought out with different degrees of clearness. (1) The atonement was effected by the death of Christ; which was a satisfaction to the devil, and an offering to God: (2) The atonement was effected by the union in Christ of the Divine and human nature in the 'logos', or word or God. That neither view is embodied in any creed is a proof that the doctrine of atonement was not, in the first centuries, what modern writers often make it, the corner-stone of the Christian faith.

An interval of more than seven hundred years separates Athanasius from Anselm. One eminent name occurs during this interval, that of Scotus Erigena, whose conception of the atonement is the co-eternal unity of all things with God; the participation in this unity had been lost by man, not in time, but in eternity, and was restored in the person of Christ likewise from eternity. The views of Erigena present some remarkable coincidences with very recent speculations; in the Middle Ages he stands alone, at the end, not at the beginning, of a great period—he is the last of the Platonists, not the first of the schoolmen. He had consequently little influence on the centuries which followed. Those centuries gradually assumed a peculiar character; and received in after times another name, scholastic, as opposed to patristic. The intellect was beginning to display a new power; men were asking, not exactly for a reason of the faith that was in them, but for a clearer conception and definition of it. The Aristotelian philosophy furnished distinctions which were applied with a more than Aristotelian precision to statements of doctrine. Logic took the place of rhetoric; the School of the Church; figures of speech became abstract ideas. Theology was exhibited under a new aspect, as a distinct object or reality of thought. Questions on which Scripture was silent, on which councils and Popes would themselves pronounce no decision, were raised and answered within a narrow sphere by the activity of the human mind itself. The words 'sacrifice', 'satisfaction', 'ransom', could no longer be used indefinitely; it was necessary to determine further to whom and for what the satisfaction was made, and to solve the new difficulties which thereupon arose in the effort to gain clearer and more connected ideas.

2. It was a true feeling of Anselm that the old doctrine of



satisfaction contained an unchristian element in attributing to the devil a right independent of God. That man should be delivered over to Satan may be just ; it is a misrepresentation to say that Satan had any right over man. Therefore no right of the devil is satisfied by the death of Christ. He who had the real right is God, who has been robbed of His honour ; to whom, is, indeed, owing on the part of man an infinite debt. For sin is in its nature infinite ; the world has no compensation for that which a good man would not do in exchange for the world (*Cur Deus Homo*, i, 21). God can only satisfy Himself. The human nature of Christ enables Him to incur, the infinity of His Divine nature to pay, this debt (ii, 6, 7). This payment of the debt, however, is not the salvation of mankind, but only the condition of salvation ; a link is still wanting in the work of grace. The two parties are equalized ; the honour of which God was robbed is returned, but man has no claim for any further favour. This further favour, however, is indirectly a result of the death of Christ. For the payment of the debt by the Son partakes of the nature of a gift which must needs have a recompense (ii, 20) from the Father, which recompense cannot be conferred on Himself, and is therefore made at His request to man. The doctrine ultimately rests on two reasons or grounds ; the first a noble one, that it must be far from God to suffer any rational creature to perish entirely (*Cur Deus Homo*, i, 4 ; ii, 4) ; the second a trifling one, viz. that God, having created the angels in a perfect number, it was necessary that man, saved through Christ, should fill up that original number, which was impaired by their fall. And as Anselm, in the spirit of St Paul, though not quite consistently with his own argument, declares, the mercy of God was shown in the number of the saved exceeding the number of the lost (*Cur Deus Homo*, i, 16, 18).

This theory, which is contained in the remarkable treatise *Cur Deus Homo* is consecutively reasoned throughout ; yet the least reasons seem often sufficient to satisfy the author. While it escapes one difficulty it involves several others ; though conceived in a nobler and more Christian spirit than any previous view of the work of Christ, it involves more distinctly the hideous consequence of punishing the innocent for the guilty. It is based upon analogies, symmetries, numerical fitnesses ; yet under these logical fancies is contained a true and pure feeling of the relation of man to God. The notion of satisfaction or payment of a debt, on the other hand, is absolutely groundless, and seems only to result from a certain logical position which the human mind has arbitrarily assumed. The scheme implies further two

apparently contradictory notions ; one, a necessity in the nature of things for this and no other means of redemption ; the other, the free will of God in choosing the salvation of man. Anselm endeavours to escape from this difficulty by substituting the conception of a moral for that of a metaphysical necessity (ii, 5). God chose the necessity and Christ chose the fulfilment of His Father's commands. But the necessity by which the death of Christ is justified is thus reduced to a figure of speech. Lastly, the subjective side of the doctrine, which afterwards became the great question of the Reformation, the question, that is, in what way the death of Christ is to be apprehended by the believer, is hardly if at all touched upon by Anselm.

No progress was made during the four centuries which intervened between Anselm and the Reformation, towards the attainment of clearer ideas respecting the relations of God and man. The view of Anselm did not, however, at once or universally prevail ; it has probably exercised a greater influence since the Reformation (being the basis of what may be termed the evangelical doctrine of the atonement) than in earlier ages. The spirit of the older theology was too congenial to those ages quickly to pass away. Bernard and others continued to maintain the right of the devil : a view not wholly obsolete in our own day. The two great masters of the schools agreed in denying the necessity on which the theory of Anselm was founded. They differed from Anselm also respecting the conception of an infinite satisfaction ; Thomas Aquinas distinguishing the ' infinite ' Divine merit, and ' abundant ' human satisfaction ; while Duns Scotus rejected the notion of infinity altogether, declaring that the scheme of redemption might have been equally accomplished by the death of an angel or a righteous man. Abelard, at an earlier period, attached special importance to the moral aspect of the work of Christ ; he denied the right of the devil, and declared the love of Christ to be the redeeming principle, because it calls forth the love of man. Peter Lombard also, who retained, like Bernard, the old view of the right of the devil, agreed with Abelard in giving a moral character to the work of redemption.

3. The doctrines of the Reformed as well as of the Catholic Church were expressed in the language of the scholastic theology. But the logic which the Catholic party had employed in defining and distinguishig the body of truth already received, the teachers of the Reformation used to express the subjective feelings of the human soul. Theology made a transition, such as we may observe at one or two epochs in the history of philosophy, from the object to the subject. Hence, the doctrine of atonement

or satisfaction became subordinate to the doctrine of justification. The reformers begin, not with ideas, but with the consciousness of sin ; with immediate human interests, not with speculative difficulties ; not with mere abstractions, but with a great struggle ; ' without were fightings, within were fears '. As of Socrates and philosophy, so it may be also said truly of Luther in a certain sense, that he brought down the work of redemption ' from heaven to earth '. The great question with him was, ' how we might be freed from the punishment and guilt of sin ', and the answer was, through the appropriation of the merits of Christ. All that man was or might have been, Christ became, and was ; all that Christ did or was, attached or was imputed to man : as God, He paid the infinite penalty ; as man, He fulfilled the law. The first made redemption possible, the second perfected it. The first was termed in the language of that age, the *obedientia passiva*, the second, the *obedientia activa*.

In this scheme the doctrine of satisfaction is far from being prominent or necessary ; it is a remnant of an older theology which was retained by the Reformers and prevented their giving a purely moral character to the work of Christ. There were differences among them respecting the two kinds of obedience ; some regarding the *obedientia passiva* as the cause or condition of the *obedientia activa*, while others laid no stress on the distinction. But all the great chiefs of the Reformation agreed in the fiction of imputed righteousness. Little had been said in earlier times of a doctrine of imputation. But now the Bible was reopened and read over again in one light only, ' justification by faith and not by works '. The human mind seemed to seize with a kind of avidity on any distinction which took it out of itself, and at the same time freed it from the burden of ecclesiastical tyranny. Figures of speech in which Christ was said to die for man or for the sins of man were understood in as crude and literal a sense as the Catholic Church had attempted to gain from the words of the institution of the Eucharist. Imputation and substitution among Protestant divines began to be formulas as strictly imposed as transubstantiation with their opponents. To Luther, Christ was not only the Holy One who died for the sins of men, but the sinner himself on whom the vials of divine wrath were poured out. And seeing in the *Epistle to the Galatians* and *Romans* the power which the law exercised in that age of the world over Jewish or half-Jewish Christians, he transferred the state which the Apostle there describes to his own age, and imagined that the burden under which he himself had groaned was the same law of which St Paul spoke, which

Christ first fulfilled in His own person and then abolished for ever.

It was not unnatural that in the Middle Ages, when morality had no free or independent development, the doctrine of the atonement should have been drawn out on the analogy of law. Nor is there any reason why we should feel surprised that, with the revival of the study of Scripture at the Reformation, the Mosaic law should have exercised a great influence over the ideas of Protestants. More singular, yet an analogous phenomenon, is the attempt of Grotius to conceive the work of Christ by the help of the principles of political justice. All men are under the influence of their own education or profession, and they are apt to conceive truths which are really of a different or higher kind under some form derived from it; they require such a degree or kind of evidence as their minds are accustomed to, and political or legal principles have often been held a sufficient foundation for moral truth.

The theory of the celebrated jurist proceeds from the conception of God as governor of the universe. As such, He may forgive sins just as any other ruler may remit the punishment of offences against positive law. But although the ruler possesses the power to remit sins, and there is nothing in the nature of justice which would prevent his doing so, yet he has also a duty, which is to uphold his own authority and that of the laws. To do so, he must enforce punishment for the breach of them. This punishment, however, may attach not to the offender, but to the offence. Such a distinction is not unknown to the law itself. We may apply this to the work of Christ. There was no difficulty in the nature of things which prevented God from freely pardoning the sins of men; the power of doing so was vested in His hands as governor of the world. But it was inexpedient that He should exercise this power without first making an example. This was effected by the death of Christ. It pleased God to act according to the pedantic rules of earthly jurisprudence. It is useless to criticize such a theory further; almost all theologians have agreed in reprobating it; it adopts the analogy of law, and violates its first principles by considering a moral or legal act without reference to the agent. The reason which Grotius assigns for the death of Christ is altogether trivial.

4. Later theories on the doctrine of the atonement may be divided into two classes, English and German, logical and metaphysical; those which proceed chiefly by logical inference, and those which connect the conception of the atonement with speculative philosophy.

Earlier English writers were chiefly employed in defining the work of Christ; later ones have been most occupied with the attempt to soften or moderate the more repulsive features of the older statements; the former have a dogmatical, the latter an apologetical character. The nature of the sufferings of Christ, whether they were penal or only quasi penal, whether they were physical or mental, greater in degree than human sufferings, or different in kind; in what more precisely the compensation offered by Christ truly consisted; the nature of the obedience of Christ, whether to God or the law, and the connexion of the whole question with that of the Divine decrees: these were among the principal subjects discussed by the great Presbyterian divines of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Continuing in the same line of thought as their predecessors, they seem to have been unconscious of the difficulties to which the eyes of a later generation have opened.

But at last the question has arisen within, as well as without, the Church of England: 'How the ideas of expiation, or satisfaction, or sacrifice, or imputation, are reconcilable with the moral and spiritual nature either of God or man? Some there are who answer from analogy, and cite instances of vicarious suffering which appear in the disorder of the world around us. But analogy is a broken reed; of use, indeed, in pointing out the way where its intimations can be verified, but useless when applied to the unseen world in which the eye of observation no longer follows. Others affirm revelation or inspiration to be above criticism, and, in disregard alike of Church history and of Scripture, assume their own view of the doctrine of the atonement to be a revealed or inspired truth. They do not see that they are cutting off the branch of the tree on which they are themselves sitting. For, if the doctrine of the atonement cannot be criticized, neither can it be determined what is the doctrine of the atonement; nor, on the same principles, can any true religion be distinguished from any false one, or any truth of religion from any error. It is suicidal in theology to refuse the appeal to a moral criterion. Others add a distinction of things above reason and things contrary to reason; a favourite theological weapon, which has, however, no edge or force, so long as it remains a generality. Others, in like manner, support their view of the doctrine of the atonement by a theory of accommodation, which also loses itself in ambiguity. For it is not determined whether, by accommodation to the human faculties, is meant the natural subjectiveness of knowledge, or some other limitation which applies to theology only. Others regard the

death of Christ, not as an atonement or satisfaction to God, but as a manifestation of His righteousness, a theory which agrees with that of Grotius in its general character, when the latter is stripped of its technicalities. The theory is the shadow or surface of that of satisfaction ; the human analogy equally fails ; the punishment of the innocent for the guilty is not more unjust than the punishment of the innocent as an example to the guilty. Lastly, there are some who would read the doctrine of the atonement 'in the light of Divine love only' ; the object of the sufferings and death of Christ being to draw men's hearts to God by the vision of redeeming love (compare Abelard), and the sufferings themselves being the natural result of the passage of the Saviour through a world of sin and shame. Of these explanations the last seems to do the least violence to our moral feelings. Yet it would surely be better to renounce any attempt at inquiry into the objective relations of God and man, than to rest the greatest fact in the history of mankind on so slender a ground as the necessity for arousing the love of God in the human heart, in this and no other way.

German theology during the last hundred years has proceeded by a different path ; it has delighted to recognize the doctrine of the atonement as the centre of religion, and also of philosophy. This tendency is first observable in the writings of Kant, and may be traced through the schools of his successors, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, as well as in the works of the two philosophical theologians Daub and Schleiermacher. These great thinkers all use the language of orthodoxy ; it cannot be said, however, that the views of any of them agree with the teaching of the patristic or medieval Church, or of the Reformers, or of the simpler expressions of Scripture. Yet they often bring into new meaning and prominence texts on this subject which have been pushed aside by the regular current of theology. The difficulties which they all alike experience are two ; first, how to give a moral meaning to the idea of atonement ; secondly, how to connect the idea with the historical fact.

According to Kant, the atonement consists in the sacrifice of the individual ; a sacrifice in which the sin of the old man is ever being compensated by the sorrows and virtues of the new. This atonement, or reconciliation of man with God, consists in an endless progress towards a reconciliation which is never absolutely completed in this life, and yet, by the continual increase of good and diminution of evil, is a sufficient groundwork of hope and peace. Perfect reconciliation would consist in the perfect obedience of a free agent to the law of duty or righteousness.

For this Kant substitutes the ideal of the Son of God. The participation in this ideal of humanity is an aspect of the reconciliation. In a certain sense, in the sight of God, that is, and in the wish and resolution of the individual, the change from the old to the new is not gradual, but sudden: the end is imputed or anticipated in the beginning. So Kant 'rationalizes' the ordinary Lutheran doctrine of justification; unconscious, as in other parts of his philosophy, of the influence which existing systems are exercising over him. Man goes out of himself to grasp at a reflection which is still—himself. The mystical is banished only to return again in an arbitrary and imaginative form—a phenomenon which we may often observe in speculation as well as in the characters of individuals.

Schleiermacher's view of the doctrine of the atonement is almost equally different from that of Kant who preceded him, and of Hegel and others who were his contemporaries or successors: it is hardly more like the popular theories. Reconciliation with God he conceives as a participation in the Divine nature. Of this participation the Church, through the Spirit, is the medium; the individual is redeemed and consoled by communion with his fellow-men. If in the terminology of philosophy we ask which is the objective which the subjective part of the work of redemption, the answer of Schleiermacher seems to be that the subjective redemption of the individual is the consciousness of union with God; and the objective part, which corresponds to this consciousness, is the existence of the Church, which derives its life from the Spirit of God, and is also the depository of the truth of Christ. The same criticism, however, applies to this as to the preceding conception of the atonement, viz. that it has no real historical basis. The objective truth is nothing more than the subjective feeling or opinion which prevails in a particular Church. Schleiermacher deduces the historical from the ideal, and regards the ideal as existing only in the communion of Christians. But the truth of a fact is not proved by the truth of an idea. And the personal relation of the believer to Christ, instead of being immediate, is limited (as in the Catholic system) by the existence of the Church.

Later philosophers have conceived of the reconciliation of man with God as a reconciliation of God with Himself. The infinite must evolve the finite from itself; yet the true infinite consists in the return of the finite to the infinite. By slow degrees, and in many stages of morality, of religion, and of knowledge, does the individual, according to Fichte, lay aside isolation and selfishness, gaining in strength and freedom by the negation of

freedom, until he rises into the region of the divine and absolute. This is reconciliation with God ; a half Christian, half Platonic notion, which it is not easy to identify either with the subjective feeling of the individual, or with the historical fact. Daub has also translated the language of Scripture and of the Church into metaphysical speculation. According to this thinker, atonement is the realization of the unity of man with God, which is also the unity of God with Himself. '*Deus Deum cum mundo conjunctum Deo manifestat*'. Perhaps this is as near an approach as philosophy can make to a true expression of the words : 'That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us'. Yet the metaphysical truth is a distant and indistinct representation of the mind of Christ which is expressed in these words. Its defect is exhibited in the image under which Fichte described it—the absolute unity of light ; in other words, God, like the being of the Eleatics, is a pure abstraction, and returning into Himself is an abstraction still.

It is characteristic of Schelling's system that he conceives the nature of God, not as abstraction, but as energy or action. The finite and manifold are not annihilated in the infinite ; they are the revelation of the infinite. Man is the son of God ; of this truth Christ is the highest expression and the eternal idea. But in the world this revelation or incarnation of God is ever going on ; the light is struggling with darkness, the spirit with nature, the universal with the particular. That victory which was achieved in the person of Christ is not yet final in individuals or in history. Each person, each age, carries on the same conflict between good and evil, the triumphant end of which is anticipated in the life and death of Christ.

Hegel, beginning with the doctrine of a Trinity, regards the atonement as the eternal reconciliation of the finite and the infinite in the bosom of God Himself. The Son goes forth from the Father, as the world or finite being, to exist in a difference which is done away and lost in the absoluteness of God. Here the question arises, how individuals become partakers of this reconciliation ? The answer is, by the finite receiving the revelation of God. The consciousness of God in man is developed, first, in the worship of nature ; secondly, in the manifestation of Christ ; thirdly, in the faith of the Church that God and man are one, of which faith the Holy Spirit is the source. The death of Christ is the separation of this truth from the elements of nature and sense. Hegelian divines have given this doctrine a more Pantheistic or more Christian aspect ; they have, in some instances, studiously adopted orthodox language ; they have laid



more or less stress on the historical facts. But they have done little as yet to make it intelligible to the world at large ; they have acquired for it no fixed place in history, and no hold upon life.

Englishmen, especially, feel a national dislike at the ' things which accompany salvation ' being perplexed with philosophical theories. They find it easier to caricature than to understand Hegel ; they prefer the most unintelligible expressions with which they are familiar to great thoughts which are strange to them. No man of sense really supposes that Hegel or Schelling is so absurd as they may be made to look in an uncouth English translation, or as they unavoidably appear to many in a brief summary of their tenets. Yet it may be doubted whether this philosophy can ever have much connexion with the Christian life. It seems to reflect at too great a distance what ought to be very near to us. It is metaphysical, not practical ; it creates an atmosphere in which it is difficult to breathe ; it is useful as supplying a light or law by which to arrange the world, rather than as a principle of action or warmth. Man is a microcosm, and we do not feel quite certain whether the whole system is not the mind itself turned inside out, and magnified in enormous proportions. Whatever interest it may arouse in speculative natures (and it is certainly of great value to a few), it will hardly find a home or welcome in England.

§ 3. The silence of our Lord in the *Gospels* respecting any doctrine of atonement and sacrifice, the variety of expressions which occur in other parts of the New Testament, the fluctuation and uncertainty both of the Church and individuals on this subject in after ages, incline us to agree with Gregory Nazianzen, that the death of Christ is one of those points of faith ' about which it is not dangerous to be mistaken '. And the sense of the imperfection of language and the illusions to which we are subject from the influence of past ideas, the consciousness that doctrinal perplexities arise chiefly from our transgression of the limits of actual knowledge, will lead us to desire a very simple statement of the work of Christ ; a statement, however, in accordance with our moral ideas, and one which will not shift and alter with the metaphysical schools of the age, one, moreover, which runs no risk of being overthrown by an increasing study of the Old Testament or of ecclesiastical history. Endless theories there have been (of which the preceding sketch contains only a small portion), and many more there will be as time goes on, like mystery plays, or sacred dramas (to adapt Lord Bacon's image),

which have passed before the Church and the world. To add another would increase the confusion ; it is ridiculous to think of settling a disputed point of theology unless by some new method. That other method can only be a method of agreement ; little progress has been made hitherto by the method of difference. It is not reasonable, but extremely unreasonable, that the most sacred of all books should be the only one respecting the interpretation of which there is no certainty ; that religion alone should be able to perpetuate the enmities of past ages ; that the influence of words and names, which secular knowledge has long shaken off, should still intercept the natural love of Christians towards one another and their Lord. On our present subject there is no difficulty in finding a basis of reconciliation ; the way opens when logical projections are removed, and we look at the truth in what may be rightly termed a more primitive and Apostolical manner. For all, or almost all, Christians would agree that in some sense or other we are reconciled to God through Christ ; whether by the atonement and satisfaction which He made to God for us, or by His manifestation of the justice of God or love of God in the world, by the passive obedience of His death or the active obedience of His life, by the imputation of His righteousness to us or by our identity and communion with Him, or likeness to Him, or love of Him ; in some one of these senses, which easily pass into each other, all would join in saying that ' He is the way, the truth, and the life '. And had the human mind the same power of holding fast points of agreement as of discerning differences, there would be an end of the controversy.

The statements of Scripture respecting the work of Christ are very simple, and may be used without involving us in the determination of these differences. We can live and die in the language of St Paul and St John ; there is nothing there repugnant to our moral sense. We have a yet higher authority in the words of Christ Himself. Only in repeating and elucidating these statements, we must remember that Scripture phraseology is of two kinds, simple and figurative, and that the first is the interpretation of the second. We must not bring the New Testament into bondage to the Old, but enoble and transfigure the Old by the New.

First ; the death of Christ may be described as a sacrifice. But what sacrifice ? Not ' the blood of bulls and of goats, nor the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean ', but the living sacrifice ' to do Thy will, O God '. It is a sacrifice which is the negation of sacrifice ; ' Christ the end of the law to them that believe '. Peradventure, in a heathen country, to put an end to

the rite of sacrifice 'some one would even dare to die'; that expresses the relation in which the offering on Mount Calvary stands to the Levitical offerings. It is the death of what is outward and local, the life of what is inward and spiritual; 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, shall draw all men after me'; and 'Neither in this mountain nor at Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father'. It is the offering up of the old world on the cross; the law with its handwriting of ordinances, the former man with his affections and lusts, the body of sin with its remembrances of past sin. It is the New Testament revealed in the blood of Christ, the Gospel of freedom, which draws men together in the communion of one spirit, as in St Paul's time without respect of persons and nations, so in our own day without regard to the divisions of Christendom. In the place of Churches, priesthoods, ceremonials, systems, it puts a moral and spiritual principle which works with them, not necessarily in opposition to them, but beside or within them, to renew life in the individual soul.

Again, the death of Christ may be described as a ransom. It is not that God needs some payment which He must receive before He will set the captives free. The ransom is not a human ransom, any more than the sacrifice is a Levitical sacrifice. Rightly to comprehend the nature of this Divine ransom, we must begin with that question of the Apostle: 'Know ye not that whose servants ye yield yourselves to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?' There are those who will reply: 'We were never in bondage at any time'. To whom Christ answers; 'Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin'; and, 'If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed'. Ransom is 'deliverance to the captive'. There are mixed modes here also, as in the use of the term sacrifice—the word has a temporary allusive reference to a Mosaical figure of speech. That secondary allusive reference we are constrained to drop, because it is unessential; and also because it immediately involves further questions—a ransom to whom, for what?—about which Scripture is silent, to which reason refuses to answer.

Thirdly, the death of Christ is spoken of as a death for us, or for our sins. The ambiguous use of the preposition 'for', combined with the figure of sacrifice, has tended to introduce the idea of substitution; when the real meaning is not 'in our stead' but only 'in behalf of', or 'because of us'. It is a great assumption, or an unfair deduction, from such expressions, to say that Christ takes our place, or that the Father in looking at the sinner sees only Christ. Christ died for us in no other sense

than He lived or rose again for us. Scripture affords no hint of His taking our place in His death in any other way than He did also in His life. He himself speaks of His 'decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem' quite simply: 'greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends'. The words of Caiaphas: 'It is expedient that one man should die for this nation', and the comment of the Evangelist, 'and not for that nation only, but that he should gather together in one the children of God that are scattered abroad', afford a measure of the meaning of such expressions. Here, too, there are mixed modes which seem to be inextricably blended in the language of Scripture, and which theology has not always distinguished. For the thing signified is, partly, that Christ died for our sakes, partly that He died by the hands of sinners, partly that He died with a perfect and Divine sympathy for human evil and suffering. But this ambiguity (which we may silently correct or explain) need not prevent our joining in words which, more perhaps than any others, have been consecrated by religious use to express the love and affection of Christians towards their Lord.

Now suppose some one who is aware of the plastic and accommodating nature of language to observe, that in what has been written of late years on the doctrine of the atonement he has noticed an effort made to win for words new senses, and that some of the preceding remarks are liable to this charge; he may be answered, first, that those new senses are really a recovery of old ones (for the writers of the New Testament, though they use the language of the time, everywhere give it a moral meaning); and, secondly, that in addition to the modes of conception already mentioned, the Scripture has others which are not open to his objection. And those who, admitting the innocence and Scriptural character of the expressions already referred to, may yet fear their abuse, and therefore desire to have them excluded from articles of faith (just as many Protestants, though aware that the religious use of images is not idolatry, may not wish to see them in churches)—such persons may find a sufficient expression of the work of Christ in other modes of speech which the Apostle also uses. (1) Instead of the language of sacrifice, or ransom, or substitution, they may prefer that of communion or identity. (2) Or they may interpret the death of Christ by His life, and connect the bleeding form on Mount Calvary with the image of Him who went about doing good. Or (3) they may look inward at their own souls, and read there, inseparable from the sense of their own unworthiness, the

assurance that God will not desert the work of His hands, of which assurance the death of Christ is the outward witness to them. There are other ways, also, of conceiving the redemption of man which avoid controversy, any of which is a sufficient stay of the Christian life. For the kingdom of God is not this or that statement, or definition of opinion, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. And the cross of Christ is to be taken up and borne; not to be turned into words, or made a theme of philosophical speculation.

1. Everywhere St Paul speaks of the Christian as one with Christ. He is united with Him, not in His death only, but in all the stages of His existence; living with Him, suffering with Him, crucified with Him, buried with Him, rising again with Him, renewed in His image, glorified together with Him; these are the expressions by which this union is denoted. There is something meant by this language which goes beyond the experience of ordinary Christians, something, perhaps, more mystical than in these latter days of the world most persons seem to be capable of feeling, yet the main thing signified is the same for all ages, the knowledge and love of Christ, by which men pass out of themselves to make their will His and His theirs, the consciousness of Him in their thoughts and actions, communion with Him, and trust in Him. Of every act of kindness or good which they do to others His life is the type; of every act of devotion or self-denial His death is the type; of every act of faith His resurrection is the type. And often they walk with Him on earth, not in a figure only, and find Him near them, not in a figure only, in the valley of death. They experience from Him the same kind of support as from the sympathy and communion of an earthly friend. That friend is also a Divine power. In proportion as they become like Him, they are reconciled to God through Him; they pass with Him into the relationship of sons of God. There is enough here for faith to think of, without sullyng the mirror of God's justice, or overclouding His truth. We need not suppose that God ever sees us other than we really are, or attributes to us what we never did. Doctrinal statements, in which the nature of the work of Christ is most exactly defined, cannot really afford the same support as the simple conviction of His love.

Again (2) the import of the death of Christ may be interpreted by His life. No theological speculation can throw an equal light on it. From the other side we cannot see it, but only from this. Now the life of Christ is the life of One who knew no sin, on whom the shadow of evil never passed; who

went about doing good ; who had not where to lay His head ; whose condition was in all respects the reverse of earthly and human greatness ; who also had a sort of infinite sympathy or communion with all men everywhere ; whom, nevertheless, His own nation betrayed to a shameful death. It is the life of One who came to bear witness of the truth, who knew what was in man, and never spared to rebuke him, yet condemned him not ; Himself without sin, yet one to whom all men would soonest have gone to confess and receive forgiveness of sins. It is the life of One who was in constant communion with God as well as man ; who was the inhabitant of another world while outwardly in this. It is the life of One in whom we see balanced and united the separate gifts and graces of which we catch glimpses only in the lives of His followers. It is a life which is mysterious to us, which we forbear to praise, in the earthly sense, because it is above praise, being the most perfect image and embodiment that we can conceive of Divine goodness.

And the death of Christ is the fulfilment and consummation of His life, the greatest moral act ever done in this world, the highest manifestation of perfect love, the centre in which the rays of love converge and meet, the extremest abnegation or annihilation of self. It is the death of One who seals with His blood the witness of the truth which He came into the world to teach, which therefore confirms our faith in Him as well as animates our love. It is the death of One, who says at the last hour : 'Of them that thou gavest me, I have not lost one'—of One who, having come forth from God, and having finished the work which He came into the world to do, returns to God. It is a death in which all the separate gifts of heroes and martyrs are united in a Divine excellence—of One who most perfectly fore-saw all things that were coming upon Him, who felt all, and shrank not—of One who, in the hour of death, set the example to His followers of praying for His enemies. It is a death which, more even than His life, is singular and mysterious, in which nevertheless we all are partakers, in which there was the thought and consciousness of mankind to the end of time, which has also the power of drawing to itself the thoughts of men to the end of time.

Lastly, there is the true Christian feeling in many other ways of regarding the salvation of man, of which the heart is its own witness, which yet admit, still less than the preceding, of logical rule and precision. He who is conscious of his own infirmity and sinfulness, is ready to confess that he needs reconciliation with God. He has no proud thoughts ; he knows that he is saved

'not of himself, it is the gift of God'; the better he is the more he feels, in the language of Scripture, 'that he is an unprofitable servant'. Sometimes he imagines the Father 'coming out to meet him, when he is yet a long way off', as in the parable of the Prodigal Son; at other times the burden of sin lies heavy on him; he seems to need more support—he can approach God only through Christ. All men are not the same; one has more of the strength of reason in his religion; another more of the tenderness of feeling. With some, faith partakes of the nature of a pure and spiritual morality; there are others who have gone through the struggle of St Paul or Luther, and attain rest only in casting all on Christ. One will live after the pattern of the Sermon on the Mount, or the *Epistle of St James*. Another finds a deep consolation and meaning in a closer union with Christ: he will 'put on Christ', he will hide himself in Christ; he will experience in his own person the truth of those words of the Apostle: 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me'. But if he have the spirit of moderation that there was in St Paul, he will not stereotype these true, though often passing feelings, in any formula of substitution or satisfaction; still less will he draw out formulas of this sort into remote consequences. Such logical idealism is of another age; it is neither faith nor philosophy in this. Least of all will he judge others by the circumstance of their admitting or refusing to admit the expression of his individual feelings as an eternal truth. He shrinks from asserting his own righteousness; he is equally unwilling to affirm that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. He is looking for forgiveness of sins, not because Christ has satisfied the wrath of God, but because God can show mercy without satisfaction; he may have no right to acquittal, he dare not say, God has no right to acquit. Yet again, he is very far from imagining that the most merciful God will indiscriminately forgive; or that the weakness of human emotions, groaning out at the last hour a few accustomed phrases, is a sufficient ground of confidence and hope. He knows that the only external evidence of forgiveness is the fact that he has ceased to do evil; no other is possible. Having Christ near as a friend and a brother, and making the Christain life his great aim, he is no longer under the dominion of a conventional theology. He will not be distracted by its phrases from communion with his fellow-men. He can never fall into that confusion of head and heart, which elevates matters of opinion into practical principles. Difficulties and doubts diminish with him, as he himself grows more like Christ, not because he forcibly suppresses them, but

because they become unimportant in comparison with purity, and holiness, and love. Enough of truth for him seems to radiate from the person of the Saviour. He thinks more and more of the human nature of Christ as the expression of the divine. He has found the way of life; that way is not an easy way, but neither is it beset by the imaginary perplexities with which a false use of the intellect in religion has often surrounded it.

It seems to be an opinion which is gaining ground among thoughtful and religious men, that in theology, the less we define the better. Definite statements respecting the relation of Christ either to God or man are only figures of speech; they do not really pierce the clouds which 'round our little life'. When we multiply words we do not multiply ideas; we are still within the circle of our own minds. No greater calamity has ever befallen the Christian Church than the determination of some uncertain things which are beyond the sphere of human knowledge. A true instinct prevents our entangling the faith of Christ with the philosophy of the day; the philosophy of past ages is a still more imperfect exponent of it. Neither is it of any avail to assume revelation or inspiration as a sort of shield, or Catholicon, under which the weak points of theology may receive protection. For what is revealed or what inspired cannot be answered *a priori*; the meaning of the word Revelation must be determined by the fact, not the fact by the word.

If our Saviour were to come again to earth, which of all the theories of atonement and sacrifice would He sanction with His authority? Perhaps none of them, yet perhaps all may be consistent with a true service of Him. The question has no answer. But it suggests the thought that we shrink from bringing controversy into His presence. The same kind of lesson may be gathered from the consideration of theological differences in the face of death. Who, as he draws near to Christ, will not feel himself drawn towards his theological opponents? At the end of life, when a man looks back calmly, he is most likely to find that he exaggerated in some things; that he mistook party spirit for a love of truth. Perhaps, he had not sufficient consideration for others, or stated the truth itself in a manner which was calculated to give offence. In the heat of the struggle, let us at least pause to imagine polemical disputes, as they will appear a year, two years, three years hence; it may be, dead and gone—certainly more truly seen than in the hour of controversy. For the truths about which we are disputing cannot partake of the passing stir; they do not change even with the greater revolutions of human



things. They are in eternity; and the image of them on earth is not the movement on the surface of the waters, but the depths of the silent sea. Lastly, as a measure of the value of such disputes, which above all other interests seem to have for a time the power of absorbing men's minds and rousing their passions, we may carry our thoughts onwards to the invisible world, and there behold, as in a glass, the great theological teachers of past ages, who have anathematized each other in their lives, resting together in the communion of the same Lord.

## On Predestination and Free Will

THE difficulty of necessity and free will is not peculiar to Christianity. It enters into all religions at a certain stage of their progress ; it reappears in philosophy and is a question not only of speculation but of life. Whenever man touches nature, wherever the stream of thought which flows within, meets and comes into conflict with scientific laws, reflecting on the actions of the individual in relation to his antecedents, considering the balance of human actions in many individuals ; when we pass into the wider field of history, and trace the influence of circumstances on the course of events, the sequence of nations and states of society, the physical causes that lie behind all ; in the region of philosophy, as we follow the order of human thoughts, and observe the seeming freedom and real limitation of ideas and systems ; lastly in that higher world of which religion speaks to us, when we conceive man as a finite being, who has the witness in himself of his own dependence on God, whom theology too has made the subject of many theories of grace, new forms appear of that famous controversy which the last century discussed under the name of necessity and free will.

I shall at present pursue no further the train of reflections which are thus suggested. My first object is to clear the way for the consideration of the subject within the limits of Scripture. Some preliminary obstacles offer themselves, arising out of the opposition which the human mind everywhere admits in the statement of this question. These will be first examined. We may afterwards return to the modern aspects of the contradiction and of the reconciliation.

§ 1. In the relations of God and man, good and evil, finite and infinite, there is much that must ever be mysterious. Nor can any one exaggerate the weakness and feebleness of the human mind in the attempt to seek for such knowledge. But although

we acknowledge the febleness of man's brain and the vastness of the subject, we should also draw a distinction between the original difficulty of our own ignorance, and the puzzles and embarrassments which false philosophy or false theology have introduced. The impotence of our faculties is not a reason for acquiescing in a metaphysical fiction. Philosophy has no right to veil herself in mystery at the point where she is lost in a confusion of words. That we know little is the real mystery; not that we are caught in dilemmas or surrounded by contradictions. These contradictions are involved in the slightest as well as in the most serious of our actions, which is a proof of their really trifling nature. They confuse the mind but not things. To trace the steps by which mere abstractions have acquired this perplexing and constraining power, though it cannot meet the original defect, yet may perhaps assist us to understand the misunderstanding, and to regard the question of predestination and free will in a simpler and more natural light.

A subject which claims to be raised above the rules and requirements of logic, must give a reason for the exemption, and must itself furnish some other test of truth to which it is ready to conform. The reason is that logic is inapplicable to the discussion of a question which begins with a contradiction in terms: it can only work out the opposite aspects or principles of such a question on one side or the other, but is inadequate to that more comprehensive conception of the subject which embraces both. We often speak of language as an imperfect instrument for the expression of thought. Logic is even more imperfect; it is wanting in the plastic and multiform character of language, yet deceives us by the appearance of a straight rule and necessary principle. Questions respecting the relation of God and man, necessity and free will, the finite and the infinite—perhaps every question which has two opposite poles of fact and idea—are beyond the sphere of its art. But if not logic, some other test must be found of our theories or reasonings, on these and the like metaphysical subjects. This can only be their agreement with facts, which we shall the more readily admit if the new form of expression or statement of them be a real assistance to our powers of thought and action.

The difficulties raised respecting necessity and free will, partake, for the most part, of the same nature as the old fallacies respecting motion and space, of Zeno and the Eleatics, and have their *solvitur ambulando* as well. This is the answer of Bishop Butler, who aims only at a practical solution. But as it is no use to say to the lame man 'rise up and walk', without a crutch

or helping hand, so it is no use to offer these practical solutions to a mind already entangled in speculative perplexities. It retorts upon you 'I cannot walk: if my outward actions seem like other men's; if I do not throw myself from a precipice, or take away the life of another under the fatal influence of the doctrine of necessity, yet the course of thought within me is different. I look upon the world with other eyes, and slowly and gradually, differences in thought must beget differences also in action'. But if the mind, which is bound by this chain, could be shown that it was a slave only to its own abstract ideas—that it was below where it ought to be above them—that, considering all the many minds of men as one mind, it could trace the fiction—this world of abstractions would gradually disappear, and not merely in a Christian, but in a philosophical sense, it would receive the kingdom of Heaven as a little child, seeking rather for some new figure under which conflicting notions might be represented, than remaining in suspense between them. It may be as surprising to a future generation that the nineteenth century should have been under the influence of the illusion of necessity and free will, or that it should have proposed the law of contradiction as an ultimate test of truth, as it is to ourselves that former ages have been subjected to the fictions of essence, substance, and the like.

The notion that no idea can be composed of two contradictory conceptions, seems to arise out of the analogy of the sensible world. It would be an absurdity to suppose that an object should be white and black at the same time; that a captive should be in chains and not in chains at the same time, and so on. But there is no absurdity in supposing that the mental analysis even of a matter of fact or an outward object should involve us in contradictions. Objects, considered in their most abstract point of view, may be said to contain a positive and a negative element: everything is and is not; is in itself, and is not, in relation to other things. Our conceptions of motion, of becoming, or of beginning, in like manner involve a contradiction. The old puzzles of the Eleatics are merely an exemplification of the same difficulty. There are objections, it has been said, against a vacuum, objections against a plenum, though we need not add, with the writer who makes the remark: 'Yet one of these must be true'. How a new substance can be formed by chemical combination out of two other substances may seem also to involve a contradiction, *e.g.* water is and is not oxygen and hydrogen. Life, in like manner, has been defined as a state in which every end is a means, and every means an end. And

if we turn to any moral or political subject, we are perpetually coming across different and opposing lines of argument, and constantly in danger of passing from one sphere to another ; of applying, for example, moral or theological principles to politics, and political principles to theology. Men form to themselves first one system, then many, as they term them different, but in reality opposite to each other. Just as that nebulous mass, out of which the heavens have been imagined to be formed, at last, with its circling motion, subsides into rings, and embodies the ' stars moving in their courses ', so also in the world of mind there are so many different orbits which never cross or touch each other, and yet which must be conceived of as the colours of the rainbow, the result of a single natural phenomenon.

It is at first sight strange that some of these contradictions should seem so trivial to us, while others assume the appearance of a high mystery. In physics or mathematics we scarcely think of them, though speculative minds may sometimes be led by them to seek for higher expressions, or to embrace both sides of the contradiction in some conception of flux or transition, reciprocal action, process by antagonism, the Hegelian vibration of moments, or the like. In common life we acquiesce in the contradiction almost unconsciously, merely remarking on the difference of men's views, or the possibility of saying something on either side of a question. But in religion the difficulty appears of greater importance, partly from our being much more under the influence of language in theology than in subjects which we can at once bring to the test of fact and experiment, and partly also from our being more subject to our own natural constitution, which leads us to one or the other horn of the dilemma, instead of placing us between or above both. As in heathen times it was natural to think of extraordinary phenomena, such as thunder and lightning, as the work of gods rather than as arising from physical causes, so it is still to the religious mind to consider the bewilderments and entanglements which it has itself made as a proof of the unsearchableness of the Divine nature.

The immoveableness of these abstractions from within will further incline us to consider the metaphysical contradiction of necessity and free will in the only rational way ; that is, ' historically '. To say that we have ideas of fate or freedom which are innate, is to assume what is at once disproved by a reference to history. In the East and West, in India and in Greece, in Christian as well as heathen times, whenever men have been sufficiently enlightened to form a distinct conception of a single Divine power or overruling law, the question arises, How is the

individual related to this law ? The first answer to this question is Pantheism ; in which the individual, dropping his proper qualities, abstracts himself into an invisible being, indistinguishable from the Divine. God overpowers man ; the inner life absorbs the outer ; the ideal world is too much for this. The second answer, which the East has also given to this question, is Fatalism ; in which, without abstraction, the individual identifies himself, soul and body, in deed as well as thought, with the Divine will. The first is the religion of contemplation ; the second, of action. Only in the last, as the world itself alters the sense of the overruling power weakens ; and faith in the Divine will, as in Mahometan countries at the present day, shows itself, not in a fanatical energy, but in passive compliance and resignation.

The gradual emergence of the opposition is more clearly traceable in the Old Testament Scriptures or in Greek poetry or philosophy. The Israelites are distinguished from all other Eastern nations—certainly from all contemporary with their early history—by their distinct recognition of the unity and personality of God. God, who is the Creator and Lord of the whole earth, is also in a peculiar sense the God of the Jewish people whom He deals with according to His own good pleasure, which is also a law of truth and right. He is not so much the Author of good as the Author of all things, without whom nothing either good or evil can happen ; not only the permitter of evil, but in a few instances, in the excess of His power, the cause of it also. With this universal attribute He combines another, ' the Lord our God, who brought us out of the land of bondage '. The people have one heart and one soul with which they worship God and have dealings with Him. Only a few individuals among them, as Moses or Joshua, draw near separately to Him. In the earliest ages they do not pray each one for himself. There is a great difference in this respect between the relation of man to God which is expressed in the *Psalms* and in the *Pentateuch*. In the later *Psalms*, certainly, and even in some of those ascribed to David, there is an immediate personal intercourse between God and His servants. At length in the books of *Job* and *Ecclesiastes*, the human spirit begins to strive with God, and to ask not only, how can man be just before God ? but also, how can God be justified to man ? There was a time when the thought of this could never have entered into their minds ; in which they were only, as children with a father, doing evil, and punished, and returning once more to the arms of His wisdom and goodness. The childhood of their nation passed away, and the remembrance

of what God had done for their fathers was forgotten ; religion became the religion of individuals, of Simeon and Anna, of Joseph and Mary. On the one hand, there was the proud claim of those who said : ' We have Abraham to our Father ' ; on the other hand, the regretful feeling ' that God was casting off Israel ', which St Paul in the manner of the Old Testament rebukes with the words : ' Who art thou, O man ? ', and ' We are the clay, and He the potter '.

We may briefly trace the progress of a parallel struggle in Grecian mythology. It presents itself, however, in another form, beginning with the Fates weaving the web of life, or the Furies pursuing the guilty, and ending in the pure abstraction of necessity or nature. Many changes of feeling may be observed between the earlier and later of these two extremes. The fate of poetry is not like that of philosophy, the chain by which the world is held together ; but an ever-living power or curse—sometimes just, sometimes arbitrary—specially punishing impiety towards the gods or violations of nature. In Homer, it represents also a determination already fixed, or an ill irremediable by man ; in one aspect it is the folly which ' leaves no place for repentance '. In Pindar it receives a nobler form : ' Law the king of all '. In the tragedians, it has a peculiar interest, giving a kind of measured and regular movement to the whole action of the play. The consciousness that man is not his own master, had deepened in the course of ages ; there had grown up in the mind a sentiment of overruling law. It was this half-religious, half-philosophical feeling, which Greek tragedy embodied ; whence it derived not only dramatic irony or contrast of the real and seeming, but also its characteristic feature—repose. The same reflective tone is observable in the ' Epic ' historian of the Persian war ; who delights to tell, not (like a modern narrator) of the necessary connexion of causes and effects, but of effects without causes, due only to the will of Heaven. A sadder note is heard at intervals of the feebleness and nothingness of man ; *πάν ἐστιν ἀνθρώπος συμφορή*. In Thucydides (who was separated from Herodotus by an interval of about twenty years) the sadness remains, but the religious element has vanished. Man is no longer in the toils of destiny, but he is still feeble and helpless. Fortune and human enterprise divide the empire of life.

Such conceptions of fate belong to Paganism, and have little in common with that higher idea of Divine predestination of which the New Testament speaks. The fate of Greek philosophy is different from either. The earlier schools expressed their sense of an all-pervading law in rude, mythological figures. In time

this passed away, and the conceptions of chance, of nature, and necessity became matters of philosophical inquiry. By the Sophists first the question was discussed, whether man is the cause of his own actions ; the mode in which they treated of the subject being to identify the good with the voluntary, and the evil with the involuntary. It is this phase of the question which is alone considered by Aristotle. In the chain of the Stoics the doctrine has arrived at a further stage, in which human action has become a part of the course of the world. How the free will of man was to be reconciled either with Divine power, or Divine foreknowledge, was a difficulty which pressed upon the Stoical philosopher equally as upon the metaphysicians of the last century ; and was met by various devices, such as that of the confatalism of Chrysippus, which may be described as a sort of identity of fate and freedom, or of an action and its conditions.

Our inquiry has been thus far confined to an attempt to show, first, that the question of predestination cannot be considered according to the common rules of logic ; secondly, that the contradictions which are involved in this question, are of the same kind as many other contrasts of ideas ; and, thirdly, that the modern conception of necessity was the growth of ages, whether its true origin is to be sought in the Scriptures, or in the Greek philosophy, or both. If only we could throw ourselves back to a prior state of the world, and know no other modes of thought than those which existed in the infancy of the human mind, the opposition would cease to have any meaning for us ; and thus the further reflection is suggested, that if ever we become fully conscious that the words which we use respecting it are words only, it will again become unmeaning. Historically we know when it arose, and whence it came. Already we are able to consider the subject in a simpler way, whether presented to us (1) in connexion with the statements of Scripture, or (2) as a subject of theology and philosophy.

§ 2. Two kinds of predestination may be distinguished in the writings of St Paul, as well as in some parts of the Old Testament. First, the predestination of nations ; secondly, of individuals. The former of these may be said to flow out of the latter, God choosing at once the patriarchs and their descendants. As the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* expresses it : ‘ By faith Abraham offered up Isaac ; and therefore sprang there of one, and him as good as dead, as many as the stars of heaven in multitude ’. The life of the patriarchs was the type or shadow of the history of their posterity, for evil as well as good. ‘ Simeon



and Levi are brethren ; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations ; Joseph is a goodly bough ' ; Moab and Ammon are children of whoredom ; Ishmael is a wild man, and so on. There is also the feeling that whatever extraordinary thing happens in Jewish history is God's doing, not of works nor even of faith, but of grace and choice : ' He took David from the sheep-folds, and set him over His people Israel ' . So that a double principle is discernible ; first, absolute election ; and, secondly, the fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers, or the visitation of their sins upon the children.

The notion of freedom is essentially connected with that of individuality. No one is truly free who has not that inner circle of thoughts and actions in which he is wholly himself and independent of the will of others. A slave, for example, may be in this sense free, even while in the service of his lord ; constraint can apply only to his outward acts, not to his inward nature. But if, in the language of Aristotle, he were a natural slave, whose life seemed to himself defective and imperfect, who had no thoughts or feelings of his own, but only instincts and impulses, we could no more call him free than a domestic animal which attaches itself to a master. So, in that stage of society in which the state is all in all, the idea of the individual has a feeble existence. In the language of philosophy the whole is free, and the parts are determined by the whole. So the theocracy of the Old Testament seems to swallow up its members. The Jewish commonwealth is governed by God Himself ; this of itself interferes with the personal relation in which He stands to the individuals who compose it. Through the law only, in the congregation, at the great feasts, through their common ancestors, the people draw near to God ; they do not venture to think severally of their separate and independent connexion with Him. They stand or fall together ; they go astray or return to Him as one man. It is this which makes so much of their history directly applicable to the struggle of Christian life. Religion, which to the believer in Christ is an individual principle, is with them a national one.

The idea of a chosen people passes from the Old Testament into the New. As the Jews had been predestined in the one, so it appeared to the Apostle St Paul that the Gentiles were predestined in the other. In the Old Testament he observed two sorts of predestination ; first, that more general one, in which all who were circumcised were partakers of the privilege—which was applicable to all Israelites as the children of Abraham ; secondly, the more particular one, in reference to which he says : ' All are not Israel who are of Israel ' . To the eye of faith ' all

Israel were saved'; and yet within Israel, there was another Israel chosen in a more special sense. The analogy of this double predestination the Apostle transfers to the Christian society. All alike were holy, even those of whom he speaks in the strongest terms of reprobation. The Church, like Israel of old, presents to the Apostle's mind the conception of a definite body, consisting of those who are sealed by baptism and have received 'the first-fruits of the Spirit'. They are elect according to the foreknowledge or predisposition of God; sealed by God unto the day of redemption; a peculiar people, a royal priesthood, taken alike from Jews and Gentiles. The Apostle speaks of their election as of some external fact. The elect of God have an offence among them not even named among the Gentiles, they abuse the gifts of the Spirit, they partake in the idol's temple, they profane the body and blood of Christ. And yet, as the Israelites of old, they bear on their foreheads the mark that they are God's people, and are described as 'chosen saints', 'sanctified in Christ Jesus'.

Again, the Apostle argues respecting Israel itself: 'Hath God cast off his people whom he foreknew'? or rather, whom He before appointed. They are in the position of their fathers when they sinned against Him. If we read their history we shall see, that what happened to them in old times is happening to them now; and yet in the Old Testament as well as the New the overruling design was not their condemnation but their salvation: 'God concluded all under sin that He might have mercy upon all'. They stumbled and rose again then; they will stumble and rise again now. Their predestination from the beginning is a proof that they cannot be finally cast off; beloved as they have been for their father's sakes, and the children of so many promises. There is a providence which, in spite of all contrary appearance, in spite of the acceptance of the Gentiles, or rather so much the more in consequence of it, makes all things work together for good to the chosen people.

In this alternation of hopes and fears, in which hope finally prevails over fear, the Apostle speaks in the strongest language of the right of God to do what He will with His own; if any doctrine could be established by particular passages of Scripture, Calvinism would rest immovable on the ninth chapter of the *Romans*. It seemed to him no more unjust that God should reject than that He should accept the Israelites; if, at that present time He cut them short in righteousness, and narrowed the circle of election, He had done the same with the patriarchs. He had said of old: 'Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated'; and this preference, as the Apostle observes, was shown before

either could have committed actual sin. In the same spirit He says to Moses : ' I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion '. And to Pharaoh : ' For this cause have I raised thee up '. Human nature, it is true, rebels at this, and says : ' Why does He yet find fault ? ' To which the Apostle only replies : ' Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus ? Hath not the potter power over the clay ? ' Some of the expressions which have become the most objectionable watchwords of predestinarian theology, such as ' vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy ', are in fact taken from the same passage in the *Epistle to the Romans*.

It is answered by the opponents of Calvinism, that the Apostle is here speaking not of individual but of national predestination. From the teaching of the Old Testament respecting the election of the Jewish people we can infer nothing respecting the Divine economy about persons. To which in turn it may be replied, that if we admit the principle that the free choice of nations is not inconsistent with Divine justice, we cannot refuse to admit the free choice of persons also. A little more or a little less of the doctrine cannot make it more or less reconcileable with the perfect justice of God. Nor can we argue that the election of nations is a part of the Old Testament dispensation, which has no place in the New ; because the Apostle speaks of election according to the purpose of God as a principle which was at that time being manifested in the acceptance of the Gentiles.

Yet the distinction is a sound one if stated a little differently, that is to say, if we consider that the predestination of Christians is only the continuance of the Old Testament in the New. It is the feeling of a religious Israelite respecting his race ; this the Apostle enlarges to comprehend the Gentiles. As the temporal Israel becomes the spiritual Israel, the chosen people are transfigured into the elect. Why this is so is only a part of the more general question ' why the New Testament was given through the Old ? ' It was natural it should be so given ; humanly speaking, it could not have been otherwise. The Gospel would have been unmeaning, if it had been ' tossed into the world ' separated from all human antecedents ; if the heaven of its clearness had been beyond the breath of every human feeling. Neither is there any more untruthfulness in St Paul's requiring us to recognize the goodness of God in the election of some and the rejection of others, than in humility or any act of devotion. The untruth lies not in the devout feeling, but in the logical statement. When we humble ourselves before God, we may know,

as a matter of common sense, that we are not worse than others ; but this, however true ( ' Father, I thank thee I am not as other men ' ), is not the temper in which we kneel before Him. So in these passages, St Paul is speaking, not from a general consideration of the Divine nature, but with the heart and feelings of an Israelite. Could the question have been brought before him in another form—could he have been asked whether God, according to His own pleasure, chose out individual souls, so that some could not fail of being saved while others were necessarily lost, could he have been asked whether Christ died for all or for the chosen few—whether, in short, God was sincere in His offer of salvation,—can we doubt that to such suggestions he would have replied in his own words : ' God forbid ! for how shall God judge the world ? '

It has been said that the great error in the treatment of this subject consists in taking chapter ix separated from chapters x-xi. We may say more generally, in taking parts of Scripture without the whole, or in interpreting either apart from history and experience. In considering the question of predestination, we must not forget that at least one-half of Scripture tells not of what God does, but of what man ought to do ; not of grace and pardon only, but of holiness. If, in speaking of election, St Paul seems at times to use language which implies the irrespective election of the Jews as a nation ; yet, on the other hand, what immediately follows shows us that conditions were understood throughout, and that, although we may not challenge the right of God to do what He would with His own, yet that in all His dealings with them the dispensation was but the effect of their conduct. And although the Apostle is speaking chiefly of national predestination, with respect to which the election of God is asserted by him in the most unconditional terms ; yet, as if he were already anticipating the application of his doctrine to the individual, he speaks of human causes for the rejection of Israel ; ' because they sought not righteousness by the way of faith ; ' ' because they stumble at the rock of offence '. God accepted and rejected Israel of His own good pleasure ; and yet it was by their own fault. How are we to reconcile these conflicting statements ? They do not need reconciliation ; they are but the two opposite expressions of a religious mind, which says at one moment : ' Let me try to do right ', and at another : ' God alone can make me do right '. The two feelings may involve a logical contradiction, and yet exist together in fact and in the religious experience of mankind.

In the Old Testament the only election of individuals is that

of the great leaders or chiefs, who are identified with the nation. But in the New Testament, where religion has become a personal and individual matter, it follows that election must also be of persons. The Jewish nation knew, or seemed to know, one fact, that they were the chosen people. They saw, also, eminent men raised up by the hand of God to be the deliverers of His servants. It is not in this 'historical' way that the Christian becomes conscious of his individual election. From within, not from without, he is made aware of the purpose of God respecting himself. Living in close and intimate union with God, having the mind of the Spirit and knowing the things of the Spirit, he begins to consider with St Paul, 'When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, to reveal His Son in me'. His whole life seems a sort of miracle to him; supernatural, and beyond other men's in the gifts of grace which he has received. If he asks himself: 'Whence was this to me?' he finds no other answer but that God gave them 'because He had a favour unto him'. He recalls the hour of his conversion, when, in a moment, he was changed from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Or, perhaps, the dealings of God with him have been insensible, yet not the less real; like a child, he cannot remember the time when he first began to trust the love of his parent. How can he separate himself from that love or refuse to believe that He who began the good work will also accomplish it unto the end? At which step in the ladder of God's mercy will he stop? 'Whom He did foreknow, them He did predestinate; whom He did predestinate, them He also called; whom He called, them He justified; whom He justified, them He also glorified'.

A religious mind feels the difference between saying: 'God chose me; I cannot tell why; not for any good that I have done; and I am persuaded that He will keep me unto the end'; and saying: 'God chooses men quite irrespective of their actions, and predestines them to eternal salvation'; and yet more, if we add the other half of the doctrine: God refuses men quite irrespective of their actions, and they become reprobates, predestined to everlasting damnation'. Could we be willing to return to that stage of the doctrine which St Paul taught, without comparing contradictory statements or drawing out logical conclusions—could we be content to rest our belief, as some of the greatest even of Calvinistic divines have done, on fact and experience, theology would be no longer at variance with morality.

'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to do and to will of His good

pleasure' is the language of Scripture, adjusting the opposite aspects of this question. The Arminian would say: 'Work out your own salvation'; the Calvinist: 'God worketh in you both to do and to will of His good pleasure'. However contradictory it may sound, the Scripture unites both; work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

§ 3. I. We have been considering the question thus far within the limits of Scripture. But it has also a wider range. The primary relations of the will of man to the will of God are independent of the Christian revelation. Natural religion, that is to say, the Greek seeking after wisdom, the Indian wandering in the expanse of his own dreamlike consciousness, the Jew repeating to himself that he is Abraham's seed; each in their several ways at different stages of the world's history have asked the question: 'How is the freedom of the human will consistent with the infinity and omnipotence of God?' These attributes admit of a further analysis into the power of God and the knowledge of God. And hence arises a second form of the enquiry: 'How is the freedom of the human will reconcileable with Divine omniscience or foreknowledge?' To which the Christian system adds a third question: 'How is the freedom of the human will reconcileable with that more immediate presence of God in the soul which is termed by theologians Divine grace?'

1. God is everywhere; man is nowhere. Infinity exists continuously in every point of time; it fills every particle of space. Or rather, these very ideas of time and space are figures of speech, for they have a 'here' and a 'there', a future and a past—which no effort of human imagination can transcend. But in God there is no future and no past, neither 'here nor there'. He is all and in all. Where, then, is room for man? In what open place is he permitted to live and move and have his being?

God is the cause of all things; without Him nothing is made that is made. He is in history, in nature, in the heart of man. The world itself is the work of His power; the least particulars of human life are ordained by Him. 'Are not two sparrows sold for one farthing, and yet your heavenly Father feedeth them'; and 'the hairs of your head are all numbered'. Is there any point at which this Divine causality can stop? At which the empire of law ceases? At which the human will is set free?

The answer is the fact; not the fact of consciousness as it is sometimes termed, that we are free agents, which it is impossible

to see or verify ; but the visible tangible fact that we have a place in the order of nature, and walk about on the earth, and are ourselves causes drawing effects after them. Does any advocate of freedom mean more than this ? Or any believer in necessity less ? No one can deny of himself the restrictions which he observes to be true of others ; nor can any one doubt that there exists in others the same consciousness of freedom and responsibility which he has himself. But if so, all these things are as they were before ; we need not differ about the unseen foundation whether of necessity or free will, spirit or body, mind or matter, upon which the edifice of human life is to be reared. Just as the theory of the ideality of matter leaves the world where it was—they do not build houses in the air who imagine Bishop Berkeley to have dissolved the solid elements into sensations of the mind—so the doctrine of necessity or predestination leaves morality and religion unassailed, unless it intrude itself as a motive on the sphere of human action.

It is remarkable that the belief in predestination, both in modern and in ancient times, among Mahometans as well as Christians, has been the animating principle of nations and bodies of men, equally, perhaps more than of individuals. It is characteristic of certain countries, and has often arisen from sympathy in a common cause. Yet it cannot be said to have been without a personal influence also. It has led to a view of religion in which man has been too much depressed to form a true conception of God Himself. For it is not to be supposed that the lower we sink human nature in the scale of being, the higher we raise the Author of being ; worthy notions of God imply worthy notions of man also.

‘ God is infinite ’. But in what sense ? Am I to conceive a space without limit, such as I behold in the immeasurable ether, and apply this viewless form to the thought of the Almighty ? Any one will admit that here would be a figure of speech. Yet few of us free our notions of infinity from the imagery of place. It is this association which gives them their positive, exclusive character. But conceive of infinity as mere negation, denying of God the limits which are imposed upon finite beings, meaning only that God is not a man or comprehensible by man, without any suggestion of universal space, and the exclusiveness disappears ; there is room for the creature side by side with the Creator. Or again, press the idea of the infinite to its utmost extent, till it is alone in the universe, or rather is the universe itself, in this heaven of abstraction, nevertheless, a cloud begins to appear ; a limitation casts its shadow over the formless void.

Infinite is finite because it is infinite. That is to say, because infinity includes all things, it is incapable of creating what is external to itself. Deny infinity in this sense, and the being to whom it is attributed receives a new power ; God is greater by being finite than by being infinite. Proceeding in the same train of thought, we may observe that the word finite is the symbol, to our own minds as to the Greek, of strength and reality and truth. It cannot be these which we intend to deny of the Divine Being. Lastly, when we have freed our minds from associations of place and from those other solemn associations which naturally occur to us from its application to the Almighty, are we sure that we intend anything more by the 'Infinite' than mere vacancy, the 'indefinite', the word 'not ?'

It is useful to point out the ambiguities and perplexities of such terms. Logic is not to puzzle us with inferences about words which she clothes in mystery ; at any rate, before moving a step she should explain their meaning. She must admit that the infinite overreaches itself in denying the existence of the finite, and that there are some 'limitations', such as the impossibility of evil or falsehood, which are of the essence of the Divine nature. She must inquire whether it be conceivable to reach a further infinite, in which the opposition to the finite is denied, which may be a worthier image of the Divine Being. She must acknowledge that negative ideas, while they have often a kind of solemnity and mystery, are the shallowest and most trifling of all our ideas.

So far the will may be free unless we persist in an idea of the Divine which logic and not reason erroneously requires, and which is the negative not only of freedom but of all other existence but its own. More serious consequences may seem to flow from the attribute of omnipotence. For if God is the author of all things, must it not be as a mode of Divine operation that man acts ? We can get no further than a doctrine of emanation or derivation. Again, we are caught unwittingly in the toils of an 'illogical' logic. For why should we assume that because God is omnipotent He cannot make beings independent of Himself. A figure of speech is not generally a good argument ; but in this instance it is a sufficient one, what is needed being not an answer but only an image or mode of conception. (For in theology and philosophy it constantly happens that, while logic is working out antinomies, language fails to supply an expression of the intermediate truth). The carpenter makes a chair, which exists detached from its maker ; the mechanician constructs a watch, which is wound up and goes by the action of a spring or lever ; he can frame yet



more complex instruments, in which power is treasured up for other men to use. The greater the skill of the artificer the more perfect and independent the work. Shall we say of God only that He is unable to separate His creations from Himself? That man can produce works of imagination which live for ages after he is committed to the dust; nay, that in the way of nature he can bring into existence another being endowed with life and consciousness to perpetuate his name? But that God cannot remove a little space to contemplate His works? He must needs be present in all their movements, according to the antiquated error of natural philosophers, 'that no body can act where it is not'.

(2) Yet although the freedom of the will may be consistent with the infinity and omnipotence of God, when rightly understood and separated from logical consequences, it may be thought to be really interfered with by the Divine omniscience. 'God knows all things; our thoughts are His before they are our own; what I am doing at this moment was certainly foreseen by Him; what He certainly foresaw yesterday, or a thousand years ago, or from everlasting, how can I avoid doing at this time? To-day He sees the future course of my life. Can I make or unmake what is already within the circle of His knowledge? The imperfect judgment of my fellow-creatures gives me no disquietude—they may condemn me, and I may reverse their opinion. But the fact that the unerring judgment of God has foreseen my doom renders me alike indifferent to good and evil'.

What shall we say to this? First, that the distinction between Divine and human judgments is only partially true. For as God sees with absolute unerringness, so a wise man who is acquainted with the character and circumstances of others may foretell and assure their future life with a great degree of certainty. He may perceive intuitively their strength and weakness, and prophesy their success or failure. Now, here it is observable, that the fact of our knowing the probable course of action which another will pursue has nothing to do with the action itself. It does not exercise the smallest constraint on him; it does not produce the slightest feeling of constraint. Imagine ourselves acquainted with the habits of some animal; as we open the door of the enclosure in which it is kept, we know that it will run up to or away from us; it will show signs of pleasure or irritation. No one supposes that its actions, whatever they are, depend on our knowledge of them. Let us take another example, which is at the other end of the scale of freedom and intelligence. Conceive a veteran statesman casting his eye over the map of

Europe, and foretelling the parts which nations or individuals would take in some coming struggle, who thinks the events when they come to pass are the consequences of the prediction? Every one is able to distinguish the causes of the events from the knowledge which foretells them.

There are degrees in human knowledge or foreknowledge proceeding from the lowest probability, through increasing certainty, up to absolute demonstration. But as faint presumptions do not affect the future, nor great probability, so neither does scientific demonstration. Many natural laws cannot be known more certainly than they are; but we do not therefore confuse the fact with our knowledge of the fact. The time of the rising of the sun, or of the ebb and flow of the tide, are foretold and acted upon without the least hesitation. Yet no one has imagined that these or any other natural phenomena are affected by our previous calculations about them.

Why, then, should we impose on ourselves the illusion that the unerring certainty of Divine knowledge is a limit or shackle on human actions? The foreknowledge which we possess ourselves in no way produces the facts which we foresee; the circumstance that we foresee them in distant time has no more to do with them than if we saw them in distant space. So, once more, we return from the dominion of ideas and trains of speculative consequences to rest in experience. God sits upon the circle of the heavens, present, past, and future in a figure open before Him, and sees the inhabitants of the earth like grasshoppers, coming and going, to and fro, doing or not doing their appointed work: His knowledge of them is not the cause of their actions. So might we ourselves look down upon some wide prospect without disturbing the peaceful toils of the villagers who are beneath. They do not slacken or hasten their business because we are looking at them. In like manner God may look upon mankind without thereby interfering with the human will or influencing in any degree the actions of men.

(3) But the difficulty with which Christianity surrounds, or rather seems to surround us, winds yet closer; it rests also on the Christian consciousness. The doctrine of grace may be expressed in the language of St Paul: 'I can do nothing as of myself, but my sufficiency is of God': that which is truly self, which is peculiarly self, is yet in another point of view not self but God. He who has sought most earnestly to fulfil the will of God refers his efforts to something beyond himself; he is humble and simple, seeming to fear that he will lose the good that he has, when he makes it his own.

This is the mind of Christ which is formally expressed in theology by theories of grace. Theories of grace have commonly started from the transgression of Adam and the corruption of human nature in his posterity. Into the origin of sin it is not necessary for us to enquire ; we may limit ourselves to the fact. All men are very far gone from original righteousness, they can only return to God by His grace preventing them ; that is to say, anticipating and co-operating with the motions of their will. (1) God wills that some should be saved, whom He elects without reference to their deserts ; (2) God wills that some should be saved, and implants in them the mind of salvation ; (3) God calls all men, but chooses some out of those whom He calls ; (4) God chooses all alike, and shows no preference to any ; (5) God calls all men, even in the heathen world, and some hear His voice, not knowing whom they obey. Such are the possible gradations of the question of election. In the first of them grace is a specific quality distinct from holiness or moral virtue ; in the second it is identical with holiness and moral virtue, according to a narrow conception of them which denies their existence in those who have not received a Divine call ; in the third an attempt is made to reconcile justice to all men with favour to some ; in the fourth the justice of God extends equally to all Christian men ; in the fifth we pass the boundaries of the Christian world and expression is given to the thought of the Apostle : ' Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth God is accepted of Him '.

All these theories of grace affect at various points the freedom of the will, the first seeming wholly to deny it, while all the others attempt some real or apparent reconciliation of morality and religion. The fourth and fifth meet the difficulties arising out of our ideas of the justice of God, but fall into others derived from experience and fact. Can we say that all Christians, nominal and real, nay, that the most degraded persons among the heathen, are equally the subjects of Divine grace ? Then grace is something unintelligible ; it is a word only, to which there is no corresponding idea. Again, how upon any of these theories is grace distinguishable from the better consciousness of the individual himself ? Can any one pretend to say where grace ends and the movement of the will begins ? Did any one ever recognize in himself those lines of demarcation of which theology sometimes speaks ?

These are difficulties in which we are involved by ' oppositions of knowledge falsely so called '. The answer to them is simple— a return to fact and nature. When, instead of reading our own

hearts, we seek, in accordance with a preconceived theory, to determine the proportions of the divine and human—to distinguish grace and virtue, the word of God and man—we know not where we are, the difficulty becomes insuperable, we have involved ourselves in artificial meshes, and are bound hand and foot. But when we look by the light of conscience and Scripture on the facts of human nature, the difficulty of itself disappears. No one doubts that he is capable of choosing between good and evil, and that in making this choice he may be supported, if he will, by a power more than earthly. The movement of that Divine power is not independent of the movement of his own will, but coincident and identical with it. Grace and virtue, conscience and the Spirit of God, are not different from each other, but in harmony. If no man can do what is right without the aid of the Spirit, then every one who does what is right has the aid of the Spirit.

Part of the difficulty originates in the fact that the Scripture regards Christian truth from a Divine aspect, 'God working in you', while ordinary language, even among religious men in modern times, deals rather with human states or feelings. Philosophy has a third way of speaking which is different from either. Two or more sets of words and ideas are used which gradually acquire a seemingly distinct meaning; at last comes the question—in what relation they stand to one another? The *Epistles* speak of grace and faith at the same time that heathen moralists told of virtue and wisdom, and the two streams of language have flowed on without uniting even at our own day. The question arises, first, whether grace is anything more than the objective name of faith and love; and again, whether these two latter are capable of being distinguished from virtue and truth? Is that which St Paul called faith absolutely different from that which Seneca termed virtue or morality? Is not virtue, *πρὸς θεόν*, faith? Is faith anything without virtue? But if so, they are not opposed at all, or opposed only as part and whole. Christianity is not the negative of the religions of nature or the heathen; it includes and purifies them.

Instead, then, of arranging in a sort of theological diagram the relations of the human will to Divine grace, we deny the possibility of separating them. In various degrees, in many ways, more or less consciously in different cases, the Spirit of God is working in the soul of man. It is an erroneous mode of speaking, according to which the free agency of man is represented as in conflict with the Divine will. For the freedom of man in the higher sense is the grace of God; and in the lower

sense (of mere choice) is not inconsistent with it. The real opposition is not between freedom and predestination, which are imperfect and in some degree misleading expressions of the same truth, but between good and evil.

II. Passing out of the sphere of religion, we have now to examine the question of free agency within the narrower limits of the mind itself. It will confirm the line of argument hitherto taken, if it be found that here too we are subject to the illusions of language and the oppositions of logic.

(1) Every effect has a cause ; every cause an effect. The drop of rain, the ray of light does not descend at random on the earth. In the natural world though we are far from understanding all the causes of phenomena, we are certain from that part which we know, of their existence in that part which we do not know. In the human mind we perceive the action of many physical causes ; we are therefore led to infer, that only our ignorance of physiology prevents our perceiving the absolute interdependence of body and soul. So indissolubly are cause and effect bound together, that there is a mental impossibility in conceiving them apart. Where, then, in the endless chain of causes and effect can the human will be inserted, or how is the insertion of the will, as one cause out of many, consistent with the absolute freedom which we ascribe to it ?

The author of the *Critic of Pure Reason* is willing to accept such a statement as has been just made, and yet believes himself to have found out of time and space, independent of the laws of cause and effect, a transcendental freedom. Our separate acts are determined by previous causes ; our whole life is a continuous ' effect ', yet in spite of this mechanical sequence, freedom is the overruling law which gives the form to human action. It is not necessary to analyze the steps by which Kant arrived at this paradoxical conclusion. Only by adjusting the glass so as to exclude from the sight everything but the perplexities of previous philosophers, can we conceive how a great intellect could have been led to imagine the idea of a freedom from which the notion of time is abstracted, of which nevertheless we are conscious in time. For what is that freedom which does not apply to our individual acts, hardly even to our lives as a whole, like a point which has neither length nor breadth, wanting both continuity and succession ?

Scepticism proceeds by a different path in reference to our ideas of cause and effect ; it challenges their validity, it denies the necessity of the connection, or even doubts the ideas themselves. There was a time when the world was startled out of

its propriety at this verbal puzzle, and half believed itself a sceptic. Now we know that no innovation in the use of words or in forms of thought can make any impression on solid facts. Nature and religion, and human life remain the same, even to one who entirely renounces the common conceptions of cause and effect.

The sceptic of the last century, instead of attempting to invalidate the connexion of fact which we express by the terms cause and effect, should rather have attacked language as 'unequal to the subtlety of nature'. Facts must be described in some way, and therefore words must be used, but always in philosophy, with a latent consciousness of their inadequacy and imperfection. The very phrase 'cause and effect' has a direct influence in disguising from us the complexity of causes and effects. It is too abstract to answer to anything in the concrete. It tends to isolate in idea some one antecedent or condition from all the rest. And the relation which we deem invariable is really a most various one. Its apparent necessity is only the necessity of relative terms. Every cause has an effect, in the same sense that every father has a son. But while in the latter case the relation is always the same, the manifold application of the terms, cause and effect, to the most different phenomena has led to an ambiguity in their use. Our first impression is, that a cause is one thing and an effect another, but soon we find them doubling up, or melting into one. The circulation of the blood is not the cause of life, in the same sense that a blow with the hammer may be the cause of death; nor is virtue the cause of happiness, in precisely the same sense that the circulation of the blood is the cause of life. Everywhere, as we ascend in the scale of creation, from mechanics to chemistry, from chemistry to physiology and human action, the relative notion is more difficult and subtle, the cause becoming inextricably involved with the effect, and the effect with the cause, 'every means being an end, and every end a means'.

Hence, no one who examines our ideas of cause and effect will believe that they impose any limit on the will; they are an imperfect mode in which the mind imagines the sequence of nature or moral actions; being no generalization from experience, but a play of words only. The chain which we are wearing is loose, and, when shaken will drop off. External circumstances are not the cause of which the will is the effect; neither is the will the cause of which circumstances are the effect. But the phenomenon intended to be described by the words 'cause and effect' is itself the will, whose motions are analyzed in language borrowed from physical nature.

The same explanation applies to another formula: 'the strongest motive'. The will of every man is said to be only determined by the strongest motive: what is this but another imaginary analysis of the will itself? For the motive is a part of the will, and the strongest motive is nothing more than the motive which I choose. Nor is it true as a fact that we are always thus determined. For the greater proportion of human actions have no distinct motives; the mind does not stand like the schoolmen's ass, pondering between opposite alternatives. Mind and will, and the sequence of cause and effect, and the force of motives, are different ways of speaking of the same mental phenomena.

So readily are we deceived by language, so easily do we fall under the power of imaginary reasonings. The author of the *Novum Organum* has put men upon their guard against the illusions of words in the study of the natural sciences. It is true that many distinctions may be drawn between the knowledge of nature, the facts of which are for the most part visible and tangible, and morality and religion, which run up into the unseen. But is it therefore to be supposed that language, which is the source of half the exploded fallacies of chemistry and physiology, is an adequate or exact expression of moral and spiritual truths? It is probable that its analysis of human nature is really as erring and inaccurate as its description of physical phenomena, though the error may be more difficult of detection. These 'inexact natures' or substances of which Bacon speaks exist in moral philosophy as in physics; their names are not heat, moisture, form, matter and the like, but necessity, free will, predestination, grace, motive, cause, which rest upon nothing and yet become the foundation-stones of many systems. Logic, too, has its parallels, and conjugates, and differences of kind, which in life and reality are only differences of degree, and remote inferences lending an apparent weight to the principle on which they really drag, which spread themselves over every field of thought and are hardly corrected by their inconsistency with the commonest facts.

III. Difficulties of this class belong to the last generation rather than to the present; they are seldom discussed now by philosophical writers. Philosophy in our own age is occupied in another way. Her foundation is experience, which alone she interrogates respecting the limits of human action. How far is man a free agent? is the question still before us. But it is to be considered from without rather than from within, as it appears to others or ourselves in the case of others, and not with reference to our internal consciousness of our own actions.

The conclusions of philosophers would have met with more favour at the hands of preachers and moralists, had they confined themselves to the fact. Indeed, they would have been irresistible, like the conclusions of natural science, for who can resist evidence that any one may verify for himself? But the taint of language has clung to them; the imperfect expression of manifest truths has greatly hindered the general acceptance of them even among the most educated. It was not understood that those who spoke of necessity meant nothing which was really inconsistent with free will; when they assumed a power of calculating human actions, it was not perceived that all of us are every day guilty of this imaginary impiety. The words, character, habit, force of circumstances, temperament and constitution imply all that is really involved in the idea that human action is subject to uniform laws. Neither is it to be denied that expressions have been used equally repugnant to fact and morality; instead of regularity, and order, and law, which convey a beneficent idea, necessity has been set up as a constraining power tending to destroy, if not really destroying, the accountability of man. History, too, has received an impress of fatalism, which has doubtless affected our estimate of the good and evil of the agents who have been regarded as not really responsible for actions which the march of events forced upon them.

According to a common way of considering this subject, the domain of necessity is extending every day, and liberty is already confined to a small territory not yet reclaimed by scientific enquiry. Mind and body are in closer contact; there is increasing evidence of the interdependence of the mental and nervous powers. It is probable, or rather certain, that every act of the mind has a cause and effect in the body, that every act of the body has a cause and effect in the mind. Given the circumstances, parentage, education, temperament of each individual; we may calculate, with an approximation to accuracy, his probable course of life. Persons are engaged every day in making such observations; and whatever uncertainty there may be in the determination of the future of any single individual, this uncertainty is eliminated when the enquiry is extended to many individuals or to a whole class. We have as good data for supposing that a fixed proportion of a million persons in a country will commit murder or theft as that a fixed proportion will die without reaching a particular age and of this or that disease under given circumstances. And it so happens that we have the power of testing this order or uniformity in the most trifling of human actions. Nor can we doubt that were it worth while to make



an abstract of human life, arranging under heads the least minutiae of action, all that we say and do would be found to conform to numerical laws.

So, again, history is passing into the domain of philosophy. Nations, like individuals, are moulded by circumstances; in their first rise, and ever after in their course, they are dependent on country and climate, like plants or animals, embodying the qualities which have dropped upon them from surrounding influences in national temperament; in their later stages seeming to react upon these causes, and coming under a new kind of law, as the earth discloses its hidden treasures, or the genius of man calls forth into life and action the powers which are dormant in matter. Nature, which is, in other words, the aggregate of all these causes, stamps nations and societies, and creates in them a mind, that is to say, ideas of order, of religion, of conquest, which they maintain, often unimpaired by the changes in their physical condition. She infuses among the mass a few great intellects, according to some law unknown to us, to 'instrument this lower world'. Here is a new power which is partially separated from the former, and yet combines with it in national existence, like body and soul in the existence of man. Partly isolated from their age and nation, partly also identified with them, it is a curious observation respecting great men that while they seem to have more play and freedom than others, in themselves they are often more enthralled, being haunted with the sense of a destiny which controls them. The 'heirs of all the ages' who have subjected nature to the dominion of science are also nature's subjects; the conquerors who have poured over the earth, have only continued some wave or tendency in the history of the times which preceded them. From the thin vapour which first floated, as some believe, in the azure vault, up to that miracle of complexity which we call man, and again from man the individual to the whole human race, with its languages and religions, and other national characteristics, and backwards to the beginning of human history, in the works of mind too as well as in the material universe, there is not always development, but order, and uniformity, and law.

It is a matter of some importance in what way this connexion or order of nature is to be expressed. For although words cannot alter facts, the right use of them greatly affects the readiness with which facts are admitted or received. Now the world may be variously imagined as a vast machine, as an animal or living being, as a body endowed with a rational or divine soul. All these figures of speech, and the associations to which they give

rise, have an insensible influence on our ideas. The representation of the world as a machine is a more favourite one, in modern times, than the representation of it as a living being ; and with mechanism is associated the notion of necessity. Yet the machine is, after all, a mere barren unity, which gives no conception of the endless fertility of natural or of moral life. So, again, when we speak of a 'soul of the world', there is no real resemblance to a human soul ; there is no centre in which this mundane life or soul has its seat, no individuality such as characterizes the soul of man. But the use of the word invariably recalls thoughts of Pantheism :

*deum namque ire per omnes terrasque tractusque maris, cælumque profundum.*

So the term 'law' carries with it an association, partly of compulsion, partly of that narrower and more circumscribed notion of law, in which it is applied to chemistry or mechanics. So again the word 'necessity' itself always has a suggestion of external force.

All such language has a degree of error, because it introduces some analogy which belongs to another sphere of thought. But when, laying aside language, we consider facts only, no appearance of external compulsion arises, whether in nature, or in history, or in life. The lowest, and therefore the simplest idea, that we are capable of forming of physical necessity, is of the stone falling to the ground. No one imagines human action to be necessary in any such sense as this. If this be our idea of necessity, the meaning of the term must be enlarged when it is applied to man. If any one speaks of human action as the result of necessary laws, to avoid misunderstanding, we may ask at the outset of the controversy, 'In what degree necessary?' And this brings us to an idea which is perhaps the readiest solution of the apparent perplexity—that of degrees of necessity. For, although it is true, that to the eye of a superior or divine being the actions of men would seem to be the subjects of laws quite as much as the falling stone, yet these laws are of a far higher or more delicate sort ; we may figure them to ourselves truly, as allowing human nature play and room within certain limits, as regulating only and not constraining the freedom of its movements.

How degrees of necessity are possible may be illustrated as follows : The strongest or narrowest necessity which we ever see in experience is that of some very simple mechanical fact, such as is furnished by the law of attraction. A greater necessity than this is only an abstraction ; as, for example, the necessity

by which two and two make four, or the three angles of a triangle equal two right angles. But any relation between objects which are seen is of a much feebler and less absolute kind ; the strongest which we have ever observed is that of a smaller body to a larger. The physiology even of plants opens to our mind freer and nobler ideas of law. The tree with its fibres and sap, drawing its nourishment from many sources, light, air, moisture, earth, is a complex structure : rooted to one particular spot, no one would think of ascribing to it free agency, yet as little should we think of binding it fast in the chains of a merely mechanical necessity. Animal life partaking with man of locomotion is often termed free ; its sphere is narrowed only by instinct ; indeed the highest grade of irrational being can hardly be said, in point of freedom, to differ from the lowest type of the human species. And in man himself are many degrees of necessity or freedom, from the child who is subject to its instincts, or the drunkard who is the slave of his passions, up to the philosopher comprehending at a glance the wonders of heaven and earth, the freeman ' whom the truth makes free ', or the Christian devoting himself to God, whose freedom is ' obedience to a law ' ; that law being ' the law of the Spirit of life ', as the Apostle expresses it ; respecting which, nevertheless, according to another mode of speaking (so various is language on this subject), ' necessity is laid upon him '. And between these two extremes are many half freedoms, or imperfect necessities : one man is under the influence of habit, another of prejudice, a third is the creature of some superior will ; of a fourth it is said, that it was ' impossible for him to act otherwise ' ; a fifth does by effort what to another is spontaneous ; while in the case of all, allowance is made for education, temperament, and the like.

The idea of necessity has already begun to expand ; it is no longer the negative of freedom, they almost touch. For freedom, too, is subject to limitation ; the freedom of the human will is not the freedom of the infinite, but of the finite. It does not pretend to escape from the conditions of human life. No man in his senses imagines that he can fly into the air, or walk through the earth ; he does not fancy that his limbs will move with the expedition of thought. He is aware that he has a less, or it may be a greater, power than others. He learns from experience to take his own measure. But this limited or measured freedom is another form of enlarged necessity. Beginning with an imaginary freedom, we may reduce it within the bounds of experience ; beginning with an abstract necessity, we may accommodate it to the facts of human life.

Attention has been lately called to the phenomena (already noticed) of the uniformity of human actions. The observation of this uniformity has caused a sort of momentary disturbance in the moral ideas of some persons, who seem unable to get rid of the illusion, that nature compels a certain number of individuals to act in a particular way, for the sake of keeping up the average. Their error is, that they confuse the law, which is only the expression of the fact, with the cause ; it is as though they affirmed the universal to necessitate the particular. The same uniformity appears equally in matters of chance. Ten thousand throws of the dice, *ceteris paribus*, will give about the same number of twos, threes, sixes : what compulsion was there here ? So ten thousand human lives will give a nearly equal number of forgeries, thefts, or other extraordinary actions. Neither is there compulsion here ; it is the simple fact. It may be said : Why is the number uniform ? In the first place, it is *not* uniform, that is to say, it is in our power to alter the proportions of crime by altering its circumstances. And this change of circumstances is not separable from the act of the legislator or private individual by which it may be accomplished, which is in turn suggested by other circumstances. The will or the intellect of man still holds its place as the centre of a moving world. But, secondly, the imaginary power of this uniform number affects no one in particular ; it is not required that A, B, C, should commit a crime, or transmit an undirected letter, to enable us to fill up a tabular statement. The fact exhibited in the tabular statement is the result of all the movements of all the wills of the ten thousand persons who are made the subject of analysis.

It is possible to conceive great variations in such tables ; it is possible, that is, to imagine, without any change of circumstances, a thousand persons executed in France during one year for political offences, and none the next. But the world in which this phenomenon was observed would be a very different sort of world from that in which we live. It would be a world in which 'nations, like individuals, went mad' ; in which there was no habit, no custom ; almost, we may say, no social or political life. Men must be no longer different, and so compensating one another by their excellencies and deficiencies, but all in the same extreme ; as if the waves of the sea in a storm instead of returning to their level were to remain on high. The mere statement of such a speculation is enough to prove its absurdity. And, perhaps, no better way could be found of disabusing the minds of the objections which appear to be entertained to the fact of the uniformity of human actions, than a distinct effort to imagine

the disorder of the world which would arise out of the opposite principle.

But the advocate of free will may again return to the charge, with an appeal to consciousness. 'Your freedom', he will say, 'is but half freedom, but I have that within which assures me of an absolute freedom, without which I should be deprived of what I call responsibility'. No man has seen facts of consciousness, and therefore it is at any rate fair that before they are received they shall be subjected to analysis. We may look at an outward object which is called a table; no one would in this case demand an examination into the human faculties before he admitted the existence of the table. But inward facts are of another sort; that they really exist, may admit of doubt; that they exist in the particular form attributed to them or in any particular form, is a matter very difficult to prove. Nothing is easier than to insinuate a mere opinion, under the disguise of a fact of consciousness.

Consciousness tells, or seems to tell, of an absolute freedom; and this is supposed to be a sufficient witness of the existence of such a freedom. But does consciousness tell also of the conditions under which this freedom can be exercised? Does it remind us that we are finite beings? Does it present to one his bodily, to another his mental constitution? Is it identical with self-knowledge? No one imagines this. To what then is it the witness? To a dim and unreal notion of freedom, which is as different from the actual fact as dreaming is from acting. No doubt, the human mind has or seems to have a boundless power, as of thinking so also of willing. But this imaginary power, going as it does far beyond experience, varying too in youth and age, greatest often in idea when it is really least, cannot be adduced as a witness for what is inconsistent with experience.

The question: How is it possible for us to be finite beings, and yet to possess this consciousness of freedom which has no limit? may be partly answered by another question: How is it possible for us to acquire any ideas which transcend experience? The answer is, only, that the mind has the power of forming such ideas; it can conceive a beauty, goodness, truth, which has no existence on earth. The conception, however, is subject to this law, that the greater the idealization the less the individuality. In like manner that imperfect freedom which we enjoy as finite beings is magnified by us into an absolute idea of freedom, which seems to be infinite because it drops out of sight the limits with which nature in fact everywhere surrounds us;

and also because it is the abstraction of self, of which we can never be deprived, and which we conceive to be acting still when all the conditions of action are removed.

Freedom is absolute in another sense, as the correlative of obligation. Men entertain some one, some another, idea of right, but all are bound to act according to that idea. The standard may be relative to their own circumstances, but the duty is absolute; and the power is also absolute of refusing the evil and choosing the good, under any possible contingency. It is a matter (not only of consciousness but) of fact, that we have such a power, quite as much as the facts of statistics, to which it is sometimes opposed, or rather, to speak more correctly, is one of them. And when we make abstraction of this power, that is, when we think of it by itself, there arises also the conception of an absolute freedom.

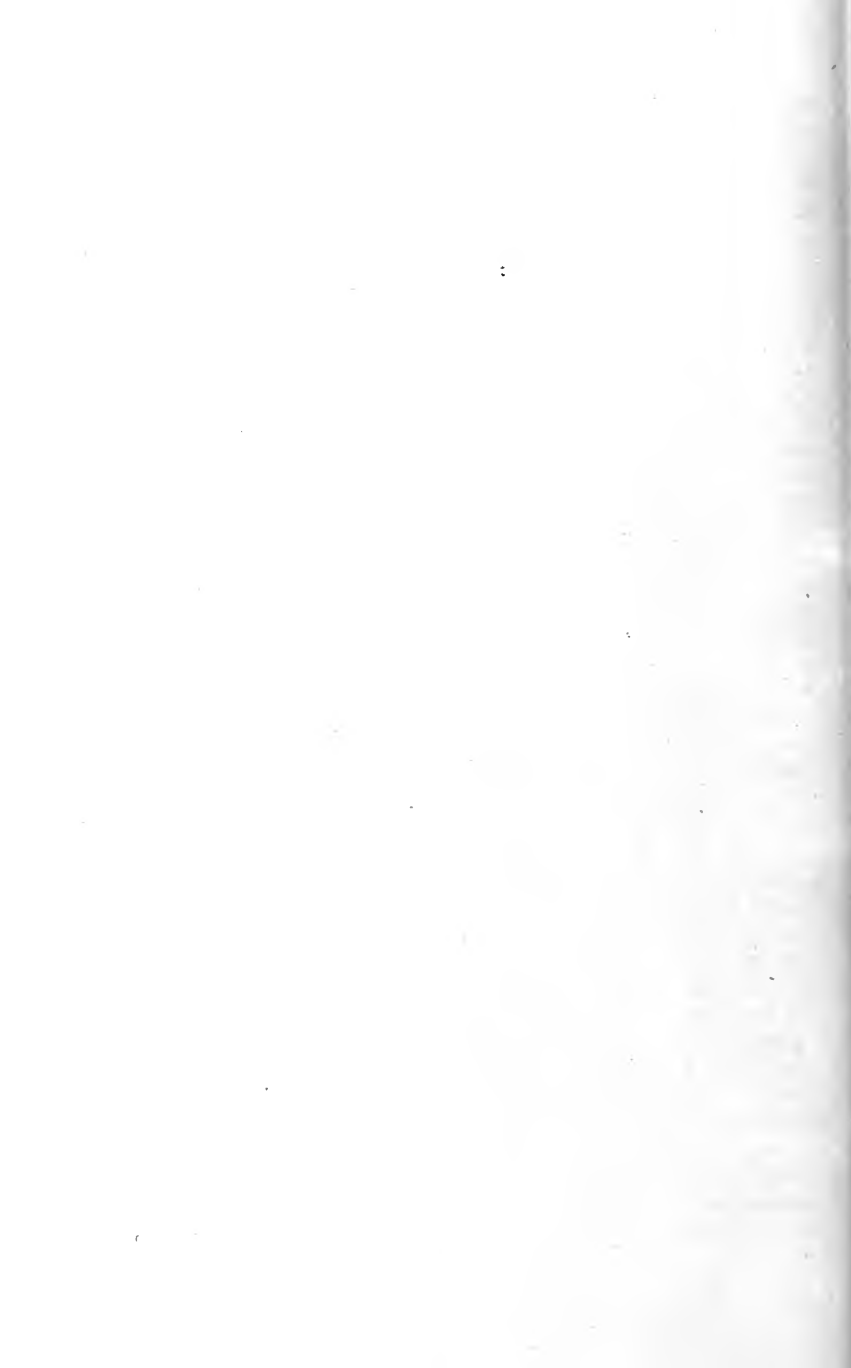
So singularly is human nature constituted, looking from without on the actions of men as they are, witnessing inwardly to a higher law. 'You ought to do so; you have the power to do so' is consistent with the fact, that in practice you fail to do so. It may be possible for us to unite both these aspects of human nature, yet experience seems to show that we commonly look first at one and then at the other. The inward vision tells us the law of duty and the will of God; the outward contemplation of ourselves and others shows the trials to which we are most subject. Any transposition of these two points of view is fatal to morality. For the proud man to say: 'I inherited pride from my ancestors'; or for the licentious man to say: 'It is in the blood'; for the weak man to say: 'I am weak, and will not strive'; for any to find the excuses of their vices in their physical temperament or external circumstances, is the corruption of their nature.

Yet this external aspect of human affairs has a moral use. It is a duty to look at the consequences of actions, as well as at actions themselves; the knowledge of our own temperament, or strength, or health, is a part also of the knowledge of self. We have need of the wise man's warning, about 'age which will not be defied' in our moral any more than our physical constitution. In youth, also, there are many things outward and indifferent, which cannot but exercise a moral influence on after life. Often opportunities of virtue have to be made, as well as virtuous efforts; there are forms of evil, too, against which we struggle in vain by mere exertions of the will. He who trusts only to a moral or religious impulse, is apt to have aspirations, which never realize themselves in action. His moral nature may

be compared to a spirit without a body, fluttering about in the world, but unable to comprehend or grasp any good.

Yet more, in dealing with classes of men, we seem to find that we have greater power to shape their circumstances than immediately to affect their wills. The voice of the preacher passes into the air ; the members of his congregation are like persons ' beholding their natural face in a glass ' ; they go their way, forgetting their own likeness. And often the result of a long life of ministerial work has been the conversion of two or three individuals. The power which is exerted in such a case may be compared to the unaided use of the hand, while mechanical appliances are neglected. Or to turn to another field of labour, in which the direct influence of Christianity has been hitherto small, may not the reason why the result of missions is often disappointing be found in the circumstance, that we have done little to improve the political or industrial state of those among whom our missionaries are sent ? We have thought of the souls of men, and of the Spirit of God influencing them, in too naked a way ; instead of attending to the complexity of human nature, and the manner in which God has ever revealed Himself in the history of mankind.

The great lesson, which Christians have to learn in the present day, is to know the world as it is ; that is to say, to know themselves as they are ; human life as it is ; nature as it is ; history as it is. Such knowledge is also a power, to fulfil the will of God and to contribute to the happiness of man. It is a resting-place in speculation, and a new beginning in practice. Such knowledge is the true reconciliation of the opposition of necessity and free will. Not that spurious reconciliation which places necessity in one sphere of thought, freedom in another ; not that pride of freedom which is ready to take up arms against plain facts ; nor yet that demonstration of necessity in which logic, equally careless of facts, has bound fast the intellect of man. The whole question when freed from the illusions of language, is resolvable into experience. Imagination cannot conquer for us more than the degree of freedom which we truly have ; the tyranny of science cannot impose upon us any law or limit to which we are not really subject ; theology cannot alter the real relations of God and man. The facts of human nature and of Christianity remain the same, whether we describe them by the word ' necessity ' or ' freedom ', in the phraseology of Lord Bacon and Locke, or in that of Calvin and Augustine.





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The contractions used in this index are :

f. a.—fact about  
m.—mentioned  
N. T.—New Testament

O. T.—Old Testament  
q.—quoted  
r.—referred to

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