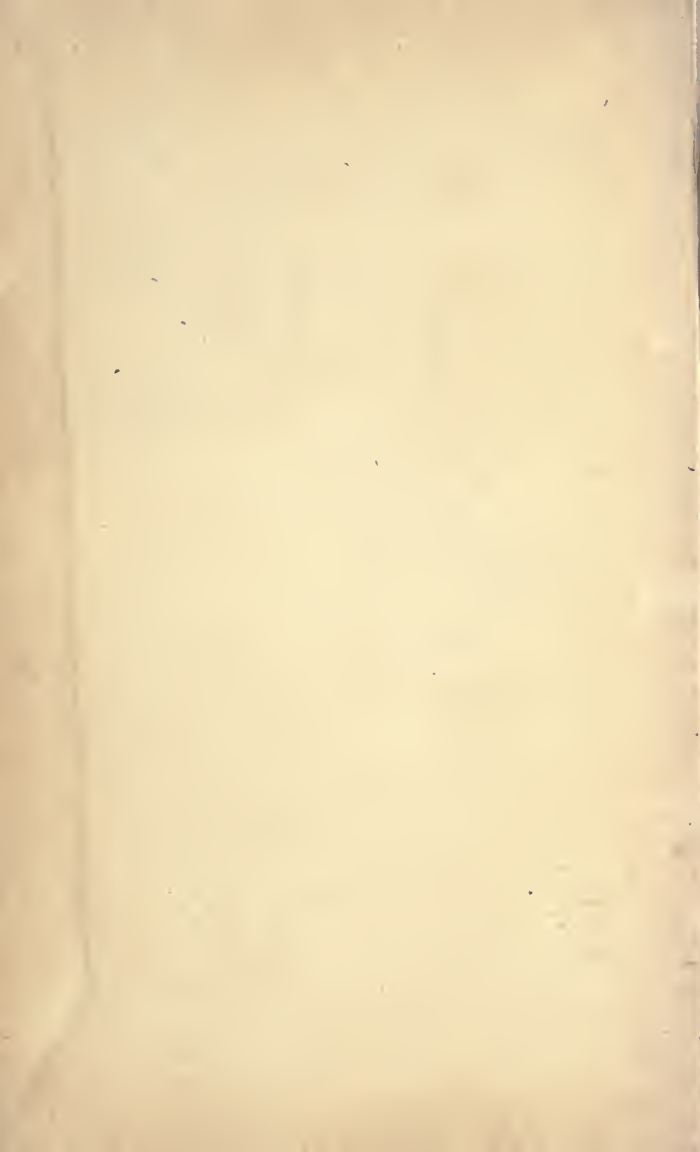


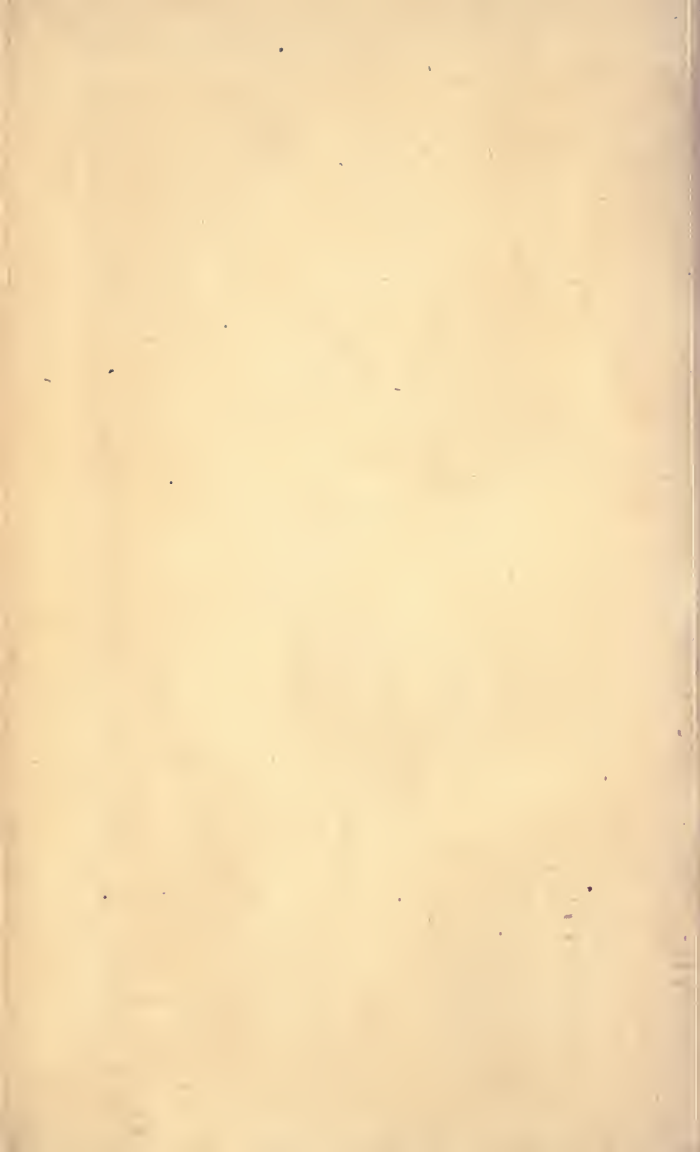


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# Coleridge and his Followers.

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A LECTURE

BY THE

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## COLERIDGE AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

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THE subject of this evening's Lecture is one which involves no small amount both of difficulty and delicacy in its treatment. We have to deal with principles of philosophic thinking—subtle, profound, far-reaching, comprehensive, and powerful for good or evil—as they were expressed by one of England's noblest sons of Genius, in language at all times "beautiful exceedingly," but not unfrequently melting away into dream-like vagueness, leaving the mind in a state of delighted but inapprehensive wonder. To compress that vast region of thought into a narrow compass, and to reduce it to more simple and definite form, must needs be indeed a difficult task. On the other hand, to state the result of our investigations freely, and yet with due respect and veneration of the mighty and honoured dead, and also with due courtesy to the able and earnest-minded living who are regarded as his followers, demands the utmost delicacy, such as only love and charity can lend to sincerity and truth. It is our hope, that in the course of the following disquisition we may not be found either rashly unconscious of the difficulty, or forgetful of the delicacy, of our arduous task.

A slight biographical sketch of Coleridge may be useful as an introduction to our subject. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE was the tenth and youngest child of the Rev. John Coleridge, vicar of the parish of Ottery, St. Mary, in the county of Devon. He was born at Ottery, on the 21st of October, 1772, and had the misfortune to lose his father in the ninth year of his age. In the next year he obtained a presentation to the school of Christ's Hospital, London, where he remained till his nineteenth year, enjoying, to use his own words, "the inestimable advantage of a very sensible, though, at the same time, a very severe master." At school he appears to have excelled all his class-fellows in mere scholarship, and to have added to his classical learning an immense mass of other reading and study, chiefly in poetry and metaphysics, his mind thus early displaying its innate tendency, and pointing significantly to its future course. From London he went to Cambridge, in 1791, where he gained the gold medal for the Greek Ode in his first year, but failed in his competition for the Craven Scholarship in his second year. This failure weighed heavily upon his spirits, blighting, as it did, his hopes of obtaining a Fellowship, and the consequent learned leisure for which his active intellect so eagerly longed, but could never realise. In 1794 he left Cambridge and proceeded to London, without money, without a home, without friends, and, most deplorable of all, without an aim. After wandering about the streets for some days in a state of great destitution, and almost despair, he enlisted in the 15th Dragoons. His learning soon discovered itself, and led to his being discharged and restored to his friends, who, though unable to secure him an independence, put him in a condition to make

some attempts towards procuring for himself a maintenance by his literary labours—a field of exertion at all times sufficiently precarious, especially in the case of one like Coleridge, whose mental characteristics were wholly unfitted for such a task.

In the same year, 1794, he published a volume of poems, of considerable merit and still greater promise, but met with little success in a pecuniary point of view. Next year, having formed an acquaintance with Southey and Lovell, who were, equally with himself, ardent admirers of ideal liberty, the three enthusiastic poets formed a scheme of emigration to America, there to establish a republic on the basis of equality; and to promote this scheme they married three sisters. The scheme, however, went no further. The actual contact into which they were thus brought with the duties and the necessities of real life, dispelled their visionary dream, and each betook himself to some employment to enable him to meet the demands of our common nature.

At this period the mind of Coleridge was like a chaos—all possible notions surging about at random within its spacious compass, stirred into eager action by the forming spirit, but not yet reduced to calm and regulated harmony beneath its sovereign control. In his philosophical opinions he was a Platonist; in his religious, a zealous Unitarian, frequently preaching in the meeting-houses of those who usurp and misuse that designation. His mind was not one that could rest satisfied with forms and ceremonies, or build its belief upon the mere dogmas of authority. But, though deeply in error, he was a sincere inquirer, and was, ere long, led to find that truth which no sincere inquirer ever sought

in vain. By the liberal kindness of his friends, Josiah and Thomas Wedgewood, he was rescued from the necessity or hazard of becoming a Socinian preacher, and enabled to devote himself entirely to the study of poetry and philosophy. Accompanied by Wordsworth, he set out on a visit to Germany, in 1798, there to prosecute for a time his studies, according to his own plans. In Germany he resided for two years, enjoying the friendship of some of its most distinguished poets and philosophers, and became intimately conversant, or rather deeply imbued, with German philosophy, especially with the systems of Kant and of Schelling. Breaking loose at once from the philosophy of Locke and Paley, with its materialising tendencies, and prosecuting earnestly a more ethereal course of study, he found himself unexpectedly brought into a great degree of harmony with the pure, unworldly, and evangelical Christianity of Paul and John; thus obtaining, what he himself terms, a "reconversion," from which again he never erred, and in the faith of which he humbly lived and calmly died.

On his return from Germany, he dwelt for a time at Keswick, along with his friends, Southey and Wordsworth. But in this congenial society he did not long remain, being compelled to engage in periodical writing, to aid in the support of himself and his family; and for some time he was a principal contributor to the "Morning Post," a ministerial paper of the day. In 1804 he went to Malta, on a visit to his friend Dr. Stoddart, and while there was appointed secretary to Sir Alexander Ball, at that time governor. For such a situation he was little adapted, and relinquished it in less than a year. Soon after his return to England he published "The

Friend," at first as a periodical, and afterwards collectively, in three volumes. In this work will be found some of the most beautiful, and, at the same time, most profound disquisitions in the whole compass of British literature, with an exquisite biographical sketch of his friend, Sir Alexander Ball. In 1816 appeared "Christabel," which, with the "Ancient Mariner," had been composed in 1797, while residing at Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire, in the neighbourhood of which his friend Wordsworth at that time also dwelt. In the same year, 1816, he published "The Statesman's Manual; or, The Bible the Best Guide to Political Skill and Foresight;" and next year he published his "Biographia Literaria," a singular and most interesting compound of biography, criticism, and philosophy.

From that year till 1825, little appeared from his pen, except some poems and plays, which detracted nothing from, but added little to, his literary reputation. In the last-mentioned year, however, appeared the "Aids to Reflection," both the most popular and the most valuable of all his prose works—one which, indeed, demands a very vigorous application of the reader's intellect, but will amply repay it. In 1830 appeared the last work sent to the press by himself, "On the Constitution of the Church and State, according to the Idea of Each." This remarkable specimen of the application of a very lofty and abstract philosophy to the determination of a most important politico-ecclesiastical question, does not appear to have ever entered into the public mind, though it has since been quoted and referred to in several recent works on the same subject, but seldom in a spirit and for an end which Coleridge would have approved.



At length, on the 25th of July, 1834, this truly great and good man—this distinguished poet, philosopher, and theologian, departed this life, leaving behind him a reputation equalled by few in any age, surpassed by still fewer, and not soon to reach that elevation to which a more extensive acquaintance with, and a juster appreciation of both his merits and defects, will inevitably raise it, when the turmoil of censure and apology, detraction and defence, shall have passed away,—when what is true and beneficial in his thinking shall have been admitted and approved, and what is erroneous and detrimental shall have been eliminated and consigned to quiet oblivion. For many years he had been in a state of great bodily infirmity; but few or none were apprehensive that his end was so near. When the stern messenger gave the summons, Coleridge was found not unprepared. In the words of one who had ample means of being acquainted with the closing scene, “The fatal change was sudden and decisive, and, six days before his death, he knew assuredly that his hour was come. His few worldly affairs had been long settled, and after many tender adieus, he expressed a wish that he might be as little interrupted as possible. His sufferings were severe and constant till within thirty-six hours of his end; but they had no power to affect the deep tranquillity of his mind, or the wonted sweetness of his address. His prayer from the beginning was, that God would not withdraw his Spirit, and that by the way in which he should bear the last struggle he might be able to evince the sincerity of his faith in Christ. If ever man did so, Coleridge did.” Such is the solemn language of one who beheld what he has so impressively described.

We have thus traced a brief outline of the outward mortal pilgrimage of this very remarkable man; but it would be no easy task fully to analyse and explain the peculiarities of his character, personal, poetical, philosophical, and religious. In truth, his personal character as a man seemed to be formed chiefly from the equipoise of the poetical and philosophical elements within him, without the intermixture of one particle of selfishness. He possessed in almost equal proportions the large-hearted affectionateness of the poet and the profound thoughtfulness of the philosopher. Not all the distresses and disappointments wherewith he was tried,—and his life was an almost continuous tissue of pains and sorrows,—were able to abate the warm glow of ardent friendship and affection in his bosom, or to repress his soul's strong thirst for knowledge and truth, spiritual and divine. His feelings and pursuits were equally ardent, unselfish, and unworldly; hence the little sympathy which they found among the cold, selfish, calculating men of the world.

But in order to arrive clearly at what we have in view, we must be somewhat more minute in tracing the special elements of his constitutional being, as they wrought in his mental growth and the formation of his character. From infancy he was a delicate and timid child, unfit for rough and energetic action, and prone to solitary reading and speculative musings. He said of himself that he had never personally known the sportive gaiety of childhood, far less the boisterous sports of boyhood. All this tended to foster and develope in him that morbid element in his physical constitution, which kept him throughout his entire lifetime in the listless, half-felt pain and languor of low

fever, out of which he could not be roused but by the excitement of some strong bodily or mental stimulus. In an evil hour he sought, and imagined he had found, relief by taking opium, which soon became the bane and torment of his very existence for a period of fourteen or fifteen years. By the kindness and benevolent care of the late Mr. Gillman, of Highgate, he was rescued from this direful habit, and enabled to resume and prosecute his literary labours, though he never recovered health to anything more than a very feeble degree, not sufficient to enable him to undertake or execute any task that demanded vigorous and continued exertion. Defective in action, as he was by nature and early habit, this tendency became incurable, in consequence of his deplorable prostration beneath the power of opium, and the feebleness resulting from it; and redundant in thought, as his marvellous intellectual capacity had always been and continued to be, after his rescue from narcotic slavery it was not strange that his mental characteristics suffered a partial collapse, and subsided into something like mingled indecision and vagueness.

There was one very remarkable feature in the character of Coleridge, to which we may briefly advert. In conversational powers he was altogether unapproached—we might say unapproachable. Various circumstances had contributed to cultivate this endowment to its highest pitch of excellence. His mind was filled with that innate dignity which prevented him from sinking into the use of any meanness of thought or expression; his ardent and affectionate heart communicated a vital glow to every word that he uttered; his intellect was of the most capacious order, and his



imagination ranged with strong, untiring wing throughout the whole vast regions of the beautiful, the sublime, and the true, in nature, art, and reason. His taste had been cultivated to the utmost, his memory was prodigious, and his power in the use of language was almost, if not quite, unrivalled. With all these qualities in most rare combination, and though meditative yet affectionate, though solitary not unsocial, though almost too full of discursive thought for energetic action, yet fond of the opportunity of pouring forth his rich treasures of knowledge and wisdom to all who had the capacity or showed the will to receive them; his conversation—if conversation that multiform, mellifluous monologue might be called—like a river, clear, deep, and wide, flowed, and as it flowed, seemed as it might for ever flow magnificently on. Once only had the writer of this Lecture the pleasure of listening to the “large discourse” of this “old man eloquent,—”

*Τοῦ καὶ ἀπὸ γλώσσης μέλιτος γλυκίων ῥέει αὐδῆ.*

Never shall we forget that interview. It was in the year 1831, that, having received an introduction from a mutual friend in London, we made our way to Highgate, and were admitted into the hospitable mansion of Mr. Gillman. There we were received by Mrs. Gillman herself, the poet's “most kind hostess,” who stated that Mr. Coleridge was suffering under extreme weakness and pain, but would very soon be ready to receive us. She went out for an instant, then quickly returning, began in a soft, low, apologetic, half-pleading, half-persuading tone, to mention, “that the state of Mr. Coleridge's health was such as to render it extremely injurious for him to give way to that excite-

ment in the flow of conversation so natural to him, which a very few minutes' converse with a congenial mind could not fail to produce; that she was convinced she needed but to hint the propriety of abstaining from the discussion of any exciting topics, and of not prolonging the interview to any length likely to be hurtful, for that, of course, no friends of Coleridge could wish to obtain gratification to themselves at the expense of injury to him;" then smiling, and requesting forgiveness, she retired. While we were admiring and mentally applauding her gentle prudence and her tender care, a door from another apartment slowly opened, and leaning on a smooth-worn staff, with short, feeble, and shuffling step, approached the poet and sage himself. A sickening pang of mingled surprise and sorrow shot through our heart to behold, in such a condition, the beloved and venerated man. The expression of his countenance was that of pain, subdued by resignation and sublimed by serious thoughtfulness. Still the poetic light was alive within the dreamy depths of his large grey eyes; and his broad, high, and compact forehead seemed still a fitting home for genius of the loftiest order. He spoke, and the tones of his voice were kindly but plaintive, as he apologised for his tardy approach, in consequence of his many and heavy infirmities. In a few seconds, resting himself in an easy chair which we had placed for him, he assumed a more cheerful tone and manner, and began conversing on a number of topics chiefly connected with Scotland and its literary men, displaying a very minute and accurate acquaintance with all of any celebrity. From that the transition was easy to the Rev. Edward Irving, on whom he passed a glowing eulogium, deploring at the same time

his wayward will, and, consequently, wayward fate. The stream flowed on and began to widen. The interpretation of prophecy was the next topic on which he touched, making it evident that he had studied the subject with considerable attention. The multiform mellifluous monologue was now commenced. His eye began to kindle and dilate; the expression of pain and languor forsook his countenance; his forehead brightened and beamed, and even seemed to expand with the power of the mental workings within; his fine silvery locks waved more freely and gracefully, as if with young life, around his temples; and his voice poured out a strange rich, mellow, rhythmical, yet somewhat monotonous music, peculiarly suited to his ever-varying yet continuous flow of transcendent eloquence. It was with not less than mental agony that we perceived the forbidden limits to be well-nigh overpassed. We rose—hesitated—blushed—expressed our deep regret that we must most reluctantly tear ourselves away. He looked for a moment confused, surprised, half-disappointed, then smiling affectionately, held forth his hand, saying, "I understand your motive, and I appreciate it. I thank you; I have as yet sustained no injury—again I thank you warmly; all my young friends are not so considerate. Farewell!—in the full meaning of that most emphatic word, fare well!" and we departed, feeling amply rewarded for our self-denial by his warm grasp and his full-hearted farewell.

As he had early possessed, so throughout life he retained, an exquisite sense of the beautiful and the pure, the tender and the good, the lovely and the loving. To these his heart and genius always responded, like the harp-strings to the passing breeze; but instead of a

prolonged strain being produced, the notes died dreamily away in weak and weary sadness. To this result also tended that morbidly acute physical sensitiveness which rendered any continued exertion more than he could endure. To sit in silent thought; to read some book that treated of subjects congenial to his own mind, and write long notes on its margins and fly-leaves; to pour out his vast stores of knowledge, and his boundless meditative musings in singularly beautiful and eloquent language, whenever he could obtain an intelligent, or even a patient listener—these became, and continued to be, the main employment of his latter life. And many a man has earned a considerable reputation, based on his gleanings from the wonderful conversational monologues of Coleridge.

And now, let the question be fairly asked, Could it be expected that, in this condition, Coleridge could conduct any profound and difficult philosophical or theological investigation to a precise and definite conclusion? Or, Was it to be expected that his thoughts, however clear in themselves, and however accurately expressed by him, could be adequately conveyed in occasional notes of a fragmentary nature, or by remembered snatches of table-talk, depending on both the perception and the memory of those by whom they might be reproduced? We do not think so. On the contrary, it is our deep conviction, that much as Coleridge talked of his system of philosophy, of its connexion with theology, and even of its necessity as indispensable to the construction of a sound and true theological system, he never had thoroughly thought out, far less sketched out in writing, even a full outline of his system of philosophy. His powers of thought had not reached their

maturity, nor obtained any fixedness of direction, till after his return from Germany. But a short period elapsed after his return till he fell under the power of that pernicious drug which so terribly affected all his aims and paralysed his energies. In that short interval he wrote "The Friend," in which there are ample proofs that his mind was preparing for, and equal to, its greatest efforts, on which it was beginning to concentrate its energies, so soon to be smitten into a condition never more to be capable of full concentration and sustained endeavour. From that time forward he could but make excursions into those high regions in which, otherwise, he might have soared, eagle-like, with balanced and untiring wing, and clear, undazzled eye.

A philosophical thinker may, with one strong intuitional glance, perceive the life-germ, the constitutive idea, of what can be developed into a vast and mighty system, and may also, with that single glance, be fully convinced of its necessary truth. But in order to ascertain its true value, he must, with slow, painful, and laborious care, write down its axiomatic principle, mark its primary applications, trace out all its bearings on, and coincidences with, truths already ascertained, intensely anxious neither to include any fallacious elements that do not belong to it, nor to leave out what may be required for its right developement, and thus conduct it, clearly and comprehensively, to its full and legitimate conclusion, and to nothing more. This Coleridge never did, and for reasons already stated, was never able to have done, from the time when the idea first took possession of his mind.

He had been early inclined to adopt what his then boyish mind thought Infidelity, as many other boys in



their vanity regard it a manly thing to do, in defiance of their instructors. But love was too powerful an element in his nature to permit him to dwell long in the cold regions of scepticism. Tortured for a time by restless speculations on the writings of the English deists, the French infidels, Spinoza, Hume, and others, and finding no sufficient rescue in the works of Locke and Paley, he turned with eager interest to the philosophical treatises of German authors, particularly to those of Kant and Schelling. By the study of these philosophers, Coleridge was at once raised into far higher regions of thought than he had previously attained, and found much that was to him of great value. But there seemed to him still an important defect in their systems, which he was of opinion might be supplied, and which he longed to supply. The leading object of Kant was to inquire whether it was possible for the human mind to know anything of objects imperceptible to the faculty of sense; and to this he was led by a desire to refute the scepticism of Hume. In the refutation of Hume the philosopher of Königsberg succeeded; but in establishing a sure foundation for his own system he failed. And in the hands of his followers the system became as hostile to revealed religion as that of Hume himself. This was a result in which Coleridge could not willingly rest. The views of Schelling seemed to promise a more satisfactory conclusion, and were therefore largely followed or adopted by Coleridge, though not perfectly satisfactory. It seemed to him possible to find a still more axiomatic position than that of either Kant or Schelling, which should include and command theirs, and not theirs only, but those of every philosopher, so far as their positions had been true, and thus to

obtain an absolute philosophy, not only in accordance with, but containing all truth, both human and divine; at least, all truth for the reception and belief of which man could be justly held responsible. But it may be shown, both that Coleridge rather perceived what was erroneous or defective in the systems of Kant and Schelling than supplied the defects or corrected the errors; and also that his own system is less original and less complete than he himself believed it to be. He has clearly stated the great and pervading error in Schelling, "his exaltation of the understanding over the reason;" and in this single statement he has proved himself not to be the servile follower of Schelling, which he has been called—a charge to which his numerous quotations from that philosopher, not to say plagiarisms, as some have termed them, have very greatly exposed him. The reference to the error of Schelling, which we have made almost unawares, has caused the use of the two terms, the explanation of which, and the statement of the distinctive difference between them, must be given if we would even attempt to point out the essential meaning of what Coleridge called his philosophical system. In this attempt we shall avail ourselves to the utmost practicable extent of his own language:—"A thorough mastery of the fundamental distinction between the Reason and the Understanding is an indispensable pre-requisite to, or condition of, a sound system of mental philosophy. The Understanding suggests the materials of reasoning; the Reason decides upon them. The first can only say, 'This *is* or *ought to be*;' the last says, 'It *must* be so.' Reason is the power of universal and necessary convictions, the source and substance of truth above sense, and having their

evidence in themselves. Its presence is always marked by the *necessity* of the position affirmed; this necessity being *conditional* when a truth of Reason is applied to facts of experience, or to the rules and maxims of the Understanding; but *absolute* when the subject-matter is itself the growth or offspring of the Reason. Hence arises a distinction in the Reason itself, derived from the different mode of applying it, and from the objects to which it is directed, according as we consider one and the same power, now as the ground of formal principles, and now as the origin of *ideas*. Contemplated distinctively, in reference to *formal* (or abstract) truth, it is the *speculative* Reason; but in reference to *actual* (or moral) truth, as the fountain of ideas and the *light* of the conscience, we name it the *practical* Reason. On the other hand, the judgments of the Understanding are binding only in relation to the objects of our senses, which we reflect under the forms of our Understanding. It is, as Leighton rightly defines it, 'the faculty judging according to sense.' To make the distinction evident, we have only to describe Understanding and Reason, each by its characteristic qualities. The comparison will show the difference. Understanding is discursive: Reason is fixed. The Understanding in all its judgments refers to some other faculty as its ultimate authority. The Reason in all its decisions appeals to itself as the ground and substance of their truth. Understanding is the faculty of *reflection*; Reason that of *contemplation*. The result is, that neither falls under the definition of the other. They differ in *kind*. The Understanding, then, is the faculty by which we reflect and generalise. The whole process may be reduced to *three acts*, all depending on, and supposing a previous impression on,



the senses, namely, *attention*, *abstraction*, *generalisation*; and these are the proper functions of the Understanding — it is therefore truly and accurately defined ‘a faculty judging according to sense.’ Now whether, in defining the *speculative* Reason (*i. e.*, the Reason considered abstractly as an *intellective* power) we call it ‘the source of necessary and universal principles, according to which the notices of the senses are either affirmed or denied;’ or describe it as ‘the power by which we are enabled to draw from particular and contingent appearances universal and necessary conclusions’—it is equally evident that the two definitions differ in their essential characters, and consequently the subjects differ in *kind*. Understanding in its highest form of experience remains commensurate with the experimental notices of the senses, from which it is generalised. Reason, on the other hand, either predetermines experience, or avails itself of a past experience to supersede its necessity in all future time, and affirms truths which no sense could perceive, nor experiment verify, nor experience confirm.

“In this manner we seem to arrive at a tolerably conclusive demonstration of our proposition, *viz.*, that the Understanding suggests the materials of reasoning: the Reason decides upon them. And thus it would appear to be proved, first, that there is an *intuition* or immediate beholding, accompanied by a conviction of the necessity and universality of the truth so beheld, not derived from the senses, which intuition, when it is construed by *pure* sense, gives birth to the science of mathematics, and when applied to objects super-sensuous or spiritual, is the organ of theology and philosophy; and, secondly, that there is likewise a reflective and discursive faculty, or *mediate* apprehension, which taken

by itself, and uninfluenced by the former, depends on the senses for the materials on which it is exercised, and is contained within the sphere of the senses. This faculty it is, which, in generalising the notices of the senses, constitutes sensible experience, and gives rise to *maxims* or *rules* which may become more and more general, but can never be raised into universal verities, or beget a consciousness of absolute certainty, though they may be sufficient to extinguish all doubt. Almost all the errors prevalent in philosophy, in the largest sense of the word, have their origin in the neglect of this distinction, even in kind, between Reason and Understanding, and in the absurd and pernicious attempt to force the primary and necessary *truths* of the former into the accidental or conditional *forms* of the latter; whereas, for pure Reason to retain her power and sovereignty, correcting the errors of the Understanding misled by sense, dwelling among first principles, contemplating their formative energies, marking their necessary products, and by them judging actual facts, evolving processes, and all possible objects of sense, is the only sure foundation of a sound, impregnable system of scientific, political, moral, and religious philosophy."

There is yet one point which it may be expedient to state and explain with regard to what Coleridge termed his philosophy, as, in his own words, "the philosophy of *pure reason*, and its constitutive, self-realising *ideas*," for the purpose of explaining what he meant by the term *idea*, and this, too, we shall do in his own words: "That which, contemplated *objectively* (*i. e.*, as existing *externally* to the mind), we call a LAW; the same contemplated *subjectively* (*i. e.*, as existing in a subject or mind), is an IDEA. Hence Plato often names ideas, laws; and Lord

Bacon, the British Plato, describes the laws of the material universe as the ideas in nature; 'Quod in natura *naturata* LEX, in natura *naturanti* IDEA dicitur.' It has already been seen incidentally, how, in the department of astronomy, the philosophy of ideas, the Newtonian, triumphed over that of appearances, the Ptolemaic. In like manner, it might be shown, how, by taking a new position for the purpose of investigating the human mind, it could be proved '*that the mind makes the sense far more than the senses make the mind;*' which would put an end to all the dangerous errors of materialism, and the puerile absurdities of phrenology; rendering the philosophy of mind, indeed, that which it ought to be, the philosophy of pure Reason."

We have thus endeavoured to give as distinct and intelligent a view of what Coleridge called his philosophical system as we could; and we must now express our opinion regarding it. There is, we apprehend, far less of what is really new in it than he himself supposed. Scarcely any thinker will deny that there is in the human mind a power by which we are able to apprehend at once some truths in their own self-evidencing light, of which sense can give us no evidence. This power, faculty, capacity, or whatever name may be given to it, has been recognised by almost all philosophical writers; and this is essentially what Coleridge designates Reason. Farther, no person denies that through the senses we obtain intimations respecting things external to us, the whole world of sensations, of which the mind takes cognizance by reflection, and knows by perception aided by consciousness, by memory, by observation, by experience and experiment; and this is essentially what Coleridge designates Understanding.

Now, since the mind can perceive certain truths in their own self-evidencing light, we are constrained to believe that there must be in the constitution of the mind certain primary principles of thought, or constitutive ideas, or forms of mental being and knowing, so adapted to these self-evidencing truths, that no sooner do they appear to the mind than it at once and for ever perceives them, believes them, and knows them, without any medium of perception, or need of proof. Whether we term these elements in the constitution of the mind "fundamental laws of belief," or the "principles of the practical reason," or "necessary conditions of thought," or, by a plainer and humbler term, the "principles of common sense," does not seem to be a matter of very great philosophical importance. It is of importance, doubtless, to get quit of the meagre and false theory based on the aphorism, "*Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius in sensu;*" but that was done when Leibnitz added to it, "*Nisi intellectus ipse.*" There may be some considerable advantage in restricting certain terms to the specific purpose of employing them to designate specially certain determinate states, or primary principles of mind; and therefore we do not object to restrict the term Reason to designate those primary laws of human belief, or forms of thought-apprehension, by means of which, or in consequence of which, the mind intuitively or immediately perceives, admits, and retains those self-evidencing truths and axioms of which no proof either can or need be given. Nor do we object to the restriction of the term Understanding to that department of the mind by which we take cognizance of all that is presented to us through the medium of the senses, aided by our own powers of reflection. And so far as

the restricting of these terms to their proper spheres would tend to disentangle philosophical investigation from the confusion of a mixed terminology, the service thereby rendered to true philosophy would be great; but we cannot regard the distinctions themselves as constituting a new system of philosophy. And still less can we either call it new, or ascribe it to Coleridge, when we turn to the writings of Kant and Schelling, from which Coleridge himself admits that it was largely derived, and in particular from Kant, who invented the term "practical reason," and assigned to it will, conscience, and the moral being of man; ascribing to it the right of attributing reality to its objects, revelations, and dictates, as the organ of moral and religious truths. Nor was even Kant's theory new, except in its form and terminology, at least since the introduction of Christianity; for though Christianity has not spoken of "practical reason," nor termed it the "organ of moral and religious truths," as if it could itself constitute them; it has appealed to man's will, conscience, and moral nature, enlightening and enabling them to respond to its appeal.

We are thus led to consider the application which Coleridge made of his philosophical system to theology. And in the very outset we must say that we have often deplored his constant and persevering attempts, not only to express scriptural doctrines in the language of philosophy, but to translate or transmute the words of Scripture into the scholastic terms of philosophy, till by such transmutation Scripture and transcendentalism seemed to be the same thing. That reason will never contradict revelation we very confidently believe; but it does not follow either that reason is the standard and



test of revelation, or that reason can anticipate and supersede the necessity of revelation. Yet in this very point Coleridge has, as we think, fallen into grievous and pernicious error in consequence of his adoption of Kant's theory of "practical reason." For if "practical reason" be the "organ of moral and religious truths," and entitled to include them in its unconditional command, or "category imperative," it must be able of itself to produce them. Hence, we believe, the attempt made by Coleridge to produce the doctrine of the Trinity from pure reason, an attempt we need scarce say utterly abortive. Hence, too, his metaphysical theories of *original sin*, of *redemption*, of *baptism*, and of several other leading doctrines of revelation. As these, according to the Kantian theory, which he had made his own, are within the domain of the "practical reason," their proper meaning might be determined by it quite as legitimately as by the direct statements of Scripture, if we should not rather say that reason was to be regarded as the authoritative interpreter of Scripture. This seems to us entirely to transcend the province of even the transcendental philosophy. If, to follow the course of this philosophy, the Understanding must bring all its information to the bar of Reason, there to be judged, affirmed, or denied, or superseded, by the higher authority of that superior faculty, is it not as likely that Reason must bring her intuitions to the bar of Revelation, which is God's Reason, or the supreme reason, there to be judged, affirmed, or denied, or superseded by that highest authority? Still, further, if we admit the doctrine of the fall, and the consequent darkening and corruption of all the faculties of the human mind, does it not inevitably follow that what-

ever might have been possible to human reason in its primitive and undimmed purity when it was the unmarred image of God,—and although it may still continue instinctively to claim, it cannot now either hold or exercise its original prerogative,—it cannot now be the authoritative declarer and supreme arbiter of moral and religious truth. That philosophy, therefore, which even tacitly ignores the fall and its consequences, and still ascribes to human reason its unfallen clearness of vision and supreme moral and religious authority, cannot be a true philosophy; and if it dares to tamper with the direct teaching of revelation, it may, like a blind leader of the blind, conduct its misled followers into the yawning pit of ruin.

It has been already remarked that Coleridge perceived the defect of Kant's system, and was anxious to remedy that defect by endeavouring to bring it into harmony with revealed religion, in the great and holy truths of which he was himself a firm believer. In this we think he failed; not because true philosophy can ever contradict true religion, but because he misconceived their necessary relation to each other. His great error consisted in this, that he included theology in his philosophy, and thereby made reason the judge of revelation. This view may be presented in a different aspect. We have been accustomed to speak of two different modes of thinking and reasoning, called respectively the *à priori* and the *à posteriori* methods. These are closely analogous to what we have been already investigating. Reasoning *à priori* begins by primitive and necessary truths, and traces them to their legitimate conclusions; whereas *à posteriori* reasoning begins with observed facts, and traces them back to

their origins or causes. Now, that there are *à priori* truths and *à priori* laws of thought, and that the highest style of reasoning should begin in that supernal region may be admitted; but it is not primarily accessible to man. We are obliged to begin by *à posteriori* reasoning, the most comprehensive and pure generalisations of which may raise us to the *à priori* region of thought; and when admitted there they may be used as *à priori* truths, and made the basis of true, though not perfectly legitimate *à priori* reasoning. It will be seen that this is almost exactly what Coleridge describes of Understanding bringing her experience to Reason, which Reason perceives to belong to some formative idea, or necessary truth, adopts as her own, and thereby supersedes further inquiry or experiment. But revelation is the alone *à priori* region, the alone bestower of *à priori* truths of religion; therefore revelation is the alone judge of these truths, and of Reason in relation to them. Thus, again, by another mode of philosophical inquiry, we point out the great error of Coleridge in his philosophico-theological system.

There is yet another view of Coleridge's philosophy which we ought to take, in order to obtain a full conception of it. All who have attended to philosophical writings in comparatively modern times, must be aware of the great use made of the terms, *subject* and *object*, *subjective* and *objective*. The term *subject* implies the very *self* of the personal being, the self-conscious thinker, the man who uses it; and *subjective*, all that essentially pertains to his personal being. The term *object* implies all that is external to that very *self*; and *objective*, all that essentially pertains to what is external. Self-consciousness is the basis of all self-knowledge,



aided by memory and other faculties. Thus man investigates his own being and nature, his laws of thought, his powers and faculties, and all that constitutes him what he is; and in this investigation he becomes an *object* to himself, or perceives the synthesis of *subject* and *object*. Again, when through the intimations of his senses, or his own faculty of reflection, he obtains the perception of external objects, retaining still, though it may be, faintly, self-consciousness, he is led to investigate what he can know of the objective, and may thereby perceive again the synthesis of *object* and *subject*. Hence arises the inquiry into the relations of mind and matter, and into the principles and laws of human knowledge; and into this inquiry Scepticism incessantly attempts to intrude. It was on this ground that Hume reared the deadly fabric of his false system. But the subtle fallacies of that system were utterly refuted by direct and profound inquiries into the fundamental laws of human belief—the real nature of experience and experimental philosophy, and the laws or ideas of speculative and practical reason. These inquiries unavoidably gave to modern philosophy a very strong tendency to the subjective, elevating it into an undue pre-eminence over the objective in every department of thought. Among the direct followers of Kant this pre-eminence became absolute, till the laws of mind were regarded as the only laws of nature which could be known—the laws of reason, the supreme laws of all moral and religious truth, and man the only law to himself—nay, man his own God. In other instances, these speculative thinkers have wandered into the regions of Pantheism.

Into such airless heights, or abysmal depths, of transcendental thinking, Coleridge never soared or

plunged. There was, indeed, an excess of *subjectivity* in his system, arising, as we are inclined to think, from another cause. His bodily frame had, from infancy, been intensely sensitive; and the use of opium, taken at first to alleviate his sufferings, rendered that sensitiveness tenfold more morbidly acute. In consequence of this he was perpetually under the influence of a spurious and unphilosophical, but diseased and physical, self-consciousness, which tended to thrust the subjective unduly into his highest thinking, to a degree of which he could not himself be fully aware. Not unfrequently there may be traced, even in the highly *idealised objective* regions of his philosophy, the unacknowledged influence, or the latently governing presence of a transcendental or transfigured *subjective*, sent up from the painful throbbings of his heart, and the fine-strung thrillings of his delicate nerves. Sometimes what he intended for reasoning was only the spirit-like essence of exquisite feeling, trembling with passionate earnestness through all his argument—more like the quiver and the glow of hurt life and anxious love, than the cool analysis of calm philosophy. This was very generally his state of mind and body when he engaged in theological inquiries, causing that remarkable blending of power and weakness by which they are all more or less characterised. Christianity had been too truly balm and solace to his weary frame and wounded heart for him to contemplate calmly either the fierce assaults of its enemies or the unwise defences of its friends. Of both he judged from his own position, and without adequate knowledge of either. All tendency to the extreme flights of the German rationalists and theosophists was kept in check by the counteracting power

of his religious sincerity, of his strong faith, and of his humble and earnest Christian love. But while these great and sacred principles kept the Christian man safe, they did not wholly keep the speculative thinker right. What his want of sufficient acquaintance with such subjects left him unable directly to answer, seemed to him unanswerable, except by assuming new ground; and for the same reason his new ground was not always either tenable or safe, exposing, at times, Christianity to greater dangers than those which he sought to avert. As a Christian he clung with earnest faith and strong love to the great leading truths of revelation; but as a philosopher he not only attempted to express these truths in the uncongenial and vague phraseology of his system, but even strove to think it possible that they might be evolved out of the practical reason, proved by it, and thereby set above the reach of all ordinary cavilling objections,—not perceiving that such a process would have denied to them their supreme characteristic of a directly Divine origin, and consequently would have divested them of their Divine authority. His Christian faith and love prevailed in his own case; but there is reason to fear that his philosophy has prevailed in the case of many of his followers.

As an instance of the injurious effect produced by his proneness to a species of subjective idealism, we may refer to the theory of inspiration contained in his posthumous treatise, "The Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit." In that treatise Coleridge set himself most earnestly to refute what he regarded as the prevalent theory of inspiration; and in doing so his design was manifestly to rescue the Bible from the peril to which he thought it exposed by the prevalent theory.

There are in that little work some of the very finest and noblest passages he ever wrote, full of what we have called "the quiver and the glow of hurt life and anxious love," expressed with the most exquisite felicity of thought and language. Yet, as we are thoroughly convinced, that treatise displays an entire misconception of the subject, and produces a theory at least as dangerous as that which it attempts to refute. He reclaims, protests, and inveighs with great vehemence against that theory of inspiration, which is commonly termed plenary inspiration, which regards the Bible as throughout the very Word of God. This theory suggests to him only those extreme and repulsive views, which men who are not able to form any intelligent conception of such a subject have in their rash folly uttered about it. And, directing his attention solely to their crude absurdities, he denounces plenary inspiration as giving such a view of the Bible narrative as cannot be received — repulsive to feeling in some of its sterner narratives — contradictory to reason in others — and depriving the Scriptures of all the natural humanities of real life and personality, rendering its writers the mere *amanuenses* of the Holy Spirit, and inspiration itself a "ventriloquism," or a mechanical power exerted in a human being, rendered for the time unconscious, dehumanised. Now, it may be admitted, that some men have written and said very absurd things about verbal inspiration and plenary inspiration, confounding the two terms and their meanings ; and it may also be admitted that such absurdities give occasion to the enemies of Scripture to bring forward plausible objections, not merely against such a theory, but against Scripture itself, as if such a theory were the only one held by those who hold plenary inspi-

ration. But what has that to do with the real essence of the matter? Let all who hold such crudities, and the crudities themselves, be scathed into nothingness by the fierce bolts of our author's polemic wrath; but that will not affect plenary inspiration, as generally understood by wise and thoughtful men. If there be danger that scepticism may be promoted by the consequences drawn from a false theory, or from a true one misunderstood, let an inquiry be begun and prosecuted with all care and calmness, in order that it may be ascertained where the real error lies, instead of bounding away at once, as Coleridge did, to an opposite extreme. There is nearly equal folly in coining a word to explain the meaning of an unknown truth. Some term inspiration a *dynamical power*, and think they have explained it. Others term it a *mechanical power*, and think they have at once explained and refuted the theory of plenary inspiration. The great error is in attempting to explain it at all. It is claimed by the Bible itself—"All Scripture is of Divine inspiration;" and it should for this reason be admitted, but not explained, though perhaps it may be illustrated. Even Coleridge admits plenary inspiration in the case of Moses and the prophets; if not also, by implication, in the case of the apostles; and yet it is not more easy to explain the mode of such inspiration, and to determine whether it were *mechanical* or *dynamical* in *their* case than in any other;—nay, what we ask, is gained, or even meant, by using either of these terms? What do men mean when they apply the word *mechanical* to a spiritual act? The HOLY SPIRIT acting *mechanically* on a *human spirit*! Can these words have any possible meaning? Must we invent and employ what is really a glaring contradiction in



terms—a *mechanically spiritual operation*—which no man in his senses ever dreamt of affirming, in order to condemn a misrepresentation of that claim which Scripture itself makes expressly?—must we, because we cannot conceive and explain that claim, cast loose our trust in the word of God as divinely inspired, and therefore and thereby the infallible revelation of eternal truth, relative to man's salvation? It may not be possible to explain the mode of inspiration; in our opinion it *ought not to be possible*, since, being a Divine act, it lies necessarily beyond the sphere of our cognizance, and he who speaks of explaining a Divine act, either utters folly, or claims equality with God; but is it, therefore, incapable of being believed? Such an argument would fearfully limit human belief on all subjects, natural as well as spiritual; for in every inquiry we soon reach what we cannot explain.

The real nature of the inquiry regarding inspiration seems to be this—“It being admitted that the Holy Scriptures claim to be inspired, is there anything in this claim so repugnant to reason that it cannot be believed?” It is not enough for any man to say, “I cannot conceive how it takes place, and how it affects the man who is inspired.” Neither is it enough to stigmatise it as a mere mechanical process, reducing man to an unthinking, irrational, unconscious machine. We ask, Is it absolutely incredible, or contrary to reason, to suppose that God, who made the human soul, can communicate with its inner being, so as to convey to it his own designs, as in prophecy, and his own ideas, as in doctrinal truth, without at the same time suspending all its faculties, and reducing it to an unintelligent vehicle of transmission? And when, further, we perceive that

there are differences of style and other mental characteristics very apparent among the inspired writers, are we not led to the conclusion, that the Divine Spirit did not suspend these men's mental faculties, but divinely used them, presenting absolute truth in special forms, without either compromising the truth or marring the forms ?

If a skilful worker in gold should frame hollow moulds of a lion, a lamb, an eagle, a dove, and fill them with pure molten gold, when the mould was removed, and the figures produced, their precious quality would not be depreciated by the forms they bore—the lion, the lamb, the eagle, the dove, would still be pure gold ; and, instead of being depreciated, their value would be enhanced by their adaptation to the variety of tastes in those who might wish to possess them. And is it not, at least, equally conceivable, that when God intended to transmit divine truth to mankind at large, with all the diversities of mental tastes and sympathies that prevail among them, he would inspire men of varied mental characteristics, allowing the word of inspiration to assume and present all those varied characteristics, so as to suit every diversity of taste and feeling, and yet to retain, all unalloyed, its own unapproachable pre-eminence, as truth divine and absolute ? The high-souled Isaiah roars like a lion over prostrate Assyria and proud Babylon swept with the besom of destruction, or in exulting response to the blood-stained Conqueror of Bozrah ; because his whole being is filled with the strong glories of the Lion of Judah. The plaintive Jeremiah mourns like a dove, as if his were the voice of Him who wept over doomed Jerusalem. The keen eye of Paul traces the inner workings of the human heart, or pierces into the deep mysteries of spiritual

truth, with the lofty, far-searching, and steadfast glance of an eagle ; but through him the Spirit lays open the secrets of all hearts, and reveals the deep mysteries of God. The affectionate and lamb-like John leans on the bosom of the Lamb of God, and wins us to gentleness, purity, and love. Does this marvellously perfect adaptation of revealed truth to the minds of those through whom it was revealed reduce these holy and inspired men to mere machines? Does this impair the divineness of the record? Does it not rather approve to us the excellence and perfection of Divine wisdom, condescension, and love, thus graciously adapting the message of mercy to all the faculties of the human mind, and all the thrilling sensibilities of the human heart?

But we cannot prosecute the subject, though full of interest and of vital importance, because it is not further within our present province than as it has been treated of by Coleridge with great beauty and power, but without adequate knowledge. That there have been many very foolish things spoken and written about inspiration, and terms employed with little or no meaning, for the sake of seeming to obtain apparently intelligible distinctions, we readily admit, and at the same time deplore ; and so far as the eloquent indignation of Coleridge tended to sweep away some of these offensive crudities, it may have done service to the cause of truth ; but his view possesses no right to be regarded as itself a satisfactory theory. It presents no advantages to the ambassador of Christ in proclaiming or defending the Gospel message, beyond those offered by the theory of plenary inspiration, rightly understood, so far as we can perceive ; while it has furnished to the enemy of Scripture the use of that singularly ill-omened and malign epithet, "bibliolatry," and



gives countenance to those vain dreams of intuitions, and apperceptions, and Christian consciousness, by means of which a class of men seem eager to obliterate all distinction between the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and the shadowy visions of imagination that float gleaming away before the eye of genius.

This excessive elevation, or glorification, of the *subjective*—the *self* in man, was not, we are strongly persuaded, a necessary consequence of Coleridge's philosophy; but rather the invasion of it by his morbidly excited self-consciousness, and by the exquisitely idealised fineness of his poetic sensibilities. Religion was the life of his soul. "Christianity," said he, "is not a theory or a speculation, but a *life*. Not a *philosophy* of life, but a life and a living process." True; profoundly and solemnly true. In this life and living process he had his being, and through it his soul was always striving to ascend, conscious of weakness, and in that conscious weakness making the Bible the man of his counsel, his guide, and support; yet conscious also of vast powers of thought, and in that consciousness attempting to transmute the Spirit-forms of sacred truth as God gave them, into those thought-forms of his own reason which he could most readily apprehend. In consequence of this incessant, yet fruitless endeavour, his theology became a theosophy, as expressed in his writings and conversations; yet still a living Christianity, as it dwelt within the profoundest depths of his own adoring soul. In one mood of mind he could blame Schelling for elevating the understanding above the reason; in another, he could make the subjective give laws to the objective, and reason contain and regulate revelation. Thus there struggled ever in his capacious mind two mighty anta-

gonistic modes of thinking ; but by that very struggle they maintained generally a mutually counteracting, self-balanced, yet uneasy and tremulous, equipose.

Time and space forbid us to survey, however briefly, his theories of the Church, through all of which a similar disturbing and misleading subjective bias may be distinctly traced. What his own heart felt intensely, his mind laid hold of powerfully, and his imagination idealised magnificently, till it passed the conditions and the sphere of actual existence ; and men gazed wondering after what they could not appreciate and ceased to believe. Yet true it is that from these theories many—understanding them as their author never did, and viewing them from a far lower position than that high specular mount on which their author stood—have gathered germs of thought, idealised notions, which they have thrown broadcast over the kingdom, and up has sprung a weedy growth, all rank and run to seed, covering the land with Puseyism. These men are not true followers of Coleridge—none of them, no, not even Mr. Gladstone, whose writings on Church and State prove that he never rightly understood his master. It is one thing to write in language elegantly select, and in a style ornate, copious, and vague, so as to leave the reader pleasingly fatigued, and dreamily at rest, unconscious whether he has received any new elements of thought or not ; and it is another to produce a work full of life and of strange power, which startles and besets us as we peruse, leaving behind it the haunting feeling that some great visitant has been with us, whose real character, and the design of whose mysterious converse, we cannot readily apprehend. The shadow may be larger than the substance ; but in the substance alone dwells all that is of value. Nay, more ;

a shadow may chill, where a substance would have given vital warmth, and might yet tend to restore it. Nor would it, we apprehend, be very difficult to produce, in the essential ideas of Coleridge's writings on the Church, a complete and conclusive refutation of the whole Puseyite theory. That may be done, no doubt, more directly by other arguments; but, as that theory strives to sustain itself considerably by his name, it might be of some service to prove the fallacious nature of its claims, and to bring to bear against it that very power from which it seeks support. We said the *essential ideas* of his writings, both because in them are contained all the vitality and the strength of his theories, and also because we are well aware that there are not a few subordinate passages and incidental statements that seem to countenance High-Church views, and could be plausibly adduced in their support.

There are several of his formal and essay-like statements of the leading doctrines of Christianity, on which we could have wished to make some comments had it been practicable. On such, for example, as his systematic view of Regeneration, of Faith, of Justification, of the Atonement, of Baptism, of the position of Sanctification. In none of these do we regard his views as perfectly clear and sound. Some of them are injured and disfigured by the introduction of his own scholastic or philosophical terminology; others by the prevalence of his own subjectivity, inducing him to mould them into conformity with his own mental configuration; and others in consequence, apparently, of his not feeling in himself anything which instinctively, or rather intuitively, responded to the teaching of Scripture. As an example of what we mean, let us revert to the doctrines

relating directly to the death of Christ, viz., Atonement and Justification. In most instances, a really anxious soul, convinced of sin and appalled by the terrors of declared, deserved, and impending judgment, looks eagerly to the cross of Christ, and finds refuge and peace in the thought that HE, the Divine Substitute, has borne the penalty, paid the ransom, and procured not only pardon but justification, peace with God, and life eternal. On this view, Coleridge very rarely dwells, and when he does treat of it, he does so very vaguely, defining it thus:—"A spiritual and transcendent mystery, that passeth all understanding." True, beyond all question, true; for every act of God, and very specially every act in the great work of redemption, is a spiritual and transcendent mystery. But oh, how different is the language of the ransomed believer as he fixes his earnest eye on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of his faith! We think the explanation of this defective intensity of interest in, or attention to, such a topic may be this:—Coleridge had led a life more of contemplation than of action, brooding much and deeply on his own mental and moral condition, and thinking more of his alienation from the spiritual requirements of the law than of his exposure to its penalty; more of the holiness of God than of his justice; and more of the evil nature of sin than of the dreadfulness of its punishment; and therefore he naturally made it his inquiry, not so much how he should escape the penalty of the law, as how he might obtain conformity with its precepts. To this aspect of theological thinking he might very naturally be pre-disposed by the almost universally Arminian tendency of English theological literature since the times of the Puritans, which his love of their writings

could scarcely be sufficient to counteract. And when we revert to the bias which his intense subjectivity gave to all his thinking, we cannot be surprised that it tinged also his speculative theology, while we rejoice to believe that it did not very seriously impair the deep sincerity of his Christian faith and love. It rendered him a less trust-worthy guide and instructor, but allowed him to follow a pilgrim-path, which, with all its windings, might lead to heaven.

It was our design in this Lecture, as even its designation indicates, to treat both of Coleridge and of his Followers. But the latter topic is not now, we apprehend, within our reach, in consequence of the length to which the former has been undesignedly extended, in our wish to do what justice we could to the memory of one whom we have long, not blindly, but very warmly loved. Although, however, it is impossible now to enter fully into this department of our subject, we may venture upon a few concluding remarks of a general character. There are a considerable number of distinguished men, chiefly clergymen, of all denominations, throughout whose writings the influence of Coleridge may easily be traced, or is by themselves gratefully acknowledged. That this influence has often been beneficial we readily admit, especially in rescuing them from the cold utilitarianism of Paley, and giving a very attractive freshness and warmth to their whole tone of thought, feeling, and expression. But that it has always wrought for good we cannot affirm,—we do not think. The whole aspect of their theology is tinged with the hues of his thinking, and that, too, not least with that in it which we deem most erroneous,—with vague, theosophic notions,—with the undue elevation of the subjective,—with the



want of the firm, distinct, and life-satisfying definiteness of the objective and the doctrinal, and with loose assertions regarding the doctrine of inspiration. All these points could be amply proved, did our limits permit. Not only so, but, as we judge, their narrower and less counterbalancing range of mind has allowed them to go farther wrong than he did. In his mind, as we have attempted to show, the two great modes of thought, or poles of thinking, maintained a mutually counterpoising tendency to combine into his long-sought central unity. A few days before his death he made the following memorable declaration:—"The metaphysical disquisition at the end of the first volume of the 'Biographia Literaria' is unformed and immature. It contains the fragments of the truth, but it is not fully thought out. It is wonderful to myself to think how infinitely more profound my views now are, and yet how much clearer they are withal. *The circle is completing; the idea is coming round to, and to be, the common sense.*" But in the minds of his followers the circle generally bursts, diverges, and each section flies off into its kindred region of errors. One class of thinkers tends to theosophic mysticism, or subjective intuitionism. Other classes tend towards an idealised Churchism, or towards Puseyism, or ultimately to absolute Romanism, which he detested, both as a true Christian, and as a free-born and freedom-loving Englishman.

In other instances, men with less of sound principles to guide them, while pretending to follow Coleridge, and using his terminology, rush into infinitely more extravagant and pernicious extremes. Becoming enamoured of that extreme Germanism from which he recoiled, they follow whithersoever, not only Schelling,



but Fichte and Hegel, may lead, and end in deifying themselves. Or, taking a different course, and getting bewildered among the mazes of theosophic speculation, while they fancy they are following Coleridge, they trace the faint footsteps of Martineau, and Parker, and Emerson—men whose theories Coleridge would have abhorred. The Socinianism of his own time could not satisfy his earnest and craving spirit; how much less the misty sophistries that overhang its present aspect?

To one sad instance we cannot refrain from directing attention,—that of the late amiable, enthusiastic, and beloved, but unhappy Sterling. He, too, was, or thought he was, a follower of Coleridge. That he felt the fascinations of that marvellous power of conversation in which Coleridge was unrivalled, was nothing strange; and that the ideas which he then heard, or at least shadowy semblances of them, took strong possession of his mind, and held it firmly for a season, cannot be doubted. But in an evil hour he yielded to the influence of a mind made of far sterner stuff,\* forsook the bright visions and beckoning shapes of transcendental idealisms, mingled, though they were, with hallowed visitants of heavenly beauty, and was whirled away into far other scenes. Who could describe the grim and baleful change? Plunged into the palpable obscure of mindless, heartless, boundless, utter barren vastness, environed with the stunning din of bodiless voices, shouting wildly, with horriblemst uproar, — “Work! work! work! — the old Eternities! — the everlasting Verities! — this miserablenst world! — the dismallest abysses! — the inexorable Destinies! — Work! work! work!” Baffled with the dread

\* See Carlyle's Life of Sterling.

confusion, dizzied with the all-unintelligible uproar, and down-smitten by the chaotic tempest of stormy, yet meaningless words, poor Sterling sunk, and drooped, and died,—yet seemed to send one dying look across the chaos of black, formless thoughts wherein he perished, towards the groves of that Platonic retreat where a Christian sage had once taught him, at least, to dream of gentler scenes amid the gracious duties of a Christian pastor's walk of peace and love. Was it because he *had* so dreamed?—because, even for a season, Coleridge had induced him to regard the spiritual attire of prophets and apostles as something more and better than a “heap of Hebrew old clothes?” Was it on this account that He of the inexorable destinies and all the other terrific abstractions, growled out his savage mockery in grim laughter, over the grave of Coleridge? So his own strong language constrains us to infer. If so, while we cannot but pity the stunned victim of those huge impersonal abstractions that bellow so uncouthly through our modern literature, as if to destroy all life and love in nature, and all personality in man or God, we cannot but deplore that a man of the highest literary distinction should disgrace himself by so harshly insulting the dead—and we must condemn the outrage. Had Sterling met no worse adviser than Coleridge, and followed no leader more erratic, his life-day might not have been prolonged, but its skies would have been more serene, and its close might not have been surrounded by such densely mustered darkness.

But let us quit such painful topics, and hasten, with one brief remark, to close a Lecture already far too long. We have attempted previously to point out what seems to us the essential element of error in all the philo-

sophical and theological writings of Coleridge. Let us now attempt to leave a compressed re-statement of it, as our parting thought, in the hope that it may obtain a lodgment in your minds for future use,—perhaps for guardianship. It is a rash and dangerous assumption, whether raised from the subjective or the objective side of thought, that man is able, or may be able, to determine what God ought to reveal, and how, and in what form of expression, it ought to be revealed. Especially is it rash and dangerous so to presume when we look on man as he now is—as even philosophy may see him to be—not that creature which he could have been, and, therefore, not that creature which he ought to have been—in one word, **FALLEN**. Neither subjective nor objective can be to man now what they were before the fall. Man cannot now have access to know God's ideas, as he possibly had, or might have had, then; nor is his own inner being now so pure through all its depths, so true an image, or image-like mirror of God and God's truth, as it was then. A philosophy, therefore, that either wilfully ignores, or boldly refuses to acknowledge, or actually does not know, the fall, cannot be other than a fallen philosophy. It falls in the very fact of not knowing, or not acknowledging the fall, and it cannot rise by its own proud efforts,—it cannot rise except by laying hold of, and receiving Christianity with the simple docility and undisputing directness of a child. It cannot rise haughtily; it may rise humbly. It may thus receive God's thoughts of love, mercy, justice, wisdom, goodness, holiness, and truth, and become divinely wise by their reception; but it cannot anticipate them,—cannot in its finite capacity rightly comprehend them,—cannot mould them into what it may imagine to be its own necessary constitutive

ideas. Soar as it may toward the regions of eternal truth, the soul of man cannot enter there by the unaided flight of its own inherent powers, nor even when partly guided, partly upheld, by the dim forms of ancient sacred records, transmitted from primæval times. Why else was even Plato's flight so devious and so endless?—and why was the death-hour of Socrates so dark? Into these regions the human soul cannot soar, cannot pierce, till the Incarnate Son of God comes forth, and gently apprehending the helpless wanderer, bears it across the else impassable barrier, unites it to himself, the Life and the Truth, the Light and the Love,—then shall it know even as it is known. This, and this alone, is true philosophy, because it is divine philosophy. And this can be found only in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is the power of God, and the wisdom of God, to every one that believeth, alike to the philosopher and the child. Let the philosopher explore the heart and mind of whole humanity, and he will find no end to his inquiries there, and no solution to his ever-deepening mysteries, far less a passage thence into the knowledge of creation and its God: but let him raise a reverential, supplicating look to God, as revealed in the Bible, and bend a humble and studious eye on that word of inspired truth, given for his learning, and as he reads and prays his mental and spiritual darkness will pass away; in God's light he will clearly see light, and become wise unto salvation.

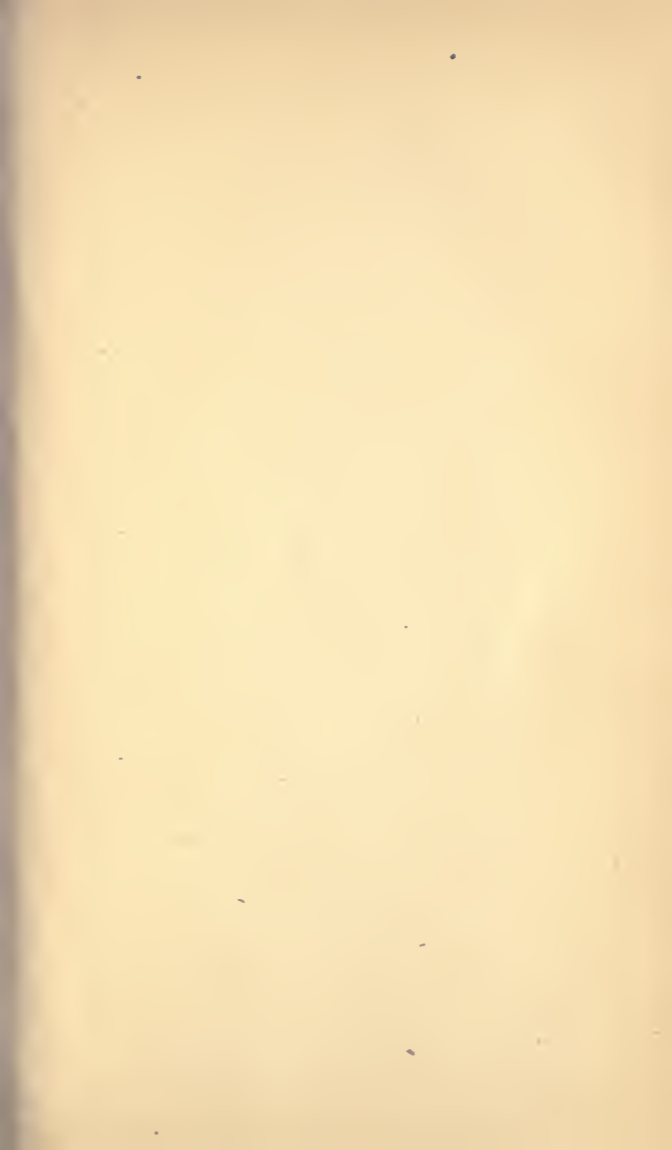




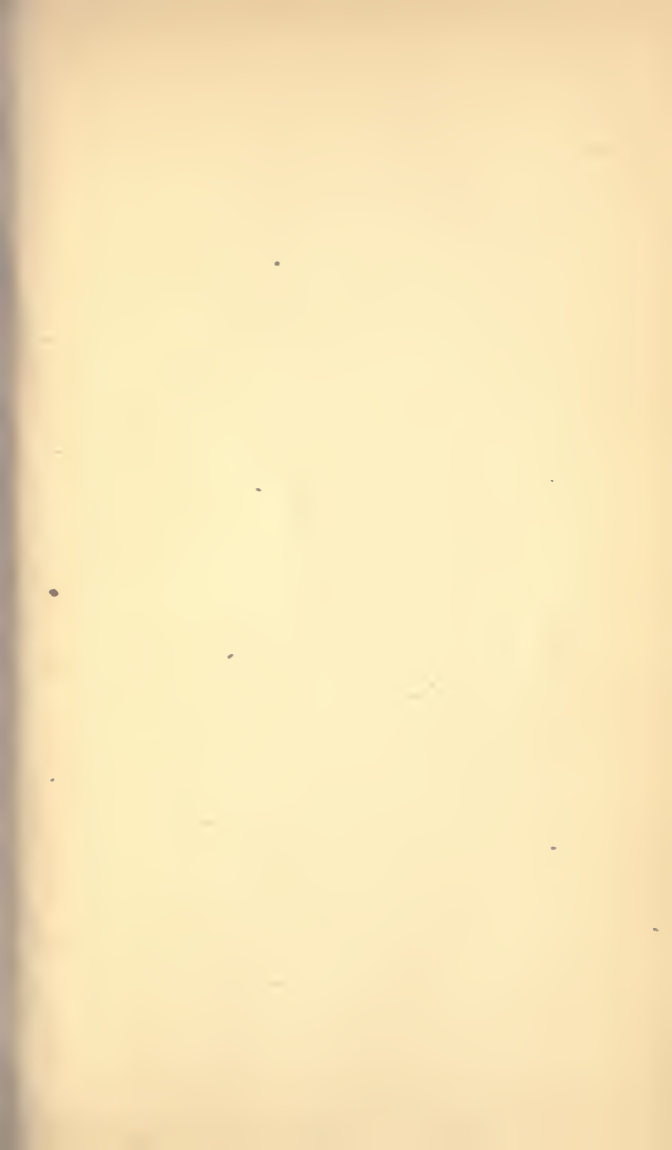




































































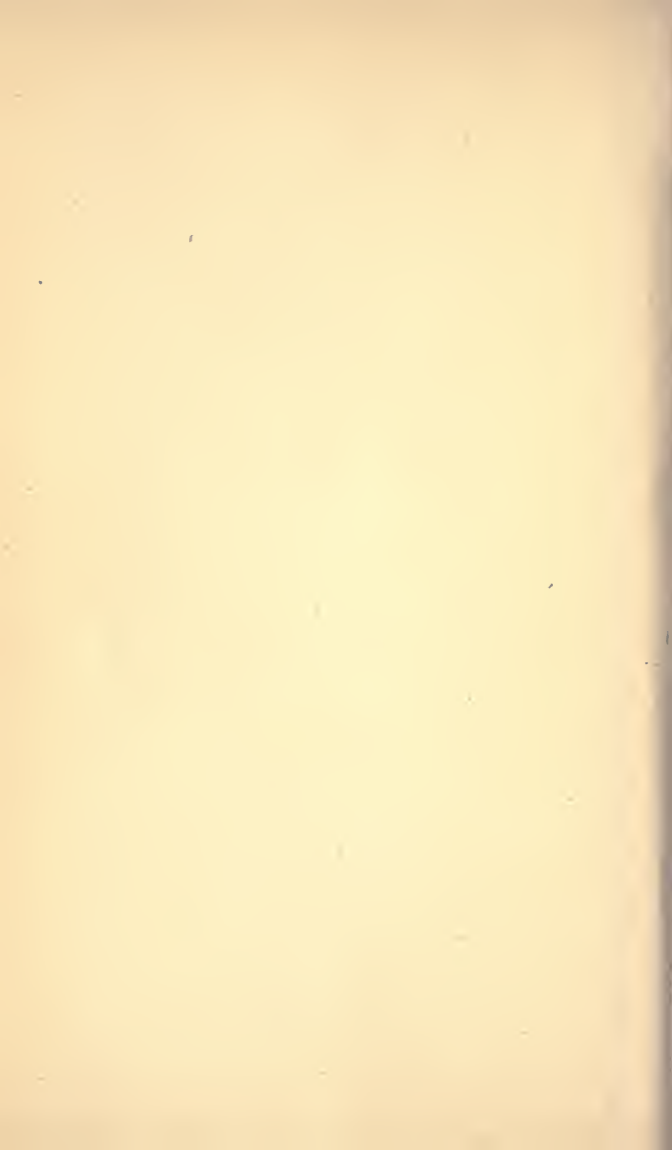




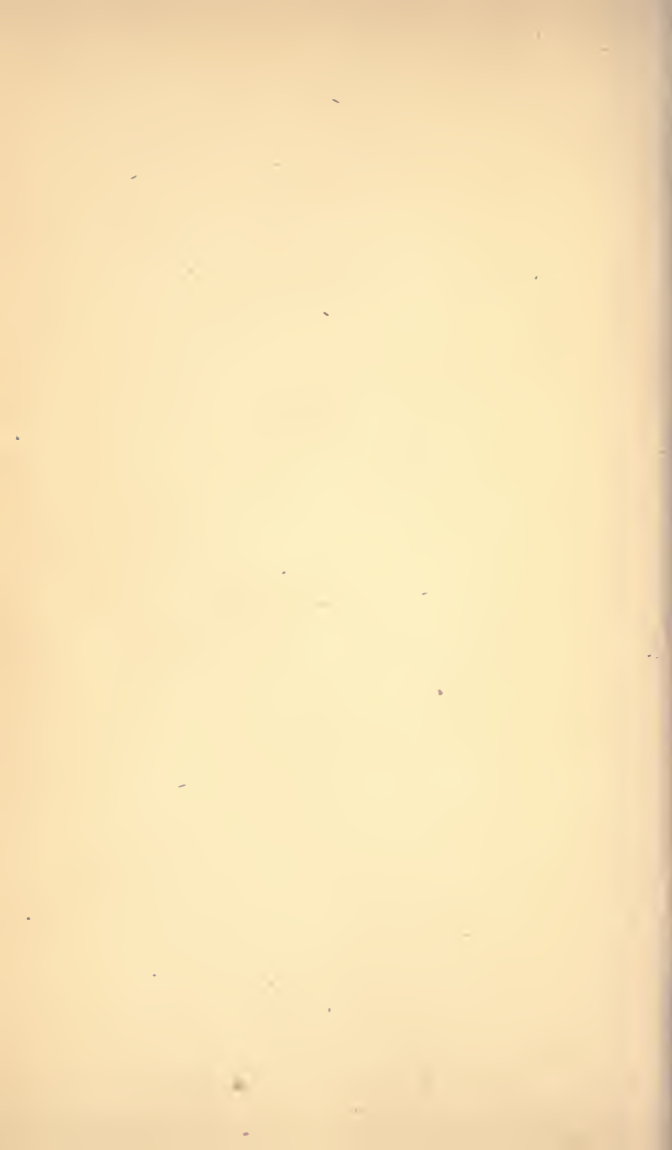






































































































































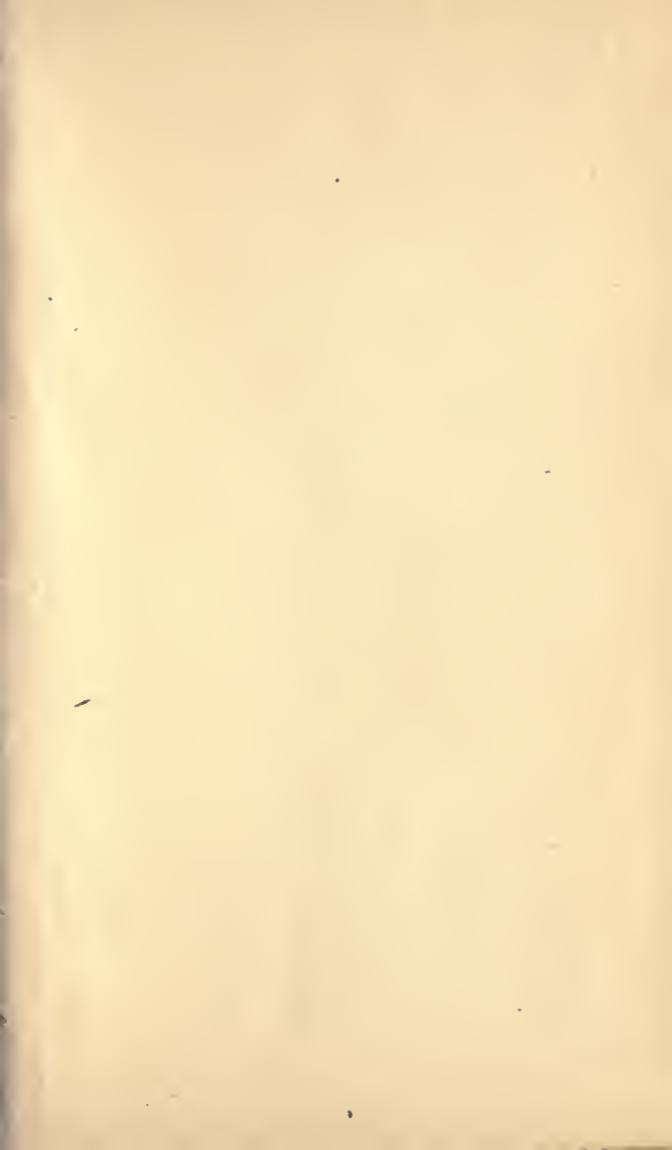


















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