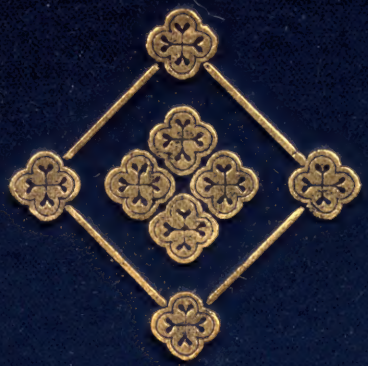

SIDELIGHTS ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

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BY

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"One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all"

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Preface

THE Studies in this Volume are based upon Addresses on Christian Doctrine given at various Conferences and Bible Schools in America. This may explain the semi-popular character of the exposition, and some peculiarities in the style, which it has not been thought necessary to remove. Perhaps the less formal nature of the Studies will adapt them better to the needs of those whom technical works on theology might repel. The treatment makes no pretence at exhaustiveness, but probably it will be found that few points of real importance in theological study are left untouched. The work may therefore serve as an introduction to more elaborate handbooks on the Christian doctrines. It may serve to show what, in substance, theology is, to create an interest in its questions, and to remove some misconceptions as to its nature, necessity, and scope. In some degree, it may even be a contribution to the right apprehension of the Christian truth itself. These are days in which theology is at a discount. The cry is loud for "reconstruction" of Christian doctrines; for re-statement in terms of living thought. This book has little to offer in the way of novelties. It rests on the

conviction that, however necessary it may be to state Christian doctrines constantly anew in relation to advancing knowledge, there is an essential content in the Christian system which does not change. One truth is related to another, and cannot be essentially altered without detriment to the whole system. There is a testimony to that truth in the living organism of Scripture —held here to be the self-attesting record of God's revelation of life and salvation to the world—and on that Scriptural basis, not on the changing thoughts and speculations of men, a sound theology must be reared. For fuller exhibition and discussion of the doctrines dealt with, the author may refer to his special works, "The Christian View of God and the World" (10th Edition), "The Progress of Dogma" (the history and development of Christian doctrine), and "God's Image in Man and its Defacement in the Light of Modern Denials," with articles in Hastings' and other Bible Dictionaries.

JAMES ORR.

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I AM to speak in this series of studies on some of the greater Christian doctrines, and to try to set these in lights which may prove helpful to minds in perplexity, and to students of Scripture who desire, for its own sake, a firmer grasp of the essentials of their Christian faith. At the outset it is necessary to show that there is such a thing as Christian doctrine, and that the study of it is a matter of great importance.

I.

Everyone must be aware that there is at the present time *a great prejudice against doctrine*—or, as it is often called "dogma"—in religion; a great distrust and dislike of clear and systematic thinking about divine things. Men prefer, one cannot help seeing, to live in a region of haze and indefiniteness in regard to these matters. They want their thinking to be fluid and indefinite—something that can change with the times, and with the new lights which they think are being constantly brought to bear upon it, continually taking on new forms, and leaving the old behind. They show a desire to get away from precision of thought into a vagueness and obscurity in which nothing can be clearly discerned.

What naturally occurs to one in this connection is that religion is, perhaps, the only subject on which men feel

in the way described. Few people would regard it as a recommendation of a physician if he made it his boast that he was, and had always been, very hazy about his anatomy and physiology, or would regard it as a recommendation of an economist or statesman if he professed to throw behind him all that had been written or taught on political economy and the science of government, and preferred to be guided solely by his own ideas. This does not mean that there is to be no progress or advance in any of these departments of truth. But it does imply that there is—or is believed to be—a well-ascertained body of truth in each, which it is imperative for the student in that department to be acquainted with, and without a knowledge of which further progress cannot be made.

Here let me say that I cannot help feeling that, underlying this distrust and dislike of what is called "doctrine," there often lurks a *secret unbelief* in the reality of any revelation of God from which we can derive sure and satisfying knowledge regarding Him. For it seems to me that if we believe that there has really been a revelation of God Himself in this world—a real entering of God in word and deed into the history of man, culminating in the appearance of Jesus Christ and the redemption of mankind through Him—if we believe that as a result of this revelation we possess an assured and satisfying knowledge of God, of His character, of His will, of His purposes of grace, of the great hope given us in Christ, it must be felt that it is not only our privilege, but our highest duty, to apply ourselves to the study of this revelation, and to get out of it all the knowledge of God and of divine things it is fitted to yield; then, when we have got it, to try to state the things we know as clearly as we can to ourselves and others, and to relate them to one another, so that we may

carry about with us an intelligible notion of what we do believe, and are prepared to testify for.

But the moment a man sets out on this track he has entered the decried sphere of what is called "theology," or the systematic statement of doctrine. For theology is not, as many suppose, a mere manipulation of notions of men's own minds. Rightly conceived, theology is simply the putting down, as clearly and accurately as we can, all we know about God and divine things derived from God's own revelation; the stating of these things and relating them to one another as perfectly as possible; and the consideration with the best light available of the questions and difficulties that arise out of them.

This suggests a word of explanation as to the more exact relations of the terms which have been just employed, and which are often used with a certain confusion of meaning — the terms, viz., "*doctrine*," "*dogma*," "*theology*." Doctrine is not necessarily dogma, nor is the one term, as is sometimes thoughtlessly imagined, a mere synonym for the other. By *dogma* is properly meant that statement or formulation of doctrine which has obtained some ecclesiastical recognition—which is embodied in some creed, confession, or articles of belief. The statements of the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed, *e.g.*, rank as dogmas. For the Roman Church, the Tridentine and Vatican Creeds; for the Anglican Church, the Thirty-nine Articles; for the Lutheran Church, the Augsburg Confession; for Calvinistic Churches, the Westminster Confession, embody dogmatic findings.

Doctrine is a word of much wider signification. Doctrine precedes dogma, and dogma may have to be rectified from time to time to bring it into closer accord with Christian doctrine. Doctrine is an essential element of the Biblical religion, in so far as this has a content of

truth which admits of being intelligibly stated, and makes a claim on our belief. Doctrines arise necessarily from the very nature of the religion. It is sometimes said that doctrine is evolved from Christian *experience*. But this is only a half truth. Experience is itself a fact to be explained, and has its origin in faith of the facts and truths of the outward revelation. The true source of Christian doctrine is the revelation of God's doings and will in Holy Scripture, in conjunction with the experience of the grace of salvation, which alone can make doctrine spiritually intelligible. The teacher in doctrine must always be God's own Holy Spirit. The condition of understanding must be a willingness to do God's will (John vii. 17). Objectively, however, doctrine is already present in the facts of God's revelation, and in the communications of His will to men. Spiritual conditions are necessary for the apprehension of divine truth. But the truth must be there, objectively presented, before it can be appropriated.

Theology, as distinguished from doctrine and dogma, may, as already indicated, be described as the reflective study of Christian doctrines. Its possibility, and the need of it, lie in the fact that Christian doctrines are not a miscellany of unconnected statements, but form among themselves a unity every part of which checks, sustains, and corroborates the other parts. They flow together to form a whole. This doctrinal content affords material for thought. It is furnished to the mind to be appropriated, reflected on, made clear to the intelligence, set forth in its various relations and connections. It embodies itself in forms of sound words (2 Tim. i. 13). In a wider respect, it is the function of theology to set in order, systematise, relate the doctrines of Scripture; to give them suitable expression; as far as may be, to elucidate their difficulties; to do for them, in short, what botany

does for the facts and laws of plant life, or astronomy for the facts and laws of the starry heavens. Within its proper limits it is as legitimate a branch of science as any of the others: *the science of divine things*.

It follows from what has now been said that, if we think about the truths of God's revelation at all, we *cannot get rid* of doctrine and theology, and it is a vain pretence of anyone to boast that he does. In public life one is familiar with the species known as the "non-political" candidate. But what one generally soon discovers is, that the difference between this kind of candidate and his neighbours is not that he has no politics, but that they are confused and bad politics. Similarly, when people go about boasting that they have no theology, what is commonly found out about them is not that they have no theology, but that they have a spurious or bad theology—a theology concocted from incoherent elements gathered in from all directions, with often a very scant use of the Bible. Too frequently it is a crude, superficial dilettante kind of thing, made up from ideas and elements collected from every quarter—a scrap from Hegel, an echo from Spencer, a fact from Darwin—all stuck over with terms of science, philosophy and criticism; and this is served up as something newer and better than the old faith. Anyone, certainly, is at liberty to make his own theology, if he wants to do it. It is well also to be open to new light, always looking for it, glad to use it. But as regards the great staple doctrines of the revelation of God, it must be held that the ground of these is firmly laid in Scripture itself, and it is on that basis, not on human theories and speculations, we must build, if we are to rear the structure of a truly *Christian* theology.

Side-Lights on Christian Doctrine

II.

These remarks on the necessity and place of doctrine in the Christian religion will best receive illustration from the subject it is now proposed to consider—*the doctrine of God*. The doctrine of God, it need scarcely be said, lies at the foundation of all right thinking in religion. In strictness, theology is just the doctrine of God. That is the meaning of the word. God is the Alpha and Omega of theological study, for as a man thinks about his God so will his theology be all through. It is not too strong to say that, in principle, every question of importance which arises in theology is already practically settled in the doctrine of God and His attributes. So essential is it to begin with Scripturally right thoughts about God.

The doctrine of God furnishes us with proof of the need of theology and the impossibility of getting away from it. For the first thing evidently we have to do when we speak of a doctrine of God is to say what we *mean* by God. What do you mean by this term God? This is a fair question to ask any man who uses the word, and the instant you begin to answer that question, you begin to make statements which belong to theology.

Thus, there are those who call themselves *Atheists*—who say boldly that there is no God. You pull yourself together, and make the counter-assertion, "Yes, there is a God." Well, *there* is already a definite assertion, and the opponent is quite entitled to turn round and say: "Do you know what you mean when you make that statement?" If you try to tell him, you are taking a first great step into theology.

There were those in the old religions who believed, and there still are millions in the world who believe, that there are many gods—*Polytheists*, we call them. As Christians,

we declare that there is *one* God. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. vi. 4). "Thou believest that God is one" (Jas. ii. 19). We proclaim the *unity* of God; and in making this affirmation against polytheism we are laying down a great basal proposition in theology—one, too, it can be confidently said, in which we have with us the best modern thought and science. There is no one almost who believes in God in any sense who would now deny His unity. It is a cardinal axiom of modern science that the system of things which constitute the universe—therefore the Power to which it owes its origin—is one.

Well, but you find another class of people who say: "Yes, there is a great Power, a great, inscrutable Power, in the universe, which manifests itself in all that is"; but then they deny the *distinction* between the world and God. God and the world, they tell you, are not really distinct. God's life is just the life He has in the world. His life is merged in the life of the world. He is the soul, the essence, the substance of the world. The world is the manifestation of God, and His sole manifestation. He has no personal life of His own. We call these people *Pantheists*, because they say that God is all.

But we, as Christians, come with a contrary affirmation. We say: "No; it is true that God is in the world; is its Author, Creator, Upholder; is in everything in a way which nothing else can be. But nevertheless, God's life is not merely in the world. He has also a *Personal existence* above the world." He is in all things, and through all things, but He is also above all things. He has given rise to the world by a free creative act of His will; but He Himself is above the world in His transcendent Being, eternally possessing Himself in the fulness of His own Self-conscious life. In making these affirma-

tions we have separated ourselves from Pantheism, and are building up a theology about God.

It is the same when we come to the more specific affirmations about God. There have been those who said that God had a *beginning*, an origin in time; that He was *localised* in space. There have been those who said—some do say it still—that God is a Being who is *limited* in His wisdom, His knowledge, and His power. There are those who would limit God in various ways, pointing to the seeming imperfections of the world in proof. But we Christians believe that God is *infinite* in all His perfections. We not only deny these limitations of God, but we put in their place the opposite affirmations. We say, "God is eternal, is all-powerful, is all-knowing, is all-loving." We could not believe in a God who was not infinite in all these respects. When we name God, we mean just a Being who has these perfections. We go further, and say that, if God had not these perfections, He would not be God.

This, let me say in passing, is one reason why it is not strictly correct to speak, as we sometimes do, of the being of *a* God, or of belief in *a* God. It is not uncommon to see the question stated in discussion: "Is there a God?" It is asked: "Do you believe in a God?" or "Can you prove the existence of a God?" Popularly and provisionally, such language is permissible. Strictly, it is not correct, because, in the nature of the case, there can be but *one* God. There is of necessity but one infinite, eternal, perfect Being. God cannot be thought of as one of a class, or as belonging to a class in any way. If God is, there is none beside Him. "I am God, and there is none else" (Is. xlvi. 9).

To take only one illustration more. There are those who say: "Yes, there is this Power in the world, working through all things, but then He is so great, so

vast, so infinite, that we cannot *know* Him." Our faculties are finite. There is in our minds an inherent incapacity to know a Being who is infinite, absolute—as philosophy would say, "unconditioned." This phase of denial is called *Agnosticism*. The late Herbert Spencer was a representative of it. Now we either believe this, or we do not. If we believe it, theology, of course, is at an end. But then we are not called upon to believe it. As Christians, we all do acknowledge that God is in infinite ways *incomprehensible* by finite minds. We acknowledge that God is in the depths of His absolute Being beyond our ken; that all we can ever know of Him is little compared with what we do not know. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" (Job xi. 7). His judgments are unsearchable; His ways past tracing out (Rom. xi. 33; *cf.* Is. xl. 28). But this is a very different thing from saying that God cannot be known by us at all, or, as some would have it, can be known only in dim and indefinite symbol. We may not know God in the depths of His absolute Being. But we can at least know Him in so far as He reveals Himself in His relations to us. The question, therefore, is not as to the possibility of a knowledge of God in the unfathomableness of His Being, but is: Can we know God *as He enters into relations* with the world and with ourselves? God has entered into relations with us in His revelations of Himself, and supremely in Jesus Christ; and we Christians humbly claim that through this Self-revelation we do know God to be the true God, and have a real acquaintance with His character and will. Neither is it correct to say that this knowledge which we have of God is only a *relative* knowledge. It is in part a knowledge of the *absolute* nature of God as well. The relations in which God stands to us —the revelations He makes to us—reveal something of

what He is *truly*. In the statement, *e.g.*, "God is love" (1 John iv. 8, 16), we are affirming the most absolute possible about God!

III.

If this is what we mean by God, the question which next arises is as to *the evidence* we have for God. It will not be expected that I should enter here into any elaborate proof of the existence of God. We are a stage beyond that. If we look to the Bible, we must be struck by the fact that it never lays itself out to prove the existence of God at all. It takes His existence for granted; takes His presence in all things, His power, His providence, for granted.

But the reason for this is, not that the existence of God is not a reasonable thing; not that there is not ample evidence of God's presence and power. The opposite is the case. From the Bible's standpoint, God's existence is so reasonable that only the most foolish, the most brutish, can deny it (Ps. xiv. 1). God's existence is so manifest, so pressed upon us by everything around us; God has revealed Himself to us in so many ways, that formal proof of His existence is not called for. As Paul tells us in the first chapter of Romans: "The invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse" (Rom. i. 20). This is God's natural revelation (Ps. xix. 1). In His more special revelation God has revealed Himself to the people of Israel by His mighty words and deeds in their history in such a way that the raising of the question of His existence was not so much as to be thought of.

If we are to speak of reason in relation to belief in

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God—and this is all I here propose to say on this subject —I would observe that there are just two grand pillars for belief in God on the ground of reason. The first is what I would call *the rationality of the universe*, and the second is *the reality of the moral world*.

1. When I speak of *the rationality of the universe* as a ground for belief in God, I mean simply that, if this universe is, as we know it to be, rationally constituted, then, as thinking beings, we cannot do otherwise than put reason behind it, and explain it through reason. Least of all in these modern days can we do otherwise. This, at any rate, is a debt we owe to science. Science is a splendid demonstration of the rationality of the existing world. The work of science is to construe the world as presented to our senses in terms of reason; and this a reason analogous to our own, else the apprehension of it would not be possible to us. The point is that science can spell out this world—the meaning of it—in terms that our intelligence can take in. The fact that science can do this shows that the world is constructed by an intelligence analogous to our own. Take an illustration. You open a French book. If you do not understand French, you cannot read it. You open another book in some language you do understand, and find you can read it. Why? Because the thought of the author is working in forms of language with which you are acquainted. So the fact that you can read this book of the world shows that the reason which planned it is a reason in kinship with our own. This brings us back to rationality in the universe. It brings us back also to personality. For rationality, as I take it, implies personality—is meaningless without a personal mind. It therefore brings us back to God.

2. Still, it may be urged, this does not give us *moral* intelligence. It may be granted that it does not. I

believe, indeed, that rationality and morality are at bottom one; for a personal intelligence cannot think rationally on conduct without perceiving that there are certain lines of action which for it would be right, and certain lines of action which for it would be wrong. But apart from this we have direct consciousness within ourselves of the reality of moral law, and of moral ends, which carry with them the guarantee of an absolute worth. As reasonable beings, we not only conceive *ideas*, but set before us *ends*. Some of these ends have only relative worth. They exist for other ends. But there are ends which, in distinction from these, have an absolute worth. Such are the ends of goodness. These are presented to us with an absolute obligation. We have no liberty to set them aside. Interpreting the world from this standpoint, and asking: "For what end does the world exist?" we have no alternative, without renouncing our moral nature, but to answer: "The end in the last instance must be a moral one." We must, with the philosopher Kant, affirm that the world exists for the sake of the Good—for the sake of a kingdom of the Good, or kingdom of God. We must, in other words, regard it as a moral system, and God, the Author of it, as a Moral Being. So firmly established, in fact, is this as part of our belief in God, that it is now impossible for us to entertain any lower idea of God. God means for us a Being of ethical perfection, or nothing at all. The very atheist would scoff, and turn the fact to our confusion, if we set up for worship a Being morally distorted and imperfect.

IV.

From this teaching, which comes to us so far from reason, we turn again to *the Bible*. The Bible does not, as has just been said, seek to prove the existence of God;

but, in studying its pages, we find that, in its idea of God, it takes up all these truths of reason about God, and carries them a great deal further. The Bible does not seek to prove that God is one, eternal, infinite ; is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present, all-wise, all-holy. But it takes all this for granted in the Old Testament and in the New, and makes the truth continually felt in its teachings. I know that at the present time this is widely challenged as regards the earlier parts of the Bible. There are those who say that this high idea of God is found when you come to the prophetic teaching, but that you do not find it before. In the earlier periods God is apprehended as a " tribal " or " national " deity only. I do not believe this. Elsewhere I have ventured to say, and would now repeat, that I do not know a single fact on which the critic can legitimately lay his finger to show that at any time Israel did not believe in one God, who was the Maker of heaven and earth. You find this in the earliest portions of the Bible, as well as in the latest—in those parts which even the critics will allow to be the oldest. In these earliest parts you find such ideas as the creation of the world by God, the creation of a first human pair, the judgment of the whole world by a flood, a covenant made with Noah for the whole earth—all implying that unity of God, and lordship over the whole earth, which belong to monotheism. The Book of Genesis is in all its parts a monotheistic book. No other God is even hinted at.

The Bible from the beginning thus takes up the highest truth of reason into its teaching about God. Jesus, in turn, takes up all the teaching both of nature and of the Old Testament into His revelation of God. But alike in Old Testament and the New, the truth about God is carried far higher than ever reason could attain. New light is cast on God's attributes by the discovery of them

made in His dealings with man and with man's sin—dealings both in mercy and in judgment; by His spoken words; by His commands, promises, and threatenings; by prophecies; finally, by the coming of the promised Redeemer, and the work of salvation accomplished through Him. From the whole emerges an infinitely richer, fuller, holier, more gracious conception of God than mere reason could ever have reached—a conception, too, stamped with a certainty which the deductions of reason do not possess. It is this full Biblical conception of God, with all that it involves, which is the proper subject-matter of Christian theology.

If now it be asked: What is the specific, the peculiar, the distinctively characteristic thing in the Christian idea of God? the answer I should be disposed to give would be: It is found in the revelation of God as *triune*, or in His three-fold name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Here, I know, I touch delicate and difficult ground. Many will demur and say: It is God's *Fatherhood* simply which is the distinctive thing in the Christian conception of God. Christ's dearest and most special name for God was "Father." "Holy Father," He prayed (John xvii. 11). This is true; only, I would also remark, the Fatherhood of God in the New Testament is never revealed as a thing by itself; it is revealed always in relation with the Son and Spirit. Christ Himself has His place as Son in our idea of the Godhead. The Spirit surely has His place. It is the thought of God as Father, Son, and Spirit, which is the complete thought of God in our redemption.

The Trinity of God will be considered in another paper. At present a word may be permitted in closing on this subject of *God's Fatherhood*. The full Scriptural depth of this conception is not always realized; hence the mistakes into which people fall regarding it. The

Fatherhood of God, in the full Christian idea of it, does not originate with God's relation to the world, or to man; or even with God's relation to believers. God was Father before He had relation either to the world or to believers. He is Father in Himself—"the Father everlasting." This again implies the triune conception. If you wish to find the ultimate spring of Fatherhood in the heart of God, you must seek it, not in relation to humanity, or to believers, but in the relation to the Eternal and "only-begotten" Son (John i. 18). It is with this Fatherly love, of which the primal object is the Son, that God turns to the world, and seeks to draw men in to be sharers of it.

We here find the true answer to the difficulties raised about the "universal" and "special" Fatherhood of God. Is God universally Father? Is man, by creation, a son? In one sense, as will be seen later, when God created man, it was to a destiny of *sonship*. Man was made in God's image (Gen. i. 27). He was designed for free, loving, blessed fellowship with God; was intended to possess and manifest the *filial* spirit. So far the advocates of universal Fatherhood are right. The sinner in conversion is truly a prodigal returning to his Father's house (Luke xv. 18). But man by sin turned his back on that destiny. He took another spirit into his heart; passed into another relation to God than that of a son to a Father. If his destiny of sonship was to be realized, it could no longer be on the basis of creation, but only on the basis of *redemption*. Hence the restriction of sonship in the Gospel to those who are actually partakers of the grace of Christ's salvation. Sonship, in grace, becomes ours by regeneration and a divine act of "adoption."* It is no more a thing of more nature—of creation. For the same reason it is no longer merely the carrying

*See p. 22.

through of the sonship designed for man in his creation, but is something infinitely higher. It is something which only those in union with Christ can possess. God, in the Gospel, is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

II

Names and Attributes of God

Names and Attributes of God

IT was remarked in the preceding study that there is hardly any problem in theology which is not already settled in principle in the doctrine of the divine attributes. A general indication of the nature of these attributes—God's unity, eternity, infinity, omnipotence, &c.—was given in defining the Christian idea of God. Many of the attributes, however, raise questions and involve difficulties on which it is necessary to endeavour to cast a little light. This will form a transition to the consideration of the deeply interesting subject of the Trinity of God's Being.

I.

As introductory to both subjects, a few words may be said, first, on the *Names of God* in Scripture. We often read in the Bible of the divine "name." "What is Thy name?" asked Jacob of the Angel that wrestled with him (Gen. xxxii. 27). "How excellent is Thy name in all the earth," sings the Psalmist (Ps. viii. 1). "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," reads the third commandment (Ex. xx. 7). The thing to be chiefly borne in mind here is the close connection in Scripture usage, as in ancient thought generally, between 'name" and "essence." A name is never a mere vocable.

It expresses the nature. In heathen belief, to use the names of the gods in incantations (magic) was to possess power over the gods. In the Bible, likewise, the "name" of God is the expression of His nature and character. It is that in which the fulness of His character and attributes, especially in His relations to man, is revealed. It has been described as "the revealed side of His nature." There are general names of God; but, besides, there are particular names arising out of special providential interpositions (*e.g.*, "Jehovah-Jireh," Gen. xxii. 14; "Jehovah-Nissi," Ex. xvii. 15). The general names of God reflect also the stages of the divine revelation.

The *most general* designations of God — those, accordingly, chiefly characteristic of the patriarchal age —are *El*, *El Elyon*, *El Shaddai*, but specially *Elohim*. The last is the word translated "God" in our versions. Of these names, *El* and *Elohim* have (as ordinarily taken) the root-idea of "power," *El* (Babylonian *Ilu*) is a common Semitic designation for God. In Genesis it is found only in the composition of proper names (*e.g.*, Bethel), or in combination with an attribute (*e.g.*, Gen. xxi. 33, "El Olam," the everlasting God). The early name *El Shaddai* is likewise connected with the idea of power ("God Almighty," Gen. xvii. 1 : Ex. vi. 1), but of power as specifically exercised within the sphere of revelation. It denotes the God who reveals Himself in deeds of omnipotence for the ends of His kingdom (promise of Isaac; a numberless seed to Abraham). *El Elyon*, found in Gen. xiv.—a section by itself—has the sense of "Most High God" (also in Phœnicia).

The usual name for God in the Old Testament, however, in His general aspect of Creator and Ruler of the world—the God of Creation and Providence—is *Elohim*. It is a plural form peculiar to Scripture, but though plural is used, when applied to the true God, with a

singular verb. It is customary to explain this plural form as a plural of majesty, and no doubt it has this significance. But there is more than majesty implied in it. The name denotes at least the possession by the God of Israel of all that fulness of powers which heathen peoples distributed out among their several deities. It suggests, too, the idea of plurality, which, as will be seen after, lies from the beginning in the Biblical idea of God.

Higher in rank, and peculiar in sacredness, is the covenant name, *Jehovah* (or Jahveh), which is the *Personal* name of the God of Israel. Though in itself an old name (scholars allege traces of it in ancient Babylonia), it is specially connected in Scripture with the revelation of God to Moses at the Exodus (Ex. iii. 13-15; vi. 2, 3), and with the display of His faithfulness, grace, and power at that time. The form "Jehovah" is quite a modern one (it came into use in the sixteenth century). It represents the consonants of the sacred name, with the vowels of the word "Adonai" (Lord), which the Jews used to avoid pronouncing the holier name. The word itself (JHVH) is derived from the imperfect of an old form of the verb "to be," and is properly explained, as in Exodus, "I Am that I Am," or in the third person, "He is that He is." It denotes God as the One who, in absolute freedom and independence, is always in agreement with Himself—the Self-*existent*, and therefore the Self-*consistent* One. The scholar Kautzsch gives the meaning: "Constant and eternal." Besides covenant-keeping faithfulness, there lies in it the idea of unchangeableness: "I am Jehovah; I change not" (Mal. iii. 6).

Attention to the meaning of these names will be found to solve many of the difficulties which have been raised as to their uses in Scripture.

II.

Turning now to the divine *Attributes*, we have found that most of these attributes—unity, power, eternity, unchangeableness, &c.—are already implied in the signification of the divine names. But a nearer study is desirable.

By attributes of God are meant, not anything distinct from God Himself, or divisions of His essence, but simply those determinations of His Being and character which are implied in His relations to the world and man, and which our thought must distinguish, without implying that they are really separable from Him or from one another. The attributes have been conveniently distinguished as *natural* and *moral*. A mere philosophical distinction is into those which belong generally to God's Being as the *Absolute* One (Self-existence, eternity, infinity, and the like); those which belong to His Being as *Personal* (spirituality, Personality, freedom); and the *Specific* attributes, divided, as before, into natural and moral.

Let no one take fright at the word *Absolute* as applied to God. When philosophy speaks of God as the absolute One, it means only what Scripture everywhere implies, viz., that God's is that existence which, unlike every other, is in and of itself, is dependent solely on itself, gives its being and law to all other existence, but itself is conditioned by none. God is one, sole, living, Self-existent sovereign (Ps. cxxxv. 6; Dan. iv. 35). God, as the absolute One, is sovereign, but care must be taken not to attach false ideas to this much-abused term. The sovereignty of God does not mean that the will of God is an arbitrary will (even Calvin declares that God is not *exlex*), but that it is a will self-determined—not prescribed to or controlled from without—a will which has its last grounds of acting in itself (Eph. i. 9, 11).

1. *Self-existence*, which we attribute to God in this connection, is not a thought which it is left to our own choice to form. We cannot admit existence at all without being compelled to go back finally on some uncaused, necessary, Self-existent Being. God, for our faith is that Being. He is unoriginated, uncaused, Self-existent, necessary. Scripture constantly assumes this to be true of God. It never thinks of God as the Babylonians thought of their deities, as having been "born," or having had a beginning. On the other hand, He is the free Creator and Disposer of all that exists. He must, therefore, as Christ says, have "life in Himself" (John v. 26).

2. This first truth about God involves others. For, plainly, the *Self*-existent One must be the *ever*-existent —the *eternal*. The Author and Disposer of all things can be limited by nothing beyond Himself—save as He Himself establishes the limits—therefore must be unlimited, or *infinite*. Infinity as an abstract idea the Bible writers perhaps did not entertain; but it is obvious from their teachings that the perfections of God had no limits set to them in their thoughts. Still, it is well to remember that we are here in presence of great mysteries, and that in attributing eternity and infinity to God, we employ terms which largely outreach our means of positive conception, and drive us back upon the use of symbols.

(1) The form in which the Scripture represents God's *eternity* to us is that of duration through endless ages. "From everlasting to everlasting [literally, from age to age], Thou art God" (Ps. xc. 2). In the New Testament we have "unto the ages of the ages" (Eph. iii. 20, &c.). Ordinarily we think of God's eternity in the same manner, as duration infinitely prolonged in the two directions of time—backwards and forwards. Yet this is only a symbol for what really transcends time. Time,

strictly, has relation to a world of objects existing in succession. God fills time; is in every part of it; but His eternity still is not really this being in time. It is rather that to which being in time forms a contrast. Here thought fails. This relation of the eternity of God to time is, in truth, one of the most difficult problems in theology; probably with our present faculties an insoluble one.

(2) It is not otherwise with *infinity*. The symbol here usually employed is *boundlessness*—a quantitative conception. When reflection is applied to the subject, however, it is easy to see that there can never be a *realised* quantitative infinitude. If it ever *was* realised it would not be infinite. The infinitude of number, *e.g.*, does not lie in an infinite series ever being realised, but in the *potentiality* in number of going on for ever. Omnipotence in God does not mean an absolute *quantum* of power, but an exhaustless *potency* of power—a possibility in the exercise of power to which no limits can be set; a power which can do everything which is a possibility of power, and that endlessly. This is still plainer in the moral perfections. Infinite holiness or love is not a boundless *quantum* of holiness or of love, but a holiness and love which *qualitatively* are free from all limitation and defect. Perhaps we may say that infinity in God is ultimately:—(*a*) internally and qualitatively, absence of all limitation and defect; (*b*) boundless potentiality.

3. From the same character of absoluteness flows God's *immutability*. He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. ii. 13). This changelessness of God, it need hardly be said, is not to be confounded with immobility, or rigid fixity in one unbending course of action. It does not exclude infinite variety in means and methods; the "many-coloured" wisdom of which Paul speaks (*polupoikilos*, Eph. iii. 10). It is oneness in pur-

pose, principle, character, aim; the negation of vacillation, inconsistency, fickleness, caprice.

III.

The determinations of God's Being as the Absolute, just specified, lie behind everything else in God. They are the attributes which give, in fact, to His perfections their quality as *God's*. They do not, however, yet tell us all that God is. We only reach the full conception of God when we think of Him, further, as *free Personal spirit*.

"God is a Spirit" (John iv. 24). He is not, as some schools of thought imagine, impersonal, but *Personal* Spirit. It would be out of place here to enter into elaborate discussions about personality. Enough to say that the essential marks of personality are found in these three things—self-consciousness, character (ethical), and will. Any being of whom these three things can be affirmed — and they are really inseparable — can be declared to be a person. It belongs, then, to the idea of God that He is (1) spiritual, (2) Personal, (3) free.

1. On *spirituality* it is not necessary to dwell. The Bible assumes throughout that God is distinct from nature, has no material form, is universally present, &c. From Him proceeds the "Spirit." But He from whom the Spirit proceeds must be Himself spiritual.

2. Much greater difficulty arises with the conception of *Personality*. This, some contend, is incompatible with infinity. Personality, it is argued, *ex*cludes as well as *in*cludes. It implies distinction from another. An *infinite* Personality, therefore—one which has no limitation in any direction, and leaves nothing outside itself, is a contradiction in terms. Some would solve this problem by ascribing to God what they call a *universal Personality*—that is, by making God simply the self-

conscious centre of the universe, and giving Him the contents of the universe—our own thoughts and actions included—as the contents of *His* consciousness. But this solution is Pantheistic in principle, and really makes God but the principle of unity in the world.

The real answer is to be sought for in another direction. The philosopher Lotze has rightly argued that, so far from personality being necessarily finite, man's personality is only a faint copy of the *perfect Personality* of God. Man is limited, and is conscious of his limits—in knowledge, and in other things. He is constantly seeking to break down these limits. In knowledge, *e.g.*, he is constantly seeking to break down the limits between himself and the world. He does not lessen his personality as he takes more of the world into it, but enlarges it. If he could break down barriers altogether, as in absolute omniscience, he would not abolish personality, but would perfect it.

The objection, in truth, rests on that quantitative way of conceiving of infinitude which has already been referred to. Personality is not a *quantitative*, but a *spiritual* magnitude. The infinity of God's Being and perfections does not exclude the existence of relative and dependent being. No other *such* being as God can indeed exist; but relative, dependent being can very well exist without detracting from any perfection that God possesses.

3. *Freedom* is involved in spiritual Personality. God's sovereign freedom is everywhere assumed in Scripture (Ps. cxxxv. 6; Eph. i. 11).

IV.

This leads to the consideration of the *specific attributes* of God, in their two divisions of *natural* and *moral*. The natural attributes relate to God's presence, knowledge, and power, each conceived as infinite (omnipresence,

omniscience, and omnipotence); the moral relate to His perfections as holy, and may be grouped under righteousness and love. Problems of no small interest arise in connection with each.

I speak *first* of the *natural* attributes of God.

1. Scripture everywhere assumes the *omnipresence* of God; but it is an undue limitation of omnipresence to conceive of it as simply universal presence in *space*. God is present also in the world of *mind*. The term properly denotes God's presence *absolutely*. His presence to all creatures, wherever being is, or can be thought of as existing. "If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there," &c. (Ps. cxxxix. 8-10). In relation even to the external world, God must be thought of as *present to all objects in space*, rather than as *Himself in space*. For the same reason, He is *wholly* present to all beings everywhere; not part here, and part there, as if He were *extended* in space. This is the fault of the term "immensity" as applied to God. One must think also of a *moral* nearness and distance of God to individuals, to which *spatial* categories do not at all apply.

2. Most amazing of the natural attributes of God is His *omniscience*. While we understand perfectly the meaning of our statement that God *knows all things*, we feel that both the *manner* and the *extent* of this knowledge pass our comprehension. God's knowledge, unlike ours, is not successive and gradually acquired, but is intuitive; is not partial, only part of it before consciousness at any given time, but is eternally and unchangeably complete; is not imperfect and relative as ours is—knowing in part, seeing as in a glass darkly (1 Cor. xiii. 12)—but is immediate, unerring, answering to the inmost truth of things. It is pure, undimmed, unbroken light (1 John i. 5), and the fountain of light to others (Ps. xxxvi. 9).

As respects the *objects* of omniscience, God knows

Himself, and all the mystery, unfathomable to us, of His own counsels (Acts xv. 18; 1 Cor. ii. 11); knows the whole universe of *created* existence—matter and spirit—in its inconceivable vastness, complexity, minuteness of parts, subtlety of thought, volition, motion; knows the universe of the *possible* as well as of the actual; knows the *future* equally with the present.

It is this last aspect of God's omniscience as *foreknowledge*, especially as regards the free actions of men, which presents the most baffling problems to our thought. Where necessity rules God can foreknow. But a free act is thought of as one which originates solely with the agent. How, then, it is asked, can it be foreknown before even the agent with whom alone it lies to determine what it shall be, has so much as been brought into existence? The difficulty is so great that some have been led to *deny foreknowledge* of free actions altogether (thus R. Rothe, Bp. Martensen, Dr. J. Martineau, &c.)—a position contradicted by everything in Scripture (Is. xlii. 9; xlvi. 10; xlviii. 5, 6). Others take the opposite course of *denying human freedom* (Jon. Edwards, &c.) Some evade the difficulty by speaking of God as *above time*. His Being is an "eternal Now." But while God, as above seen, is not in time, it must yet be held that time is a reality for God. There is a past, present, and future, in the history of the world. That which is future is *not yet*, except in idea, even for God; and this still leaves the problem unsolved of how it can be foreseen.

A solution of this problem doubtless there is, though our minds fail to grasp it. In part it probably lies, not in denying freedom, but in a revised conception of freedom. For freedom, after all, is not arbitrariness. There is in all rational action a *why* for acting—a reason which decides action. The truly free man is not the uncertain, incalculable man, but the man who is *reliable*. In

short, freedom has its laws—spiritual laws—and the omniscient Mind knows what these are. But an element of mystery, it must be acknowledged, still remains.

God's knowledge, when applied to the realisation of ends, is His *Wisdom*.

3. The last of the specific natural attributes of God is His *omnipotence*. Power, as we saw, is the root idea in the name "Elohim" (God). Our own ideas of power are derived from the exercise of will, but God's power differs from man's, in that man's personal power is never *creative*. It is limited to selection and control. Power, in God, on the other hand, is *constitutive* and *creative*. It brings into being—relative, dependent being, no doubt—what did not exist before.

It is no objection to the omnipotence of God that it is limited to the sphere of what is *possible* to power; cannot *e.g.*, work contradictions. It is limited also in its exercise by God's *moral* attributes. The question here is not simply what God *can* do, but what He *will* do: and it can be laid down with confidence that God will never do that by which He would deny Himself in a moral respect.

The only other limitations to the power of God are *self-imposed*, arising from regard to the nature of things He has Himself established. Thus, ordinarily, God abides by the order He has established in nature, reserving the right to supersede this order for higher ends, if He sees fit (miracle); similarly, He limits His action by regard to the laws of moral freedom. Yet in creation and providence He *rules* all things, and manifests His supremacy even in a world of sin (Ps. lxxvi. 10).

V.

A little must *next* be said on the *moral attributes* of God, as these are covered by the general term *Holiness*.

God is peculiarly "The Holy One." The term "holy"

is not found till the period of the Exodus (Ex. iii. 5 : xv. 11), but the idea is there from the beginning. It is the aspect of God's character made prominent in the Old Testament (specially in Isaiah), but is dwelt on also in the New (John xvii. 11; 1 Pet. i. 16; Rev. iv. 8; vi. 10, &c.).

Two ideas seem covered by the term "holy," as applied to God. One is His *distinction from* and *infinite exaltation above* everything that is creaturely and finite (awfulness, inapproachableness, majesty of God) : the other is *His separation from all moral impurity*, or, positively, the splendour of His *moral perfection*. On the former Martensen has well said : "Holiness is that principle which guards the eternal distinction between Creator and creature, between God and man, in the union effected between them, and preserves the divine dignity and majesty from being infringed on" (*cf.* Ex. ii. 5 : Is. xii. 8). The latter is the *ethical* aspect of the divine holiness—that in which it is imitable by man (Matt. v. 48; 1 Pet. i. 16)—and denotes God as the Being of *absolute moral perfection* (Mark x. 18).

The combined lustre of God's moral perfections in holiness yields, in the separation of its rays, the *special* moral attributes. These may be grouped under the two heads of *righteousness* and *love*.

1. Some would deny the distinction between righteousness and love, and would resolve all into love. This, however, cannot be done satisfactorily, and the relative independence of *righteousness* as an aspect of God's character must be upheld.

Righteousness has to do with right and wrong in conduct—with the *morally obligatory*. It provides norms which even love must respect. Love is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. xiii. 10) ; but the love which enables us to *fulfil* our duties does not *create* the duties. These exist

independently and spring from the fundamental relations of moral beings to one another. The ultimate ground of righteousness, however, is in the eternal nature of God Himself—in *His essential righteousness*. Righteousness, we may say, is that principle in God which founds the moral order of the world, which is pledged to uphold that order (Rom. ii. 2 ; iii. 6), and which vindicates it against all opposition. Under it are included such attributes as God's truth or faithfulness; His justice; His zeal or jealousy for His own honour; and His anger or wrath, which is simply another name for the necessary reaction of God's holiness against sin, but specially, against daring and presumptuous transgression.

The outward form which righteousness assumes is *law*. The inward witness to law in man is *conscience* (Rom. ii. 15). It is impossible to expel "law" from the relations of God to man, so long as conscience remains an indestructible witness to it.

2. This brings us to the crowning attribute of the divine character—that in which its perfection is supremely expressed—the attribute of *love*.

In the Old Testament the word "love" is not found as applied to God till Deuteronomy. What is still stranger, it is not found once in the first three Gospels as applied to God, nor in the Book of Acts as applied to either God or man. The truth, however, is not wanting, and the explanation is the same in both cases, viz., that the acts in which love is displayed must precede the use of the term. There is first the revelation of love, then the *naming* of love. The prophets gather up the lessons of God's love to Israel. John gathers up the meaning of God's revelation in Christ in the words "God is love" (1 John iv. 8, 16 ; *cf.* John iii. 16). Paul similarly dwells on the love of God displayed in redemption (Rom. v. 8, &c.).

Very manifold are the aspects in which the love of God is exhibited in Scripture. A common word in the Old Testament is "mercy," but this term has almost the breadth of signification of love itself—kindness, goodness, benevolence; not simply, as commonly with ourselves, compassion to the sinful or unfortunate. As *special forms* of love may be distinguished—

(1) *Goodness or benevolence*—God's general goodwill to men (*e.g.*, Matt. v. 45; Rom. ii. 4). Goodness extends also to the lower creation; love proper has relation to personality.

(2) As delighting in those who reflect His moral image, love in God is *complacency* (*cf.* Zeph. iii. 17).

(3) As affected by misery, suffering, misfortune, love is *pity, compassion, mercy.*

(4) As bearing with the froward and bad, love is *long-suffering*, or *forbearance* (Rom. ii. 4).

(5) As bestowing benefits on the sinful and undeserving, love is *grace.*

As respects its *range*, God's love embraces the whole world (John iii. 16). Yet love in God has also its *peculiar* objects—*e.g.*, in the Old Testament, Israel, the people whom God, of free grace, had bound in covenant with Himself (Ex. xix. 4-6); in the New Testament, those in union with His Son (John xvii. 23). There is the divine "election"; but electing love, one comes to see, is never election to the exclusion of others, but election with a view to the future larger blessing of others (*e.g.*, Gen. xii. 1-3).

III

The Trinity of God
The Divine Purpose

The Trinity of God
The Divine Purpose

FROM the love of God, which is the highest point reached in the consideration of the divine attributes, the transition is most easily made to the mysterious subject of the divine Trinity. For love, as of the eternal nature of God, can hardly, as has already been pointed out, subsist save through some form of personal distinction in the divine Being. Love is not the attribute of a solitary personality. It implies an object—some one who is loved. Just as Fatherhood was seen to imply Sonship, so love in God—if love is of His essence—implies a relation to Another, who is also God. The defect of Unitarianism is that, in default of such a conception, it is compelled to lay the accent on God's *power*, and to regard love as contingent for its exercise on the existence of a world. The full Christian view gives the warmer, more satisfying conception of God as a Being who holds within Himself the distinction necessary for an eternal movement of Life, Thought, and Love, expressed in the threefold name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I.

God is *triune*. It is this great truth, yet wondrous mystery of the Being of God, we are now to consider.

Let us see, first, how we arrive at this idea or notion

of God as Trinity. Here the first thing to be affirmed is that the divine Trinity, while meeting the need of a complete spiritual view of God, is yet essentially a *doctrine of revelation.* I mean by this that it is not a doctrine which would have been known, or which we could have put forth with confidence, on grounds of reason alone, but one which first comes to light in the course of God's historical Self-revelation. The contrary of this is often maintained. You will find brilliant books in which the idea is advocated that the whole notion of the Trinity comes to us from Greek philosophy, or other foreign sources. Now I do not mean that philosophy, or rational thought, has no points of contact with this doctrine. It is indeed a most instructive fact—not one which injures our faith, but which manifestly strengthens and corroborates it—that, in all ages, whenever men have set themselves seriously to think out their idea of God, they have found themselves driven, on philosophic grounds, to abandon the idea of bare unity in God, and to introduce the thought of living movement and of self-distinction into their conception. It was so in ancient Platonism; it was so in mediæval Mysticism; it has been so in modern systems.

Nevertheless, it was certainly not from philosophy that the Biblical writers, or the early Church, got this doctrine, any more than they got from it the idea of God Himself. The doctrine of the Trinity is, in truth, got by *induction* from the facts of the Christian revelation, and aims simply at gathering up and correctly expressing what is involved in these facts as regards the nature of God; just as in any other sphere of knowledge we arrive at general truths by inductions in that sphere. Take, *e.g.*, the knowledge which each one possesses of the faculties of his own mind. You know in consciousness that the mind—the self—is one and indivisible; yet it

subsists in a plurality of powers and activities, which you discover, distinguish, and name, from your observation of them. Or take such a fact in physical science as magnetism. You know—what you could never learn by *a priori* reasoning—that every magnet has a north and a south pole. How do you get that knowledge? By observation and induction from the facts of magnetism presented to you. How, then, do I know that God is Triune? Not by metaphysical reasoning, but by induction from the facts of God's revelation of Himself in the Old and New Testaments, specially in the Gospel of redemption.

Redemption, as the Scripture reveals it, has *three great Fountain-heads*—each divine—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and these three are *One* God. In illustration of this inductive method, note how the Apostle John rose to the conviction of the identity of the historical Jesus with that "Word" which was in the beginning with God, and was God (John i. 1). Was it by abstract reasoning, or learning in the school of Philo? No; it was, as John himself emphasizes, from what he had himself seen and heard of Jesus in His historical manifestation: "We beheld His glory; glory of the Only-begotten of the Father," &c. (John i. 14; 1 John i. 3).

II.

The doctrine, then, is obtained by observing and collating what is declared in Scripture, and discovered in the process of human salvation, regarding these divine Persons.

1. In proceeding to more special proof of this doctrine we naturally turn, first, to the well-known *Trinitarian formula* in the direction for Baptism, in Matt. xxviii. 19. This is the cardinal text on the subject: "Baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and

of the Holy Ghost." The passage is the more interesting that it occurs, not in St. John, or in the Epistles, but in one of the Synoptic Gospels, and is put into the mouth of the Lord Himself, as part of His last solemn commission to His disciples.

Observe then carefully, (1), on this subject, that it is not *three names* into which disciples are to be baptised—not into the name of the Father, and into the name of the Son, and into the name of the Holy Spirit—but *one name*, which is threefold; the *one* "name" of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It has to be borne in mind what was before said of the "name" of God in the Bible; that it is not a mere vocable, but is always an expression of some aspect of God's *nature*. The single, yet threefold, name into which we are baptised is expressive therefore of what is most distinctive in the Christian revelation of God.

If we look further into this formula, which, I think, goes to the root of the matter, we find a great deal more regarding this mystery of the divine nature.

(2) For example, the *Father* in this formula is divine. No one doubts that. Few will deny either that the *Spirit* is divine. There is discussion about the Personality of the Holy Spirit, but not much about His divinity. Must it not, then, in simple consistency, be held that the second member in this triune circle, namely, *the Son*, also is divine? Suppose another name put into the formula, and it be read: "Baptising them into the name of the Father, and of *Isaiah* (or Paul, or John), and of the Holy Spirit," how utterly incongruous we should feel it to be. But we do not feel this incongruity when the name of the Son is inserted. Why? Because our faith, instructed by the Scriptures, regards Jesus, the Son, as divine. Otherwise He would have no right to a place in this formula. The Father is the Father of

the Son; the Son is the Son of the Father. Both, in the nature of the case, are divine.

(3) I have said that few deny the divinity of *the Holy Spirit*. But many question His Personality. The Spirit is, it is often said, not a Person, but an *influence*. But look at the formula once more. The Father plainly is Personal, is He not? The Son also undoubtedly is Personal. Must we not, therefore, in all fair reasoning, hold that the *third* member in this sacred circle—the Holy Spirit—is likewise Personal. Else again the formula would lose its consistency.

As a result we have a triple distinction in the unity of the Godhead—each member conceived as divine, each as Personal.

2. It might readily be shown that the same doctrine of a threefold distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in the unity of the Godhead, underlies the teaching of the whole New Testament. Everywhere in the New Testament is the recognition of *three great Principals*, or Agents, in the work of human salvation, called by these three names. The baptismal formula just considered is one illustration. Another is found in the familiar *Apostolic benediction* in 2 Cor. xiii. 14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all." Here, as in the former case, we have mention made of three co-ordinate Sources of salvation—the name of Christ being even put first—and we have only again to apply the test we applied to the baptismal formula, and suppose a *man's* name—Paul's or John's—inserted instead of Christ's, to see how incongruous and false it would be.

Other passages of the same order in the New Testament are 1 Cor. xii. 4-6: "Diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit . . . Diversities of ministrations, but the

same Lord. . . . Diversities of workings, but the same God" (*cf.* Eph. iv. 4-6); 1 Pet. i. 2: "According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"; Rev. i. 4, 5: "From Him who is, and who was, and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits that are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ," &c. Here the Spirit, elsewhere spoken of as single (Ch. ii. 7, 11, 17, &c.), and united with the Father and Christ as the source of "grace and peace," is symbolised as sevenfold in manifestation.

In a very large number of other New Testament passages it is instructive to notice how closely *the Father and Jesus Christ* are bound together as conjoint sources of blessing. Thus, in the constant greeting of the Epistles: "Grace to you and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. i. 7, and generally). This, again, is inconceivable, if Christ be not regarded as in nature divine. The direct proofs of Christ's own divinity in the Gospels and Epistles are here in place, but will better be considered in connection with Christ's Person.

3. If this, now, is the full Christian idea of God, it is not unreasonable to expect that at least *anticipatory indications* of the doctrine will be found all along the line of revelation? It may be that occasionally theologians have tried to read too much New Testament doctrine into the Old Testament. But if God, as we believe, is really triune—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—it is surely impossible that some preludings of this will not be manifest in His earlier revelations. Such preludings we actually find.

(1) There is, as already stated, the name *Elohim* itself—a name which belongs absolutely to the Old Testament. Plural in form, and used, as was seen, with

a singular verb, the name expresses at least that God is not simple unity, but has fulness of life in Himself (a fact which itself implies differentiation and distinction). Connected with this is the idea of *Self-converse* in God, as in the narrative of the Creation: "Let us make man in our image," &c. (Gen. i. 26; *cf.* iii. 22; Is. vi. 9).

(2) There is, again, as one of the most remarkable things in the earliest or patriarchal age, that singular form of revelation in the *Angel of God* or *Angel of Jehovah*. Again and again in the earlier books you have appearances of the Angel of Jehovah, and revelations made through Him; and the peculiarity of the Angel is that, while distinguishing Himself from Jehovah, He is yet, again, in some mysterious way, *identified* with Jehovah, speaks in His name, nay, is declared to be Jehovah Himself. Thus, in connection with Hagar, Gen. xvi. 7, 12; with Abraham, Gen. xxii. 11-18; with Moses, Ex. iii. 3-6, &c., Jehovah's "name" (nature) is in the Angel (Ex. xxiii. 21). Most writers in the Church, from Justin Martyr and Tertullian down, have seen in these appearances of the Angel a forecast—a pre-revelation—of that distinction of God and His "Word" which comes to light in the New Testament.

(3) We have, yet again, in the Old Testament, the ideas of the *Word* and of the *Wisdom* of God (*cf.* Prov. viii. 22 *ff.*)—ideas developed in the later Jewish schools into the doctrine of the "Memra," or Word of God, and in the Alexandrian school (Philo) into the doctrine of the "Logos," both providential preparations for the New Testament doctrine (*cf.* Westcott's *Introd. to the Study of the Gospels*, pp. 147-152).

(4) Lastly, there is the abundant Old Testament teaching on the Spirit of God. The Spirit is no mere forthputting of the power or energy of God, but is an active, *abiding* principle in God, which, as revelation goes on, has

attributed to it more or less clearly a *Personal* character (Is. xl. 13; xlviii. 16).

Here, then, already are outlined in no indistinct way the leading features of the New Testament doctrine of God as Father, Son, and Spirit.

III.

There is, of course, a great deal that one would like to say on this doctrine of the Trinity considered in itself--difficulties that have been raised regarding it, questions that arise out of it—but I only take up one or two of the points that lie nearest the surface.

1. I dare say, for one thing, there is a feeling in many minds—it has often been expressed—to the effect that, even if the doctrine of the Trinity be true, it is not a very *vital* or *practical* doctrine. It is something subtle, so it is said, something speculative, something difficult to understand—something, therefore, which belongs to the theory of religion rather than to vital Christian faith. So the plain Christian is exhorted to set aside this doctrine, and confine himself to the simple practicalities of the Christian religion.

Now, I wish to say strongly that I take this to imply an utter misunderstanding of the real state of the case. It is this feeling, I know, which has given rise historically to a great deal of what we call Unitarianism. But it seems to rest, nevertheless, on a serious misconception.

First of all, this doctrine, as I regard it, is *not unimportant*, but goes down, as I tried to show before, to the very foundations of our Christian faith. If you take it away, tamper with it, put it aside, you will speedily find that you have altered your conception of Christianity, and that there is not a doctrine in the Christian system but suffers in consequence. But, apart from this, I should like to say, *second*, that in my judgment, and, I believe,

in that of those who have gone most deeply into this subject, the doctrine of the Trinity, so far from being a bare speculative doctrine, is one of the *utmost practical value* in our Christian thinking. Of so great value is it that, if anyone once comes to realise what is involved in it, he will never again part with it, or be able to feel that he has the right conception of God without it. There is really no help to the understanding in conceiving of God, as the Unitarian does, as simple, undifferentiated unity; while there is much aid in thinking of God as, in His own eternal Being, at once Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

To illustrate this, suppose the other view to be taken, and the idea or doctrine of the Trinity in God to be *set aside*. See what follows. For one thing, ask how, in that case, you must conceive of God Himself. I spoke before of the relation of this doctrine to the love of God. It seems plain that, if this doctrine is rejected, you have no alternative but to conceive of God as subsisting through the eternal ages before the creation of the world as a *vast solitary Ego*, with no one to love, no one to have communion with, no possibility of fellowship, or Fatherhood, or social affection of any kind. For love, as was said earlier, in the nature of the case, involves an object of love. Communion implies those between whom there is communion. So that, if you take away some such distinction in God as we associate with the Trinity, you take away from Him, apart from the world, and before the world, the possibility of Fatherhood and love.

You say, perhaps, that these things are there at least as *potentialities*, or possibilities, in God, to be brought into exercise when moral beings are created. You say that God had in His eternal mind at least the *purpose* of creating the world—of calling into existence the universe, angels, men—so, looking forward, God could see myriads of objects of His Fatherly love and care. Yes, but

does this meet the difficulty about Fatherhood and love in God's own nature? Surely not. First of all, it means, does it not, that God is made actually dependent on His own world for being Father, for being love, for having fellowship and communion? It is not that God is love in Himself, and then out of that love creates a world. For love in His eternal essence He cannot be if He is an eternally solitary Being.

But more than this. How is it supposed possible for God to find an *adequate object* for His affections and fellowship in those finite spirits He has made, or purposes to make? We know very well that, in our own human love, any soul that has depth in it needs a soul of kindred depth, in order that there may be a complete relation of love. I go even further. Is there any human soul that can find itself satisfied with the love of any finite being, or with all finite love taken together? Is it not true of every one of us—do we not affirm it in our every-day teaching and preaching—that our souls can only find their complete rest in the *infinite* God, in an *infinite* love? You remember Augustine's famous saying: "O God, Thou has made us for Thyself, and our souls are ever restless till they rest in Thee." Our finite souls need an infinite Object to rest in. How, then, is God, the Infinite One, Himself to find an object for *His* Fatherly love, commensurate with His infinitude, in our finite souls? Where is *He* to find that Other—that Fellow to Himself—who shall be the perfect image of Himself, and the absolutely satisfying Object of His love? Here it is that the great truth of the Trinity comes in—the truth that God, in His own eternal being, in His own eternal life, is *not* that absolutely solitary One we have been supposing; but that, through this Self-distinction in His nature—the eternal Son in the bosom of the Father, and, with the Father and the Son, the Eternal Spirit, there is a life of

love and fellowship, a reciprocal communion in God Himself.

You begin to see, I trust, how deep-reaching this doctrine of the Trinity is. It teaches us, as I said at the first, that it is not in the relation of God to the world and man, but in the relation to the Eternal Son, that the spring of Fatherhood is found in the heart of God. So Fatherhood comes to be of the essence of God, which it could not be in any other way.

2. There is a difficulty, I well know, which presses on many minds, in the use of the word "*Person*" to describe this distinction in the nature of God. We speak of "three Persons in the Godhead," but the imperfection of this word "Person" has always been felt. "Person" with us means a separate individual; in God it denotes a distinction within the divine nature itself, comparable to no other. To suppose the "Persons" of the Godhead to be actually distinct individuals would be to fall into the form of error called "Tritheism." The word "Person" is not found in the Nicene Creed. Yet it is difficult to find a better word to express the thought that the distinctions in the Godhead are not simply, as it is phrased, "modal" (which is the error called "Sabellianism"), but imply a true distinction of self-consciousness, and will, and love—and I and Thou and He—in the divine nature, Father, Son, and Spirit being each Self-conscious centres of knowledge, will, and love. If this real distinction, implied in all that is said of Son and Spirit in the Scriptures, is not to be lost hold of, it would seem that the word Person, or some synonym, cannot be avoided to express it.

In the *inner relations* of these divine "Persons" to one another there is no doubt much that is mysterious; yet enough is revealed regarding Them to enable us to

distinguish them with propriety. The Father, in the language of the old theologians, is the *Fons Deitatis*—the original Fountain-Head or principle of the Godhead; therefore in Scripture is frequently called "God" absolutely (*e.g.*, John i. 1; xvii. 3; 2 Cor. xiii. 14). The Son is the eternal "Image" of the Father (Col. i. 15)—the "Brightness of His Glory" (Heb. i. 3)—the principle of revelation in creation, providence, and redemption; hence called the "Logos" or "Word" of God (John i. 1, 2). The Spirit is the principle of Self-knowledge in the Godhead (1 Cor. ii. 10, 11), the Source of divine energies and of all gracious and holy influences; hence His peculiar name, "Holy Spirit." In the language of theology, the Son is spoken of as "begotten" (*cf.* John i. 16: "The only-begotten Son"), this with the view, first, of distinguishing the mode of His origin from "creation" (the Son Himself is the Creator of all, John i. 2), and, next, of indicating that He is of the Father's own substance—"very God of very God"; and the Spirit is described as "proceeding" from the Father and the Son (John xv. 26)—"breathed forth," as the name indicates. But here we enter a region in which, confessedly, language is but a symbol to express that which in its nature is ineffable. "Not that it may be spoken," said Augustine, "but that it may not be left unspoken."

IV.

From this profound subject of the divine Trinity I pass now to speak of the *Purpose* of God, and of the execution of that purpose in creation and providence. It is in this doctrine of the divine purpose that the transition is made from what God is in Himself to what He is in relation to the world.

The Trinity of God

Let no one be alarmed when mention is made of the divine purpose. If I touch on this high and difficult theme, it is not with the object of entering into metaphysical discussions upon the "Decrees," or of bringing up the points of controversy between one Christian sect and another, as between Calvinists and Arminians. My intention is to confine myself to those broad basal affirmations which everyone, I am sure, who understands the teaching of Scripture must hold fast by, and to try to show how direct is their bearing on our Christian thought and life.

When we say with Scripture that God has a "purpose" —an eternal purpose; in Paul's language, "the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph. i. 9, 11), we mean simply that God has a *plan*— an eternal plan—which He carries out in His creation and in His providence; and this, so far from being a far-off, metaphysical thing, is in truth the rockfast foundation of all our Christian thinking about God in His relation to the world. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations" (Ps. xxxiii. 11).

That in this general sense God has a "plan" in all His acting, few, I think, will be disposed to dispute. If we attribute to God, as all Christians must, self-conscious Personality, and infinite knowledge and wisdom, this already implies, (1) that in all that He does God does not act blindly, but acts with intelligence and motive; and (2) that in all that God does He does not act arbitrarily, but on settled principles of wisdom and goodness. Intelligent action is action governed by the idea of an end, and wisdom, in a good and holy Being, manifests itself in the choosing of the best ends, and of the best means to attain these ends. Thus far there will be general agreement. God's plan, in the nature of the case, must

be eternal, and does not alter. His purpose, formed in eternity, He executes in time.

A more difficult question arises when we ask, What *is* the end which God has in view in this plan of His, or in the purpose which He executes in time? The *manner* of its execution, and its relation to human freedom, we leave over to the doctrine of providence. But the question of the end may be glanced at here.

If we raise this question, What is God's great *last end* in His creation and in His providence? I think that, on the largest scale, we can only say with the older writers that it must be the manifestation of His moral attributes in their highest possible exercise, or, as it was wont to be put, His own glory. So far we may go with the saintly Jonathan Edwards in his famous Dissertation on "God's Last End in Creation," and say that His own glory is the end. But this does not carry us far enough. What God's end is, is necessarily determined by His character. So we go on to ask: What is it in the Christian revelation which we are taught to regard as of the essence of God's character? And here the note comes back to us—rings out from the whole revelation of God in Christ—that the essence of God's character consists in *love*. "God is love," says John (1 John iv. 8, 16). This is the highest declaration the Bible ever makes about God. We therefore come to this, that God's plan or purpose, from the Bible point of view, must be regarded as determined by God's love. It must be regarded as framed to carry out in the highest and fullest possible way the ends of love; and we do well in all our inquiries never to lose hold of this as our guiding clue.

This evidently is a position which requires to be stated with care to safeguard it against abuse. It is necessary to remember that what we call "love" in God is not mere good nature. It is not a soft, yielding benevolence, but is

always viewed in Scripture as in harmony with every other attribute in God's character. It is viewed as in consistency with holiness, with righteousness, with truth; with all God's other perfections. What is to be said is that love in God defines the *end* which all these other attributes are engaged to carry through to its fullest extent.

To illustrate: there is judgment in God; wrath in God. Any theology that tries to cut out the idea of wrath in God will soon find itself in a very limp condition. There is judgment in God—wrath awful and terrible (Rom. i. 18; ii. 8, 9, &c.)—but then judgment and wrath are never put forth in the Bible as something that God delights in on its own account. Judgment, the Bible tells us, is God's "strange work" (Is. xxviii. 21). If the sinner dies in his sins, it is not because God desires that he should die. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should return from his way, and live (Ez. xviii. 23). Love, therefore, is still God's end, and His purpose, if we could see it in its entirety, is subservient to the ends of love.

IV

Creation and Providence

Creation and Providence

IT was stated under last head that the transition from the doctrine of God to that of the world is given in the idea of the divine *Purpose*, and a little was said on what the purpose of God means, and of love as defining the end of God's purpose. The nature of the purpose of God, however, is best seen by observing it in its execution, and the two spheres in which that execution is to be traced are *Creation* and *Providence*.

I.

I pass then to speak of *Creation*, as the first way in which the purpose of God is realised.

I do not need to delay long on what is meant by the *word* creation. By this term is simply signified that all things that are in heaven and in earth, "things visible and things invisible" (Col. i. 16), have been brought into being by *a free act* of God's wisdom and *almighty power*, and that they continue to subsist in Him (Acts xvii. 28; *cf.* Col. i. 17), and to be dependent on Him for their existence (*cf.* Heb. i. 2). This is a doctrine which runs through all Scripture; is, indeed, as will be shown immediately, peculiar to it. It is not the first chapter of Genesis only which affirms this doctrine. It is found from the first page of the Bible to its last. The first words of Scripture are: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. i. 1); among its last

are: "Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they were, and were created" (Rev. iv. 11).

In strictness the above definition includes what theology would call "*conservation*," as well as creation; but in the large sense in which I use the term, "creation" is meant to cover both God's initial act in calling things into existence, and His preserving power in sustaining them in existence after they are created. The two ideas are inseparably connected. Things do not get out of God's hands after they have been created, or ever attain an independent existence. This is the error of *Deism*. God cannot get rid of His world in this way. The world is sustained and preserved by Him; and this, in a manner, also is, as it has been phrased, "a continual creation."

Here, however, the question may be raised: "After all, does it very much matter how the world has come into being, now that it is here? Has religion any real interest in such a doctrine as creation—in the Bible doctrine, or in any other theory of the origin of the world?" The answer must be "Yes"; religion has a *very deep stake*—one of the deepest stakes—in this doctrine of creation. It is always a safe thing to assume that there is no great doctrine of Scripture in which religion has not a deep and vital interest. Let no one be tempted to make light of any one of these doctrines, or to barter them away on the ground that they are of no great importance. What is the interest of religion in this doctrine of creation? It is that faith requires above all things the assurance that everything in the world—in the universe—is absolutely under the power and control of God; and you cannot have this assurance unless on the view which the Bible gives, that everything has been brought into being by God, and depends on Him for its continuance.

Suppose it were otherwise. Suppose there was something in this world which God did not create—some *eternal matter*, for instance, as theorists have imagined, which existed independently of God, and lay outside of His power. Then see what follows. Here is something which is uncreated, which has existed from eternity, which exists by a necessity of its own nature, which exists by as good a right as God Himself—something, therefore, over which God has no control. You have this resisting, refractory element in the world, and you have no guarantee that God's purpose will not be thwarted, defeated, or, at any rate, limited and broken, by it. Where the doctrine of creation comes in is to assure us that there is nothing of this kind in the whole universe. Everything that exists, seen and unseen, is there, because God has brought it into being; and God has the most absolute control of that which He has created. Human wills can resist God; but it is He who has endowed them with their freedom, and He prescribes the limits within which they are permitted to exercise it. Because of this faith can look confidently up and say: "My help cometh from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Ps. cxxi. 2).

Faith, therefore, it will be seen, has a vital stake in this doctrine of creation. It knows that all things are at *God's disposal*; that there is nothing outside the sphere of His agency; that everything is at His command, to be used for the execution of His will.

The New Testament carries this doctrine still further. You remember how much stress is laid in the New Testament on the fact that Jesus Christ, our Lord, had His part in the work of creation. "In Him were all things created . . . In Him all things consist," or hold together (Col. i. 16, 17): He is the beginning—the origin and principle—of creation, and He is its end

("Through Him"—"Unto Him"; *cf.* John i. 2; Col. i. 15-17; Heb. i. 2, 10; Rev. iii. 14, &c.). Christ had to do therefore, with the creation; this means that the created world is in the hands of our Saviour as well as of our Father.

II.

The next thing I wish to say about this doctrine is that the Bible doctrine of creation is an *absolutely unique doctrine.* It is a doctrine which belongs to the religion of the Bible, and to no other religion in the world. It is important to bring out this *uniqueness* of the doctrines of the Bible. I do not think it is commonly brought out with half the emphasis it ought to be. If it were brought out more, there would be far less difficulty and trouble in many people's minds; for they would see in every one of these doctrines the signature of God Himself, a uniqueness that points to a divine origin. This is true of the doctrine of creation as well as of every other. You take up books on other religions, and read a great deal in them about creation. You take up the old *Babylonian epic* of creation, and you read there of Merodach the Creator. You find the word "Creator" scattered over the Babylonian hymns. But in these it means something very different from what it does in the Bible story. In the Babylonian epic the poem begins, in fact, with an account of the origin of the gods, or of the oldest of them, from the chaotic deep. You see you are in a totally different region from what you are in the Bible.

It is the same with other systems of religion and with philosophic theories. In these *systems and theories* you have a great variety of speculations. The world is viewed either as *eternal,* which is the Atheistic view; or is made out of an eternally *pre-existing matter* which God

works up into form, which is the Platonic view; or you find the idea of *two principles*—a good principle and an evil principle—contending together (Dualism), which is the old Zoroastrian or Parsic view. The Zoroastrian set down all that was bad and harmful in the world to the evil principle, and credited all the good in the world to the good principle; and this strife is ever going on. It was overlooked that good and evil in nature are but relative terms (*e.g.*, fire burns and cooks our food; the sun fructifies, but also scorches), and that an eternal principle which is *only* evil is not an ethical principle in the proper sense at all: is hardly different from a baneful nature-force. Then, again, there are the many forms of theory already spoken of (Pantheistic) in which there is a *confounding* of the world with God. The world is simply a manifestation of God. God is the "world-soul," or the world is regarded as proceeding from God by a kind of evolutionary process or logical necessity—all things flowing from the nature of God, to use a figure of Spinoza's, with the same necessity as the properties of a triangle flow from the nature of the triangle.

Over against all these doctrines and theories you find in the world about the origin of things—many of them having their recrudescence in our own day—stands in its grand simplicity the doctrine of the Bible. Many are the crude speculations that crop up from time to time in regard to nature and creation. One of the most marvellous in recent years is that which bears the name of "Christian Science," though it is difficult for most people to see either Christianity or science in it. What one does discover, in regard to the doctrine I am dealing with, is that this world which the Bible speaks of as the creation of God is, on the new theory, an illusion of our "mortal mind," whatever precisely that may be. I think it is a very "mortal mind" indeed from which that idea

came. It is very strange, is it not, that human beings should happen to be all affected by this illusion alike; and that, as science shows, the world should have been there for long ages before there was any "mortal mind" to think of it! But in regard to all these theories which have been named, it is unwise to think of them as now outside of practical range. They are just the kind of things that are being served up under new names, though in reality they are as old as the hills; only the old-time people did not know better, whereas we ought to know better with our Bibles in our hands.

The doctrine of the Bible, then, I repeat, stands out amidst all these doctrines as something quite different and absolutely unique. As against these theories the Bible declares:—

1. That the world is *not eternal*, but had a *beginning* in time. This truth is becoming continually the more evident the more we grow to understand what the world is. Science itself has introduced a word to express the idea that the world is in the position of a clock running down—constantly working off its energy. It calls it "entropy." There will come an end to the world. Similarly, when you go backwards, you come to a beginning—a nebulous fire-mist, or something of the kind, the origin of which science cannot explain. Where does the fire-mist, or its atomic constituents, come from? Only creation can give the answer.

2. Then the world is *distinct* from God, not in the sense that the world is not *from* God, and that His presence and power are not everywhere manifested in it —that all the life and power in it are not derived from Him (immanence)—but in the sense that the world is still *not* God, but is the product of His free creative act, distinguished by God from Himself in the very act of creating it. This is the line which separates a true

Theism from Pantheism. God is not simply the life, or soul, or inner law of the world, but has His own eternally-complete life above the world, and in independence of it (transcendence). He is "over all," as well as "through all, and in all" (Eph. iv. 6).

3. It follows that this world is not the product of *necessity*—of any necessary emanation or logical unfolding of God's Being—but is the result of a *free* act of His wisdom and power: something which exists because He chose for ends of holiness and love to call it into existence. It need not be added that the only power adequate to such a work is *Almighty* power—omnipotence.

4. Last of all, the doctrine teaches that the *matter* as well as the *form* of the world is the creation of God. There is nothing left outside of God's creative power. The first verse of Genesis gives the deepest philosophy of the whole subject: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." This is what is meant when it is said that God made all things "out of nothing." The expression has sometimes been ridiculed, as if meant that "nothing" was a kind of stuff out of which God shaped the world. The youngest Sunday-school child is not so foolish as to be unaware that that this is not the meaning intended. What the expression means is simply that God brought this world into being where there was no world before; where nothing before existed. As the writer to the Hebrews says: "The worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out o things which appear" (Heb. xi. 3; *cf.* Ps. xxxiii. 6).

III.

It will not be expected that I should enter at length here into the disputed questions as to the relation of the Biblical accounts of creation to *modern science*,

but I may at least indicate what I take to be the right point of view in these matters. There are those who profess to make light of the first chapter of Genesis. I do not. The man who makes light of the first chapter of Genesis does not very well know about what he speaks. I grant at once that it is no part of the function of Biblical revelation to anticipate the discoveries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—to tell us beforehand—*e.g.*, what geology has brought to light regarding the age of the earth, or the precise order of its formations. When the Bible does speak of these things, or describes natural phenomena, it does so in plain, popular language, just as we ourselves do every day in speaking of the sun's rising and setting. What the Bible does is not to anticipate the discoveries of later ages, but to tell us about the relation of God to the world, and to convey those great truths of its origin and ordering which are necessary as the basis of a true *religious* view of the world, no matter to what stage knowledge or science may attain. When, accordingly, we look at the *great ideas* which the first chapter of Genesis is intended to teach—still more, when we compare them with the fantastic legends found in other religions—we can have little difficulty in seeing, I think, that they have their origin in that Spirit of revelation which was in Israel, and in no lower source.

What are these great ideas which stand in the forefront of this record in Genesis?

1. As already said, there is the great truth that there is *One sole Creator* of the world—God. Put that over against all forms of polytheistic religion, and remember that the world was *full* of polytheism when this chapter was written.

2. There is the truth that the world is not *eternal*, but that God in the beginning created it; "He spake and it

was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. xxxiii. 9.)

3. It tells us, and this is important, that the world originated, not in a *single* creative act, but in a *series* of divine acts; a series ascending higher and higher, and culminating in the creation of man.

4. It tells us that man was made *in God's image*, and unites in himself both *nature* and *spirit*; that he is the crown of nature, but at the same time the link between nature and a higher spiritual world—between nature and God.

Now, take these ideas, and I think it will be granted that not one of them comes into conflict with science: that, on the contrary, where the two spheres touch, they perfectly coincide, and corroborate each other.

But I venture to go further. I have said that it is not the function of the Genesis chapter to anticipate the discoveries of modern science. But this is not to say that it *contradicts them*. I do not believe that it does. There is evidence rather of a singular and *profound agreement*. Take almost any book that has been written on the relation between the first chapter on Genesis and geology—such an old book, *e.g.*, even as Hugh Miller's *Testimony of the Rocks*—and, without entering into details, the very fact, it seems to me, that it is possible to present the two series of things, the Biblical and the geological, alongside of each other as is done in these books, and to show so large and marvellous an amount of harmony between them, is of itself an evidence that we are in presence of something wholly unusual. Could the same be done with any other "cosmogony" or story of creation in existence? This writer in Genesis has clearly the right point of view, and so true is the insight yielded by the Spirit of revelation into the ascending order of nature, that there is marvellously little in this primitive

picture of creation—I take it to be one of the oldest things in the Bible—that is not in harmony with what our own most advanced science teaches. To all time this Genesis picture will remain a *wonder*, not for its disagreement with science, but for its marvellous accuracy. With it in his hands, the simplest peasant is wiser than all his teachers on the great subjects of which it treats, if the teachers are those who ignore or despise its lessons.

There is one question more. Does not this doctrine of creation, it may be said, come at any rate into conflict with the great reigning *theory of evolution*, particularly in the denial by the latter of what are called "special creations"? I cannot discuss that subject fully here. But a suggestion or two may be offered. I freely admit that the Biblical doctrine of creation does come into conflict with such a theory of evolution as the late Dr. Darwin promulgated. But science has long come to see that "Darwinism" and "evolution" are not synonymous terms; and all down the line leading representatives have taken up a stand against the evolution of *fortuity*—the evolution that excludes design, and brings in chance in nature to do the work of mind. It was not long before his death that, at the close of a scientific lecture in London, the late Lord Kelvin, the most eminent scientific man of his time, made the declaration that science did not deny creative power, but affirmed the necessity of an organising and directive intelligence in nature.

So far, in truth, from the Biblical doctrine coming into conflict with the doctrine of evolution, it seems to me that it furnishes that doctrine with its *necessary limits*.

(1) There is the initial limit of *origins*. No theory of evolution can get over that. However far, as we have already seen, you carry back your process, you come to a point at which you must begin. If it is a fiery, gaseous

cloud you start with, you have to explain your gaseous cloud. If it is atoms you start with, you have to explain your atoms. Atoms are not engendered by a process of natural selection. They are there in their countless multiplicity, stamped and fixed with their unchanging characteristics, bearing on them, as Clerk Maxwell said, all the marks of "manufactured articles." If you try to get behind atoms to "sub-atoms," and to electric strains in ether, it is the same thing. How came these wonderful "strains" to be there, the equivalents of the old atoms, only infinitely more complicated in their structure?

(2) Next, there are the limits imposed by the rise of *new kingdoms*. Evolution has never yet explained the transition from the inorganic to the organic (non-vital to vital), from the insentient to the sentient, from animal consciousness to human rationality. It is significant that it is just at such points as the original creation of matter, the introduction of animal life, and the creation of man, that the old Hebrew narrator uses the word *bara*, which expresses the idea of true creation—the production of something new and higher by the direct act of God (Gen. i. 1, 21, 27).

(3) There is the limit set to evolution by the law of *kinds*. For evolution is not, after all, a ceaseless flux Variation is not absolutely indefinite. Its limits are soon reached, and there is a constant tendency to revert to type. There are "terminal points" along the different lines beyond which evolution cannot go. The Bible affords the necessary check to error here by its insistence on the creation and propagation of "kinds" (Gen. i. 11, 12, 21, 24).

With due recognition of the determinative activity of God in the rise of new kingdoms, or orders of existence, and the production of new types or kinds, there is

nothing in evolution that need conflict with a doctrine of "creation," provided the co-operation of secondary causes is not excluded.

IV.

From creation I advance to speak of the *providence* of God. The world which God has made He also rules. The providence of God extends to everything. Little as well as great is embraced in it. It includes all persons, all events, and all actions. Human free actions, even human crimes, are taken up into it, and overruled for the accomplishment of God's wise ends.

That Scripture teaches this consoling doctrine of an *all-embracing providence* of God hardly needs proof. The passages which affirm it are innumerable. We have general statements, as, "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that hath He done in heaven and in earth" (Ps. cxxxv. 6); "He made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitations" (Acts xvii. 26). And particular declarations, as, "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He counteth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names" (Ps. cxlvii. 3, 4); "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps" (Ps. cxxxv. 6); "Not one of them [a sparrow] shall fall to the ground without your Father" (Matt. x. 29); "Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He careth for you" (1 Pet. v. 7). Many psalms, chapters, and sections of discourse have providence as their theme, as Ps. civ. (nature), Ps. cxxi. (human life), Prov. xvi. (conduct), Matt. vi. 25-34) (Sermon on the Mount). Generally, this doctrine is the implication of the whole of the Bible, in history, precept, exhortation, warning, threatening. The history of Joseph in the Book of Genesis, with its wonderful

overruling of a long train of events to a specific end, and the often-despised Book of Esther, are conspicuous examples. The crucifixion of Jesus, brought about through the worst passions of men, is an example still more striking and awful. "Delivered up," Peter says, "by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts ii. 23). "Gathered together, to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel foreordained to come to pass" (iv. 28).

1. Here many questions arise. One point which has often been raised is as to the relation of providence to what we call *natural law*. There are those who will have it that, while there is what they style a *general* providence of God, that is, an administration of the world under fixed general laws, there is not, and cannot be, what the Christian speaks of as a *special* providence, that is, a providence which concerns itself with the details of human life and of history—which cares for the individual, answers his prayers, and seeks his particular good. God, it is held, has placed the world under these general laws, which roll on and grind out their infallible results, beneficent in the main; but the details must take care of themselves. You, in the details of your life, are at the mercy of these laws. What you can do if you wish to escape harm is to get out of the way of them, or better, to bend them to your advantage. In no case do they bend to you. Many smile when they hear of God answering a man's prayers. How can He do it? These laws of His bind His hands, and it is impossible for Him to come down into the details of men's lives, and help them. On this view, when God has established His laws, His work is done; the details must look after themselves.

What I wish to say about this is, that I think it is a very *poor and superficial* view of God which it involves. It

is plainly not Christ's teaching, nor the general teaching of the Bible. There it is constantly assumed that God has all causes and all agencies at His disposal, and that the particular effects which these work out are not of chance or of necessity, but, even in their minutest details, are the results of His wise ordering (Matt. x. 29, 30). And this surely is the truest view to take even philosophically. It is a paltry conception, this theory of a God who looks after the generalities of things, but does not attend to the details. Apply the theory to earthly affairs. Who does not know that any one conducting a business, or managing a public concern, if he acted on these principles, attending to generals, but not looking after details, would soon find himself in a very undesirable position, and would probably end in the bankruptcy court? We have a proverb; "Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves." There is such a thing, no doubt, as being penny-wise and pound-foolish; but it is likewise true that, unless you attend to details, you will not bring out of the whole the result you want. Specially when one reflects that it is often on the so-called *little things* of life that the greatest consequences in the lives of individuals and the history of nations depend—that the actions of men, and through them the whole after-history of the world, have often been determined by what look like the merest accidents—he will see that the denial of a providence of God in what we regard as the *minutiæ* of life is really the denial to God of a world-plan altogether.

I do not suppose that many who read these pages have the least doubt that God *does* exercise a continuous and beneficent and omnipotent providence over their lives, and that He does answer their prayers in matters temporal as well as matters spiritual, according to His will. But the question will still be asked: "*How* is such a special providence possible? How are these general laws in

nature to be harmonised with such a providence, and with answers to prayers?"

There is one consideration which may help at least to throw some light upon the difficulty, if it does not remove it altogether. It is not the case, as the objection assumes, that you can explain anything in nature by simple reference to the general laws involved. General laws of themselves do nothing in bringing about particular results. Besides the general laws, there has to be taken into account the way in which things are *put together*—the way in which they are combined and *co-operate*. Dr. Thos. Chalmers used the word "collocation" to express this fact, and the idea was taken up by Mr. J. S. Mill, and by him introduced into scientific logic (see his *System of Logic*, Bk. III; ch. 12, 2, &c.). Chalmers said: There are two things involved in the explanation of any facts of nature; there are the laws of God's appointing, and there is the collocation of these laws.

Take, in illustration, a machine. You have a machine designed for the production of certain results—a printing-press, or whatever it may be. But in order to get the results you require not only the materials and general laws; you must get the parts and forces properly adjusted so that they will work together to produce these results. The machine is the product of man's mind in putting the materials together to effect this end. And what man can do in combining laws and forces to accomplish his ends, surely God, in His larger providence, can do to work out the results He desires. Man, besides, does not merely make his machine and set it agoing. There is commonly also a hand upon the machine, *guiding* it in its work. It is not really otherwise in God's government of the world. God has placed the world under general laws, but He has not thereby abdicated His control of it. There is not a detail which flows from the operation of

these laws under His guidance which is not part of His infinitely wise ordering, in view of the whole, and of each individual life affected by their working. This is sometimes expressed by saying that a "mechanical" view of the world (a view which regards the *causes* at work), does not exclude a "teleological" (a view which regards the *ends* of the working).

The one thing we can always be sure of on this point is that God has not tied His hands in His own universe, so that He cannot hear the cry of His children, or help them in their time of need. Our prayers, indeed, are always supposed to be prayers according to the will of God, offered in submission to His higher wisdom, where we may be, as we often are, in ignorance, or mistaken. The most earnest believer in prayer does not, *e.g.*, believe or expect that God will make water flow uphill at his request. That is a petition he would not be likely to get answered. What he prays for he leaves to God to do for him in His own time and way, in harmony with the laws He has established. He knows he has to do with a Father whose resources are infinite, who knows in every case what it is best to give and to withhold.

2. This is the sphere of nature, but a yet greater difficulty arises in connection with the relation of providence to *free actions*, especially to actions that are evil. Does God's plan embrace these, and if so, in what sense? Now, that God's plan includes—that is, foresees, and takes up into itself—human free actions, even those of wicked men, we have seen that all Scripture testifies. The Crucifixion of Christ is again the signal example (Acts iv. 28). How this is possible may be made a little clearer if we reflect that at every point human free will is only one element in a larger situation. Man acts freely in the situation in which he is placed, but how many threads of providence enter into the weaving of that

situation. The slightest change of conditions at any point, and that situation would never have emerged, or that act, with all its consequences, have eventuated. Two persons, *e.g.*, are thrown together by seeming accident, and form a friendship which determines their future relations to each other for life, and the future of a posterity springing from them. A slight change, and these persons might never have met; would possibly have met others; and the lines of the future, involving innumerable volitions, would have been different to the end of time.

Then what of *sinful actions?* We are accustomed with regard to these to use the term "permit," and rightly. But it is needful to remember that here also bare "permission" does not exhaust the whole relation of God's providence to sinful acts. Providence is permission, indeed; yet such as, in the words of an old document, "hath joined with it a most wise and powerfu bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends" (West. Conf.). God makes even the wrath of man to praise Him, and the remainder of wrath He restrains (Ps. lxxvi. 10). Evil is the sinner's own, but the wicked man grievously deceives himself if he thinks that by his rebellion he can get out of his Creator's hands. Refusing to serve God in one way, he will find himself forced to serve Him in another.

V

Man and Sin: Man's Nature and Original Condition

Man and Sin: Man's Nature and Original Condition

FROM the doctrines of creation and providence I pass to speak of the doctrines of *man and sin*. The doctrine of sin lies at the foundation of a right understanding of the doctrine of redemption. To understand a remedy you must understand the disease it is meant to cure. If sin be only a pin-scratch on the surface of man's nature, the remedy needed for it will be correspondingly slight. If, on the other hand, sin is what the Bible declares it to be—a terrible and soul-destroying evil—then the greatest miracle and most stupendous sacrifice in the universe was required to effect man's salvation from it. But the doctrine of sin, again, rests on a right conception of the nature of man. With that, accordingly, I begin.

I.

It was pointed out that the doctrine of God in the Bible was a unique doctrine, and that the doctrine of creation, as flowing from the doctrine of God, was not less unique. It is now to be shown that the *Bible doctrine of man* has the same character of uniqueness. It is a doctrine which stands altogether by itself. The Bible exalts man and abases him as no other religion on earth does—exalts him in picturing him as made in the image

of God, and capable of eternal life; abases him in setting forth the depths of his apostasy from God, and his inability to deliver himself from the misery and ruin into which it has plunged him. It will be seen as we proceed that this doctrine stands in vital connection with all the other parts of divine truth in the Bible.

It may be proper to begin by speaking for a little on what the Bible has to say of *man's place in creation.* We touch here a subject on which it will be recognised that there is, and can be, no conflict between the Bible and science. According to the Bible, man's place is at the summit of creation. He is the last and highest of God's created works—the goal and consummation of the whole creative process. When you turn to science, you find the same affirmation, expressed in almost the same terms. Evolutionary philosophy has no cavil to make here. For it, also, man is the last and highest product of nature. He stands, as in the Bible, at the head of creation, is the *microcosm* of it, gathers up into himself all that has gone before, is the *apex* of creation. It is not, so far as I know, expected by anyone that man will ever develop into something specifically different from, or higher than, the humanity we know. All further development, whatever its nature, is always assumed to be *within* humanity.

Another point on which there would seem to be no longer any difficulty or disagreement possible between the Bible and science is *the unity* of the human race. There was a time, not so long ago, when scientific men were accustomed to speak of "centres of creation." They advocated the view that there were separate centres of creation of the race of man, and that the creation of the Bible was the creation only of the "Adamic" race. This view, thanks, it must be owned, chiefly to evolutionary science, is now mostly gone. That man was

made male and female, and that from an original single pair the whole human race has descended, is the universal verdict of science. It is a very singular thing that, while science was disputing about the unity of man, the Bible was affirming it all the time (Acts xvii. 26).

But there is something more to be said. If we take the complete Bible view of man, we find that man not only stands at the summit of nature, but stands also *above nature*, as belonging to a higher spiritual realm. If man, on the lower side of his being, is linked with organic nature, sums it up in himself, is its crown and apex, it is not less true that, on another side of his being, he is, as Bushnell finely argues in his work, *Nature and the Supernatural*, supra-natural—is linked with a higher spiritual order, belongs to a higher spiritual world, in which he finds his true life. He is, as Herder said, "the middle link between two systems of creation." He binds them together, and holds them in his own person as a unity. Does not this fit in most beautifully with the structure of Bible revelation in all that it teaches about the *destiny* of man, and the place which our humanity now holds in the universe through Christ? It will be remembered what is said on this subject in Eph. i. and Heb. ii. It is the purpose of God, we are told, "to sum up all things in Christ" (Eph. i. 10). Christ stands there in our humanity, connecting all the parts of the universe together. All things are put in subjection under His feet (v. 22). The writer of Hebrews quotes the eighth psalm, and says: "We see not yet all things subjected to him [man]. But we behold Him [Jesus] . . . crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. ii. 5-9). Christ thus, ruling in our humanity, unites, or will unite, the whole redeemed universe in His own person; and it is because of this constitution of man's nature, uniting the

physical with the spiritual, that he is fitted to occupy this position in God's creation.

II.

The Scripture represents this truth, in the narrative of creation, in speaking of man as made in *the image of God*. That is the *great fundamental affirmation* of the Bible about man, as determinative of his nature, his position in God's world, and relation to God Himself. In Genesis i. this declaration is introduced in a very remarkable way. The language used prepares us for something new and exceptional. The chapter has been speaking of God's successive acts of creation. Then comes a pause, and you have God (Elohim) taking counsel with Himself: "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle," &c. (v. 26). It is not a case of converse with inferior beings, as with angels. That notion has been mooted. But you have to notice that there is nothing said about angels in this first chapter of Genesis. The whole doctrine of angels is undeveloped in this early period. You seldom read of angels, except in the case of the "Angel of the Lord," who was not a created angel. It is not angels, it is God Himself, who is here conversing with Himself about His own divine deeds; and that is an aspect of the matter, on which, as formerly observed, you do not get light fully thrown till you come to the New Testament doctrine of the Trinity. God, then, is here, taking counsel with Himself, and in the succeeding verse you have the declaration that this counsel is carried out: "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them" (v. 27).

This, then, is the grandest, deepest, most fundamental

utterance in all the Bible about man; it underlies the whole doctrine of man, and nearly every other doctrine in the Bible. So we have now to ask: What is this image of God in which man was created? *What do we mean by it?* What does it cover?

(1) We may be very clear that by the image of God is not to be understood anything relating to man's *bodily form.* It is not material shape that constitutes man the image of God, for God has no bodily form. This was the very ground on which the Israelites were forbidden to make an image of God, because they saw no similitude (Deut. iv. 15). God has no form; He is a Spirit without bodily parts.

Then (2) we cannot place this image of God merely in *man's dominion* over the creatures. This was the old Socinian idea. If there was any poorer interpretation than another to be given of a verse, the old Socinians were sure to get hold of it. So this was their notion of the image of God. The sovereignty of man over the creatures is indeed included in the image. Man is an image of God in the dominion he exercises; but this is not the primary sense of the expression. It is because man possesses the rational and moral attributes in which he *spiritually* resembles God that he is capable of exercising his sovereignty.

This leads us (3) to the position, that the image of God in man is to be sought, not in something outward, but in something *inward;* not in something relative, but in something *essential* to man's being; in something stamped primarily upon the soul, or *spiritual nature* of man. And this we see, when we look into it, to be the truth. The image of God is that in which, in distinction from the creatures below him, man *resembles* God, in which he is *like* God. No distinction is to be made between the terms "image" and "likeness,"

as is seen by the fact that in verse 27 "image" covers both. But that resemblance can only be found in what man is as spirit. Man is the image of God in the world because he is a spiritual being; an intelligent and moral being; a *self-conscious, personal* being. He has rationality; he has a moral nature; he has moral knowledge, moral affections, moral will. In this respect, as rational and moral personality, he is, in the very essence and conception of his being, the image of his Creator, of the Personal God, of the all-wise, all-knowing God, of the holy God.

If this be the true view to take of man's nature, then we see that man in this world stands *alone* as bearing the image of God. "No," someone will perhaps say, "look at the animals; they also have intelligence." And no doubt, when we look at the animals, we find that they *do* possess something which we can properly describe as intelligence. All the same, I think it can be very clearly shown that the difference between man and even the highest of the animals is not a mere difference of degree, but *a difference of kind.*

III.

Here we come into conflict with a section of evolutionist opinion. In reply to the statement just made as to man's relation to the lower animals, the evolutionist comes in, and says: "No, you have intelligence also in animals, and man's intelligence is simply a development out of that lower intelligence, by slow gradations, till we reach man, with all the faculties he now possesses." This view is not advocated by all evolutionists, but it *is* advocated by a great many. A good example of it is found in the popular book on "Man's Destiny," by the late Mr. John Fiske. The secret of Mr. Fiske's method lies very much in his use of the word "comes." Man begins away down

among the apes; then there "comes" to be a family of apes that have some glimmering of intelligence above their fellows; out of this there "comes" a particularly happy strain, which acquires the faculty of language; earlier or later, through the prolongation of infancy and other causes, there "comes" to be a development of the natural affections; finally there "comes" all the plenitude of power and faculty in arts and civilisation we have in existing man. No doubt it "comes"; but the whole problem is precisely there. *How* does it come? One is reminded of what the Book of Exodus tells of Aaron, when Moses rebuked him for making the golden calf. "So they (the people) gave it to me; and I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf" (Ex. xxxii. 24). It just "came out!"

Seriously, I challenge this whole conception of the evolutionary growth of man's mind from the lower animals. If it is asked, Where is the distinction? I would reply, in the first place, that man only is in the true sense a *person*. There attaches to his nature, and to his nature alone, the sanctity of personality. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood," we read, "by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man" (Gen. ix. 6). Man alone is capable of self-conscious reflection; of turning his mind back upon himself, and saying "I." He alone possesses the power of rational thought, in the stricter sense of that word. Is this getting metaphysical? Is it asked: What do you mean by rational thought? I answer: Man alone possesses the faculty of rising above the particular, and laying hold on the *universal* element in thought and things. Man alone, by general consent, has the powers of abstraction and generalisation. He alone has the power of laying hold of the principle in the facts; of the law in the particulars; of rising from one truth to a higher truth,

from one law to a wider law, and ultimately to the idea of the infinite, of the eternal, of God. There is no animal on earth that possesses these powers.

If this is still doubted, it is only necessary to look at the different *outcome* of their respective natures to see how marked is the distinction between the animals and man. The animal can do many things, but it never rises above its animality, above its earthly being. When you turn to man, you do find him rising above his earthly existence. Man has reflective self-consciousness. He is possessed of the faculty of intelligent, rational speech. He has the capacity of education and of progress. He is capable of self-directed, intelligent life; can set intelligent ends before him, and work them out; can set moral ends before him, and through his freedom realise them. Man alone, therefore, is capable of morality in the true sense of the word; alone is capable of religion; alone is capable of fellowship with God; alone is capable of receiving into his soul the eternal life. Between a being of whom such things can be said and the animals there is a dividing line not of degree, but of kind. There is a *spirit* in man, not found in the animals, which lifts him above the world altogether. The possession of such a nature carries with it the other thought, that man is not destined for life in this world alone. He is made for *immortality*.

IV

There is yet another thing which must be observed about man before passing from this subject of his nature. It follows from the view already given of man as the link between two worlds, the natural and the spiritual, that man is *a compound being*. Man is not what we may suppose the angels to be—pure incorporeal spirit. He is incorporated spirit. He is made up, as we say, of soul

and body (Matt. x. 28), and both of these elements enter into the conception of his nature. Both are essential elements in his personality. The Bible usage in regard to these terms is, indeed, somewhat different from our own. A special interest attaches to the Biblical terms "soul" and "spirit." In the Old Testament, "soul" (*nephesh*) is the seat of life and personality in man —on the one hand the animating principle or "life" of the body ("the soul is in the blood," Lev. xvii. 11), and source of the animal appetites, desires and passions; on the other, the source of the higher rational and spiritual activities—those which belong to man as a personal, moral, and religious being. It is these latter activities which, in Biblical phraseology, are specially denominated "spirit" (*ruach*). The soul, in other words, is the source of two classes of activities—the animal, connected with the body, and the spiritual, in which lies man's proper affinity to God. It is the presence of the soul in the body which constitutes it "flesh." One result follows, of great importance for the Biblical doctrine of man. "Soul," in the Bible, always has the implication of a "body." There may be spirits which have no bodies, but they are not "souls." On the other hand, souls, as having a spiritual nature, can properly, when disembodied, be called "spirits." The "spirits in prison" in 1 Pet. iii. 19, are spirits or souls of *men*.

These, then, are the two essential parts of man's compound nature—soul and body—and God never intended them to be separated. This sheds an important light on the Biblical idea of *death*. It is not uncommon to hear death spoken of as a universal law of nature. No difficulty need be raised on this point as regards the animals. The animal has its life here and nowhere else. Death is its natural fate. But it is different with man. Man is a spiritual being, and God never meant that the

body and soul of man, these two constituent elements in his personality, should be rent asunder. In the Biblical point of view, therefore, death is *not* natural to men. It is something that has come in; a disruption, a tearing asunder, a separation of parts of his being that God never meant to be separated. The Bible has no sympathy with that ultra-spirituality which looks on the body as the prison-house of the soul, to be got rid of as soon as possible, and which places man's hope in the immortality of the soul alone. It nowhere regards the disembodied state as a state of full and perfect life. It is in the Old Testament a state of gloom; and the prayer of the saint is to be delivered from it. "God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me" (Ps. xlix. 15; *cf.* xvi. 10). Even in the New Testament it is a state of imperfect existence. "Waiting for our adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 23). The redemption of the Gospel is not a redemption of the soul only, but the redemption of the whole man—body and soul together.

V.

Why then, it will naturally be asked, if death is a contradiction of the true idea of man, is death present in the world at all? At this point a very vital question arises, which may form the transition from the doctrine of man to the doctrine of sin. It is the question of the conception we are to form of *man's original condition.* I have spoken of the image of God in man as exhibited in his essential constitution—rational, moral, spiritual. But is this the whole? Does the possession of the image of God by man imply simply the possession of these moral and spiritual capacities; or does it imply also *actual moral resemblance* to God? Does it imply not only the elements of a rational and moral nature, but a state of

actual harmony of the affections and will—a purity of nature, an uprightness of will, which made sinless obedience possible? The state supposed would be an elementary one, no doubt, but was man, as created by God, a pure being? It seems to me that, reasoning on general grounds, we should unhesitatingly say, Yes. For what kind of image of God would that be in which everything was originally blurred, everything distorted and disfigured? This also, it seems plain to me, is implied in the story of man's creation, of Eden, of man's *fall*. It is the fact, I am convinced, that underlies the whole Bible idea of sin; it is the idea expressed also in many parts of scripture. "God made man upright" (Ecc. vii. 29). Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin" (Rom. v. 12).

Here, then, we come to a crucial point. There is no doubt that this which I have called the Bible doctrine about man's original state goes right across the track of a great deal of our *modern speculation* about man's origin and primitive moral condition. The teaching of most of our modern evolutionists on this point is well known, and has already been hinted at. Man has sprung from some species of anthropoid ape (not now existing), and through favourable variations, natural selection, and survival of the fittest, through immensely long periods of time, has been gradually changed into the image he now bears. Thus God introduced man into the world. He begins away down below anything we would now call man. He is a semi-animal; immersed in brutishness; ruled and swayed by unbridled passions; only a glimmering of reason shedding its fitful ray across the chaotic deep of his soul. This is the "primitive man" science would have us accept. Many who advocate these views speak much of the Fatherhood of God. It is a strange idea of Fatherhood which can accommodate itself to this

conception. Is God the Father of man, or is He of the ape also? Where does the Fatherhood come in? What would be thought of any earthly "father" who started his children off in similar conditions? The difficulties of accepting such a view, even from the moral standpoint, seem insuperable. Such a being as the scientists suppose is not only in a *non*-moral condition; he is in an *un*-moral condition, which is an *im*-moral one. For morality undeniably has to do with states of soul as well as with actions; it asks for a pure and harmonious state of the moral affections, and an upright condition of the moral will. Of all this the theory before us is the negation.

I need not say, further, that the acceptance of such a theory as the above will alter the whole trend of our theology. Men may well call it a "*new theology*," because through such a theory everything in theology gets changed. Sin, it will be found, changes its character and loses its gravity and heinousness. Guilt, in the Scriptural sense, practically disappears. For how can God condemn that which is the direct and necessary result of His own handiwork in man? Instead of speaking of the "fall" of man it is now necessary to speak of the "rise" of man. The fall is a "fall upwards." Instead of blaming man for what he is, and speaking of a divine "condemnation" resting on the race, we can only marvel at the marvellous progress man has made by his own efforts. The old idea of redemption must be given up, and Christ be viewed simply as the apex of a universal revolutionary process!

The question, however, in the end comes to be: *Is the theory true?* There is no use in meeting theories which claim to be based on scientific grounds with denunciation and ridicule. The theory must be faced with facts, if satisfaction is to be brought to thinking minds. The thing wanted is the truth. And if appeal is made to facts, are not anthropology and evolution against us?

On this point, as I said before, I have no quarrel with the doctrine of evolution as such ; only with certain forms of it. I have no quarrel with that doctrine so far as it is scientifically established. But this I do say with great confidence, that, *within the limits* in which it has been shown to have real scientific basis, evolution does *not* compel us to accept any such doctrine of the origin and primitive state of man as I have described. Evolution, as I said earlier, is not Darwinism, and the Darwinian idea of the production of man by slow gradations from lower ape-like forms is one which I think is being discredited on scientific grounds. Evolution, it is coming to be seen with greater clearness, has its well-marked limits. Not only must it always be regarded as having behind it creative, organising intelligence, working in and through it ; but it must make room within its process for the introduction of new potencies, new factors, which can only be referred directly to the great Creative Cause.

Now, there are evolutionists not a few who take this ground in respect of *man's mind.* Man's mind, they tell us, cannot be accounted for without a special cause ; but they think his body can. They hand over the body to the laws of evolution, and bring in a Creative Cause to explain the mind. I have always felt that there is a logical inconsistency in this supposition. There is such a connection between man's mind and man's body—between mind and organisation—that the idea of an abrupt rise on the side of mind without a corresponding rise of organism is utterly untenable. Allow, as many evolutionists do, that God's power must be brought in to explain the mind of man, then you cannot take this mind and put it into the brain of an anthropoid ape. You need a brain which will be a suitable receptacle for it. If a rise takes place on the spiritual side you must have a corresponding rise on *the organic side*—in other words, you must postulate

the founding of a new order of things—a new kingdom in humanity, *both* on the spiritual and on the bodily side. This just brings us back to the old Bible doctrine of God's creation of man.

When, moreover, you turn to science, you find that the facts bear out what is here alleged. It is vain to speak of science demonstrating the slow development of man from the anthropoid ape, for it does no such thing. There is no proof of this in science up till the present hour. There is no evidence of any such gradual process. On the contrary, there remains in nature *an abrupt fall* from the human brain to the ape brain, or, putting it the other way, a sudden rise from the ape brain to the human brain, which science cannot bridge over, and which corresponds to the mental and spiritual rise in man. Go back as far as you like—take the oldest skulls yet found—you will find the poorest of them matched by human skulls of to-day, while some are skulls which, as Huxley said, might have contained the brains of a philosopher. We hear, indeed, from time to time of the discovery of "The Missing Link." There was the famous Java case—the best yet produced—but scientific men of the highest rank early pronounced its claims unfounded.

I close, then, by repeating that, so far as knowledge goes, there is no fact in science which comes into conflict with the Bible doctrine of the origin of man, or with the doctrine of the original purity of man. For anything science has to say to the contrary, man may have come from the hand of his Creator truly bearing his image—in a state of intellectual soundness and moral integrity—as the Bible declares he did ; and, if he is now found otherwise, it can only be ascribed to his voluntary disobedience —to a "fall." I have spoken of these ancient skulls, and of the antiquity assigned to some of them. We read in books of 500,000 years or 200,000 years as the period

of man's abode upon earth. There is no need for Christian people taking alarm at these exaggerated estimates. Science itself is rapidly retrenching them. Careful calculations based on the rate of retrocession of Niagara Falls, and on similar facts, show that these immense periods must be cut down to quite reasonable dimensions. But this is an aspect of the subject on which it is unnecessary to dwell.

VI

Man and Sin: Man's Need as a Sinner

Man and Sin:

Man's Need as a Sinner

IF man was made in the image of God, and originally bore his Creator's moral likeness, very plainly he is not in that state now. That image is broken, defaced, defiled. Its elements may be there in man's rational and moral constitution, but it has lost its character of actual moral resemblance. The gold has become dim; the fine gold is changed (Sam. iv. 1). If this is the case a great change for the worse must have come over man, the explanation of which can only be found in a "fall," or voluntary defection from the state of rectitude in which God created him.

This is in truth the explanation which the Bible gives of man's existing sinful condition. He is *a fallen being*. Sin is a fact of universal experience, and if there were not this story of the fall of man in the beginning of the Bible we should, for the explanation of our own experience, and the world's condition, require to postulate such a story, and put it at the beginning of the Bible for ourselves. So we may be glad that it is there. It stands at the commencement, and furnishes the key to that moral condition of man on which the whole doctrine of salvation is built. Without it man's sin would remain an unsolved riddle.

Before looking at the origin of sin, it is well to look carefully at its nature, and make sure that we have a clear idea of what sin *is*. Sin, we discover, in the Bible sense, is that which absolutely *ought not to be* in God's world. This cuts the Bible clear away at the outset from all those theories which make sin a necessary result of man's nature and moral development, an inevitable stage in his progress. The necessity may be "metaphysical," or it may be "evolutionary," as when man is represented as starting off from a brute condition; but in any form it is a contradiction of the true idea of sin. Sin is that which ought not to be *at all*. It has throughout the Bible a volitional and *catastrophic* character. It is the tragedy of the universe; a departure from the normal in the history of the race; something against which the holy God must from eternity to eternity declare Himself in wrath and judgment. It is the abominable thing that God hates (Jer. xliv. 4). That is the idea of sin which pervades all Scripture.

If we inquire, further, into *the principle* or essence of this evil thing—sin—we can best understand it by its contrast to the good. The principle of good-willing is *love to God*. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment" (Matt. xxii. 37, 38). Acts springing from this principle are "godly," and these only, in the estimate of God, are *good*. Sin, as the contrast to this, consists essentially in the rejection or throwing off of the authority of God, and the taking into the will of a principle which is the opposite of this—the principle of *self*-will, of life for self, or, as we may express it, of *egoism*. Sin is not simply the choice of the world instead of God, though it includes this, but is something deeper—the setting up of self as an end or law to self, in place of making God's

will our law. Instead of life being, as it ought to be, a life from God to God, it is now a life from self to self. God's law is to be obeyed only so far as it suits self to obey it. Sin, therefore, as the Bible constantly affirms, is in essence *godlessness*. It is the setting up of a false independence of the creature, and results in the soul's passing over from love of God to love and service of the world. "Give me the portion of thy substance that falleth to me," said the Prodigal to his father (Luke xv. 12); then, when he got his desire, he went into the "far country" (ver. 13). Here is the eternal history of sin in its essence and results.

The egoistic principle which lies in all sin is not indeed always equally manifest, and seldom is permitted to reveal itself in its full enormity. Its presence and operation, in actual life, may be *manifoldly veiled*. There are checks and forces of many kinds in nature and society—the action of conscience, restraints of public opinion, force of custom, considerations of prudence, influences of the Spirit of God, which counteract its working and hinder its visible manifestation; which, therefore, hide from the subject of it, and from the on-looker, its real character and heinousness. In social sins—*e.g.*, the element of good fellowship and joviality may conceal the egoism that lurks behind. The principle is there, however, and leers out in the heartless selfishness of the drunkard or profligate. Just in proportion as sin develops, its God-denying and self-exalting principle becomes more apparent. In spiritual sins, as pride, covetousness, envy, it is more manifest than in fleshly sins. In more advanced wickedness, as malice, hate, deliberate cruelty, its diabolic character is revealed without disguise. Finally, in open and conscious hate and blasphemy of God its ultimate principle, as "enmity against God" (Rom. viii. 7), is laid bare.

II.

If this be the inward principle of sin, it is not difficult to see how terrible and ruinous must be *its effects*. One of the first effects is necessarily the subversion of the normal constitution of man's nature, in which reason, conscience, and the fear of God ought to rule, and the raising to a position of *undue ascendency* of the lower and sensuous impulses. From being "spiritual," man becomes "psychical"—"soulish.' Not only, however, are these lower principles raised to wrongful ascendency. Sin, which cut the bond between the soul and God, cuts also the bond between the principles in the soul itself, so that these principles, which before worked together in due subordination and harmony, now work in *disorderly* ways (Rom. vii. 5). We have now disorder, turbulence, anarchy, in the soul—a state of "lawlessness" (*anomia*), as the Scripture sometimes describes it (1 John iii. 4, R.V.). As a result, there is a *bondage* of the spirit to the lower or carnal impulses, so that even when man would do good, he feels himself impotent. The "law of the mind" may make its protests, but the "law of sin and death" prevails (Rom. vii. 14-25.)

The natural and inevitable result of sin, therefore, is a *depravation* of the whole nature. The "depravity" of human nature, still more the assertion of "total" depravity, is a doctrine loudly protested against by the enlightenment of modern times. Man, it is declared, is essentially good. There is a divine spark within him, which only needs to be developed. "Depravity" is a libel on his nature. It is not questioned that depraved men exist, but they are the wretches of humanity, and do not represent the general condition. Depravity, all the same, is a dark and terrible fact. There is no man

living who is not "very far gone from original righteousness." The doctrine in question is, indeed, misunderstood when the adjective "total" is held to imply that every human being is as bad as he can be, or that there are not natural virtues, and even beautiful and lovable traits in characters that are yet unregenerate. This would contradict experience. Jesus, beholding the young ruler, "loved" him (Mark x. 21). Paul testifies that "the barbarians" of Melita showed him "no common kindness" (Acts xxviii. 2). Paul himself, before his conversion, was upright and sincere. "Total" here does not mean that every part of man is as corrupt as it can be, but that no part has escaped depravation or corruption (*totus*, in the sense of "in every part"). Sin is in the nature, and its perverting, depraving, defiling influences pervade it all. Life is poisoned in its springs; the fountain in the heart is "evil" (Matt. xv. 19).

III.

If this is a true description of sin, and of the state of human nature under its influence, it needs no proof that sin cannot be a thing willed by God, or part of the constitution of the world as God made it. We are brought back, therefore, to the point from which we started, in the idea of *a fall*. The same thing follows from the *universality* of sin—its presence and reign in all humanity. There is no truth on which the Bible is more emphatic, or which experience more clearly confirms, than that sin is universal. "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23). Such defection must be carried back to the beginning of the race, else how should *all* the streams in the family of mankind be impure? It is sometimes objected that the idea of a fall is unknown to the writers of the Old Testament after the

third chapter of Genesis. It would be truer to say that it is the presupposition on which the whole picture of a world turned aside from God, and in rebellion against Him, in the Old Testament, rests (*cf.* Gen. vi. 5, 6, 11, 12; viii. 21; Ps. xiv., &c.). The story of the fall stands at the beginning, where it should be, and rules the entire description of mankind that follows.

The narrative of the fall in Genesis, therefore, is *no myth*, but a deep, historical truth, which no critical theories, or differences in the mode of interpretation, can ever touch. It is not an invention, but the record of a catastrophe that really happened in the beginning of the history of our race, the shuddering memory of which was never lost in the grey ages of primitive humanity. We have already seen how much of that primitive history science and discovery themselves tend to restore. The unity of the race, man as made in God's image, the need of special creative action to account for man's mental and bodily endowments, the very scene of his origin—for no region can be pointed to for the origin of man so likely as just this neighbourhood of the Euphrates and Tigris, in which Eden was situated—the presumption of his original purity, &c. That man knew God in the beginning, and that he was placed by God under a dispensation suited to his condition, involving tests of his obedience, for the furtherance of his moral development; that life would have been the result of his fidelity, and that death (foreign to his nature), with all the other evils, inner and outer, that sin entails, was the issue of his failure—this seems to be the most reasonable explanation we can even yet give of the actual state in which the world is found. It is at least the explanation which Scripture gives in both Old Testament and New (Gen. ii. 15-17; iii.; Rom. v. 12 *ff*; 1 Tim. iii. 13, 14). It suits modern thinking to deny the "fall"; to speak

rather of "rise" and "development"; but this depends on views of the origin and primal condition of man which have already been rejected.

One feature in this Genesis story of the fall of man we cannot ignore—viz., that sin entered our world not wholly through man's own act, or through bare solicitations of sense, but through the temptation of an *evil superhuman power*. That this is the real meaning of the temptation by the serpent—take it literally, or take it symbolically, as one will—I cannot doubt. It is also the interpretation put on the event by later Scripture, which recognises the existence of an evil spiritual world, with "Satan," or "the Devil," described as the prince, or god, or ruler of this world, at its head, continually active in withstanding good and ensnaring into sin (*cf.* John i. 6 *ff.*, ii. 1 *ff.*; Zech. iii. 1, 2; Matt. iv. 1-11; xii. 23-29; xiii. 19; John viii. 44, xiv. 30, xvi. 11; 2 Cor. iv. 4; Eph. ii. 2, vi. 12; Rev. xii. 9, &c,). That the serpent in Genesis is not simply the animal, but is identified with this power of evil, is manifest from the fact that this serpent not only talks, but *talks evil*, insinuates distrust of God's word, and tempts to disobedience. No such wickedness belonged to God's good creation. The truth taught is that it is not on earth only that evil is met with. There is a spiritual kingdom of evil older than man, the agencies of which are mysteriously permitted to operate in our world, with which every man has, as Jesus Himself had, to contend in his struggle for the good. It is enough for the guarantee of this truth as against modern denials that we find it in the consciousness of Jesus as one of His deepest certainties. I feel assured that in a matter so vitally connected with His mission Jesus was not, and could not be, in ignorance or error.

IV.

The fall into sin of the first man had necessarily its effects on his posterity. Here we encounter the mysterious fact of *racial sin*, or, as it is more commonly called, *original sin*, with the other evils that flow to the race from the transgression of its natural head. "Through one man," Paul says, "sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned" (Romans v. 12). In the succeeding verses the Apostle dwells on the representative position of Adam, through whose one offence the many were made sinners (v. 19), to illustrate the principle on which righteousness and life come to us through Christ.

A great difficulty is naturally often felt here; for how is this subjection of a whole race to sin and death for the offence of its first progenitor to be justified under the government of a good and holy God? The only ground, I would reply, on which it can be justified is by taking into account the *organic constitution* of the race. Science comes here to our help with its doctrine of heredity, and the increasing stress it lays on the organic unity of mankind; but the fact itself is evident. There are, so far as we can judge, only two principles on which conclusively a moral society could be constituted. One is the principle of strict *individualism* — each individual created separately, and standing or falling by himself, with strictly limited responsibility. Such, we may suppose, is the constitution of the angels (Matt. xxii. 30).

But humanity is constituted on a different principle— the *organic*. Here there is a race evolved, in successive generations, from a single head, in whom, at the beginning, the whole race was potentially contained. In itself this constitution is the most beneficent of all. Designed for good, it hands down benefits to the well-

doers in ever increasing ratio. On the other hand, when sin enters, it is as if an engine were reversed, and the powers that wrought for good become as potent to hand down evil. Hence the inevitable ruin of the fall. The disturbance introduced by the first sin, the loss of original righteousness, the alienation from God which ensued, could not stop with the first transgressor. The effects descend. Through our connection with the fallen stock, we each bring with us into the world a tainted nature, a propensity to evil, a tendency to resistance to the law and the authority of God, which early manifests itself in actual transgression. The gifts and graces which man possessed while he stood in his integrity are wanting to us. There is an evil *nature*, which calls for a complete renewal, if man is to be made holy (Ps. li. 5, 10; Ezek. xi. 19).

The state into which the fall has brought man is one of depravation and bondage, but even this, with the actual sin which proceeds from it, does not sum up the whole misery of man's condition. There is yet to be taken into account, as completing the view of sin, the awful fact of *guilt*. Sin is not simply disease and slavery; it is wrong-doing, disobedience, transgression of law, and, as such, is condemnable and punishable. Every sinner, in his own conscience, is aware that sin is not an innocuous thing; that he is answerable for it to God; that it is something which exposes him to God's righteous judgment. He feels himself *guilty*. However bravely he may carry it off outwardly, in his inner thoughts he cannot escape the feeling of self-blame, reproach, the stings of remorse, the fear of coming wrath. The heathen, Paul says, "show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them" (Rom. ii. 15). The consequence is that men naturally *fear* God—

dread the thought of Him. Felix "was terrified" when Paul reasoned with him of "the judgment to come" (Acts xxiv. 25).

This is the *natural* sense of guilt. Much more is this consciousness of guilt intensified when sin is lifted up into the light of the "holy, and righteous, and good" law of God" (Rom. vii. 12). "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things" (1 John iii. 20). This is the awful fact about sin that, wheresoever and in whomsoever it is found, it lays the soul in which it is found under the *divine judgment.* "What things soever the law saith," declares Paul, "it speaketh to them that are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God" (Rom. iii. 19). From the very nature of His holiness God must react against sin to judge and punish it. A race that is fallen and sinful must, by that very fact, lie under a divine "condemnation"; and this, the Bible, in the most emphatic terms, declares that it does (John iii. 16-19, 36; Rom. v. 12-21, vi. 23, viii. 1, &c.). This condemnation which rests upon our world man can do nothing by his own efforts to remove (Rom. iii. 20).

The punitive energy of God put forth against sin is described as His "wrath" (Rom. i. 18, ii. 5), and that wrath rests on everyone in the state of nature (John iii. 36; Eph. ii. 3). The judgment which proceeds from this wrath is summed up in Scripture in the comprehensive word, "*death.*" "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 17). "The soul that sinneth it shall die" (Ezek. xviii. 20). "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23). In this is unquestionably included, in the sense of Scripture—*natural* death, with all its attendant miseries and evils (Gen. ii. 17, iii. 17-19; Rom. vi. 12); for it has already been seen that death is

never regarded as something natural and normal to man, but as the separation of two parts of his being which go to make up the complete man; which, therefore, God never meant to be sundered. But outward death is only the manifestation and consequence of something more inward and terrible that had already taken place—*spiritual* death to holiness and the favour of God. "The mind of the flesh," Paul says, "is death" (Rom. viii. 6). "You did He make alive, when ye were dead through trespasses and sins" (Eph. ii. 2). "She that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim. vi. 6). But even physical death, ensuing on this, is not the end, but only the prelude. Behind looms the final doom of the soul in separation from God and blessedness—*eternal* death. After death comes the judgment (Heb. ix. 27). This is "the second death" (Rev. xx. 14)—the eternal loss of the soul; rather, since it succeeds the resurrection, of soul and body together—of the whole being (*cf.* Matt. x. 28).

V.

The picture thus drawn of human ruin through sin is assuredly most terrible. But it is precisely this state of depravity, of bondage, of guilt, with the utter misery and helplessness into which it plunges man which constitutes man's *need of redemption*, and which the redemption of the Gospel is designed to meet, and does meet in all its parts. It was before remarked that there is no book which exalts man so highly as the Bible does, in representing him as made in the image of God, and capable of eternal life; and no book which abases man so utterly in depicting the depths of his fall and apostasy from God. But the glory of the Bible is that, over against the developing sin and corruption of the race, it presents, almost from its first page, the developing

purpose of God for man's salvation. The Bible is, as Jonathan Edwards called it, "the history of redemption." It is the unfolding of God's great purpose of grace for the redemption of man from sin. This is the thread that runs through it all, and binds all its parts together; and the right clue to the understanding of the Bible is only given when it is read in this light.

It is here that so much of our modern study of the Bible goes astray. An immense amount of labour is spent on non-essential things, while the essential thing is neglected. Criticism is good and necessary; but, because of this neglect of the central idea, we have speculation after speculation, a groping about as of blind men, without the door into the real meaning of the book ever being found. Elaborate statistical tables of the critical constituents of the books—which is all we often get, especially of the books of the Old Testament—can never take the place of the study of the Bible as the message of God's method of salvation. Out in the country, among the hills, one sometimes comes across a solitary fisher. The sun is shining, the birds are singing, the mountains are towering around him, but he sees and hears nothing of it all. His soul is absorbed in that little fish, and how he is to get it to take his fly or worm. All the rest has passed from his thoughts for the time. One is irresistibly reminded of this enthusiast when one sees the critic bending with his microscope over the smallest details of textual analysis, while the great mountain heights of God's word—the things that chiefly concern —are left almost wholly out of view!

I have said that the Bible doctrine of redemption is intended to meet our need in *all its parts*. This has the more to be insisted on, that our human experience of that need is always imperfect and limited. It is not every man that realises equally, or in its full extent, the great-

ness of the need that arises from sin. People are differently constituted. They have their different experiences, and have been brought to feel their need in different ways. One thing in the Gospel appeals to one person, another to another person. One man, *e.g.*, is specially laid hold of by the idea of the *guilt* that is in sin; of his exposure through sin to the anger and judgment of a holy God. His cry, like that of the Philippian jailor, is: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts xvi. 30). He yearns for pardon, for forgiveness. Another man, just as true as he, but differently constituted, has, of course, some realisation of the guilt of sin—I do not suppose that anyone really convinced of sin can be without it—but what lays hold on him most is the *uncleanness* of sin. It fills him with self-loathing to discover the impurity of sin, and his cry is supremely for sanctification, for holiness. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit withim me" (Ps. li. 10). In comparison with this the other side of guilt and danger is almost lost sight of. That beautiful soul, Henry Drummond, was, I think, very much of this type. Drummond's soul went out in the line of sanctification, and he had little to say about some other doctrines, *e.g.*, the atonement. I think his theology was one-sided and defective; but it illustrates how it may be given to one man to see with greater clearness one aspect of the truth of redemption, and to another man to see another part. Henry Drummond had certainly a rare insight into the need of sanctification, and wrote many beautiful things on it. Other men, again, are more impressed with the *helplessness* and *bondage* of sin. They are in the grasp of an evil habit, and their cry is for power to overcome it. "Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24).

All these are Scriptural aspects of sin, and of the need of redemption that results from it. But it is the glory of

the Bible that its redemption meets the *whole* need of man, and leaves no aspect of that need outside of it. It comes to meet the need of man not simply as individuals happen to feel it, but the need of our whole humanity, as God sees it, and probes it to its depths. It meets the need of purging from guilt, of pardon, of sanctification, of deliverance from inward bondage, of spiritual power. It reveals itself, the more we study it, as an "all-round" Gospel—a key that fits into every ward of the complicated lock of our spiritual need through sin. In this it approves itself to be divine.

VII

Christ and Salvation: General View The Redeemer

Christ and Salvation: General View—The Redeemer

THERE is an expression used by Paul which may fitly introduce this new branch of our subject. He speaks of "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii. 24). It has been seen how deplorable is the state into which sin has brought man—how evil it is, as a state of *depravity* and *bondage;* how awful it is, as a state of *guilt*, and of exposure to divine wrath; how universal it is, as not simply individual, but *racial*, in its effects; how terrible it is, in its *eternal* consequences. Redemption—the provision which God has made for the salvation of the world—has to meet this state of man in all its parts. It is the fact that it does meet it which is the secret of the perennial power of the Gospel. "He that made that Book made me," was a remark once made upon the Bible. Apart from all external attestation, the Gospel has a sure witness in the heart of every man to whom it is preached. "Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. iv. 2).

I.

It will be convenient, in unfolding this subject, that I begin with a point of view which has already been before us—I refer to the *organic constitution* of the race. Sin, as we saw, is an organic thing. In the connection of the

first Adam with his descendants, there is a representative principle involved. "In Adam all die" (1 Cor. xv. 22). It follows that, if redemption is to meet this aspect of the case, it must deal with the world organically. The representative principle must enter here also. And so, if we take the testimony of Scripture, it does. "As in Adam all die, *so also* in Christ shall all be made alive." The "alls" here, indeed, are limited as to actual result by their respective spheres—all "in" Adam through natural relation; all "in" Christ through spiritual relation. But the organic principle is the same in both.

This is specially the view of the matter wrought out in the remarkable parallel between *Adam and Christ* in Rom. v. 12-19. Adam in his representative capacity is the figure or type of Christ in His. There is not a separate redemption for each individual. Redemption is on the principle of a new Head of the race, of a new righteousness won for man by Christ, of a new life communicated through union with Him (vv. 15-19).

This, it seems to me, is an exceedingly valuable and helpful point of view in dealing with the difficulties which many feel about the Christian salvation. It has been seen how, through the organic constitution of the race, there is of necessity a suffering of many for the sins of others. The drunkard, *e.g.*, not only breaks his wife's heart, and reduces his children to penury, but transmits to his offspring a diseased organism. With profound truth, the Apostle says: "None of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself" (Rom. xiv. 7). You say: "This is very hard, that one should be made to suffer for another's wrong-doings." It is hard, though it flows from a constitution which, as before shown, is, in its normal working, a wholly beneficent one. It is, in any case, the law under which we are obviously placed.

But now, is it not just here that we begin to get a

glimpse of *the solution* of the problem of salvation? For, if it lies in the organic constitution of things that *evil* should be handed down from one generation to another—the innocent being made to suffer for the sins of the guilty—is it not the necessary counterbalance of this idea, that *good* also should be handed down from one to another—that many should benefit through the good of one? In ordinary life we see this principle continually recognised. It is not the evil only that men do that entails consequences. The good they do affects those connected with them as well. A son, *e.g.*, inherits title and estates as the reward of his sire's or grandsire's services to the nation. The righteousness of the good brings blessing to the sinful. Is it not reasonable that in the Gospel we should have this same great idea of the benefiting of the many through the righteousness of the One? It has been seen how Paul teaches that through this law of organic connection the whole race is involved in sin and death by the disobedience of one. Is it not part of the same constitution that there should be restoration by the obedience of One? We discover, in short, that there is a wider law in the divine government than that which regards mankind solely as individuals—viz., the *organic*—and on that law the divine procedure with our race is based, both in judgment and in mercy.

II.

Restoration by the obedience of One! Yes; but *where is the One* who is capable of taking this position and effecting this work? Capable of turning back this terrible stream of evil that has come into the world through sin, and of bringing in redemption and salvation? This is the question that presses for an answer. It needs no proof, I think, that this is not a work which anyone, or everyone, could undertake, or, undertaking it, could

accomplish with success. Could any ordinary son of Adam—any member, *i.e.*, of the race that was to be saved —take upon him such a task? There is the initial bar that such an one is himself a sinful being, involved in the disabilities of our fallen humanity; one, therefore, who, instead of becoming the Redeemer of the world—the source of a new life to the race—requires himself to be redeemed. But apart from this, could such an ordinary member of the race, even if sinless—a mere individual among others—take up this absolutely unique position of representing the whole race before God, and of transacting with God for its redemption? The question, surely, has only to be asked to be answered.

No: this position of *representative of man* and world's Redeemer is not one that can be arbitrarily assumed. It must rest on some real relation which subsists between the race represented and the person who represents it. Adam, *e.g.*, sustained a natural relation to his posterity—one which made his standing or falling a true representative act in regard to his descendants. The Restorer of the race must be One whose relation is equally real, or even deeper and more fundamental. He must have in Him the possibility of being truly a new Adam—a new Head and Representative of mankind—not in any fictional or merely "federal," but in a most real sense; One who stands in a relation to God and to humanity which no other does; who stands in such a relation to God that He can represent God perfectly to men, and in such a relation to humanity that He can transact for man with God; who can be in a real and proper sense a *Mediator* between God and man.

This brings us to the question of who the Redeemer in the divine economy of redemption in the Gospel actually is. *Who is this Christ* whom we honour with the name Saviour? The present is an age of attempts at humani-

tarian interpretations of the Person of Christ. Is Jesus, then, mere man—albeit the noblest and holiest of men—one individual of the race—a single offshoot of humanity like others? Or is He something more: One who in the root of His Personality is divine—who sustains a relation to God, to the world, and to humanity, which antecedes all time—who, in truth, was the Creator of all things—but who, for us and our salvation, in pursuance of the Father's counsel, condescended in His infinite grace and love to become man, and to stoop to suffering and death for our salvation? This latter is the faith of the Church about Christ; it is, as will be seen, the teaching of the Scriptures; it is also, I venture to affirm, the only doctrine which gives what is needed as an adequate support for the work of human salvation.

To be convinced of this, think only again of *what redemption means*. To remove the burden of the world's guilt; to perfectly reconcile God and man; to be the Mediator of forgiveness to the race, and Source to it of a new, eternal life; to be all that Christ has proved Himself to be to humanity of strength, of hope, of comfort, of joy, of holiness; to open to believers the gates of heavenly glory; surely it must be felt that this is infinitely too heavy a burden to be laid on the shoulders of any mere man! In the Scriptural view there is a proportion and consistency between the work to be done and the Person who is to do it. In this the harmony of Scripture doctrine is again evinced. In the Being of God we saw there is a Trinity which lays the foundation for the possibility of the incarnation of the Son. In the relation of the divine Son to the world, and specially to humanity, in the creation, is grounded the possibility of a unique relation to our race—a *relation "sui generis"*—deeper and more fundamental than any other. Christ's relation to men is unspeakably closer than that of the natural Adam. Adam

was the *physical* progenitor of the race (1 Cor. xv. 45, 47). The Divine Word is the *root* from which the whole race —even Adam himself—sprang. When, therefore, the Word entered humanity—" became flesh " (John i. 14)—His relation to the race was representative in the highest possible degree. If the saving of our race was possible through anyone taking upon himself the burden of its responsibilities, it was possible through Him. Nor can it be conceived that He should take our nature upon Him except on the assumption that redemption was possible, and with the design of accomplishing it.

In the light of the work of human redemption, then, the *incarnation* of the Son is seen to be an essential part of Christian doctrine. Many tendencies are at present in operation to weaken this doctrine—speculative and evolutionary theories, doctrines of divine immanence, a pantheistic identification of God and man, above all, the powerful bent in the spirit of the age towards a non-supernatural interpretation of the facts and truths of religion. In all directions, as already said, the attempt is being made to lower the doctrine of Christ to a more or less avowed humanitarian level. It is a necessity of the life of the Church to resist these tendencies, and to contend for a Christ who is as essentially divine in nature and Personality as He is human in His form of manifestation —who is the very Word of God become flesh (John i. 14).

Into the numerous subtle questions which have agitated the mind of the Church as to the *relations of the divine and human* in the one Person of Christ—as to how His divine and human natures are united—I cannot enter at any length. The more the question is considered, it will be found, I think, that the Church in its decisions on this profound mystery has done little more than reaffirm the essential fact to which faith must always hold fast—the

fact, viz., that in Jesus Christ we have at once *true man and true God*—one divine and human Christ, without dividing of His person (this against Nestorianism), or mutilating, or confusing of the natures (this against what is called Apollinarianism and Eutychianism), one Person, truly God, in being begotten by the Father before all worlds, and truly man in the possession of a true human body and a true soul. To these essential positions the Church universal unswervingly adhered, warding off denials on one side or on another as they arose, and seeking language which would unambiguously, however imperfectly, express the truth affirmed. It is natural to plead for new "constructions," or to claim to be free from *all* constructions. Commonly, however, the real issue in these contentions will be discovered to be, as of old, *the essential Deity* of Him whom we call Lord, and the choice will remain, as before, between the assertion of Christ's oneness in essence with the Father, or the descent, through various intermediate forms of negation, to undisguised humanitarianism.

III.

It has been stated that the Incarnation, in the sense defined, is the undeniable *doctrine of Scripture*, just as we have seen it to be the necessary presupposition of the redeeming work Christ came to do. Part of the proof, as respects the *divine* side of Christ's person, has been already given under the doctrine of the Trinity. There the equality in nature of the Son with the Father and the Holy Spirit was shown to be involved in the whole New Testament teaching on salvation. It is not denied by impartial exegetes that passages abound in which the highest names, attributes, works, and honours of God are ascribed to Christ. He was in the beginning with God, and was God (John i. 1); was in the "form of

God" (Phil. ii. 6); pre-existed before all time—was eternal (John xvii. 5; Col. i. 17; Rev. i. 17); created and upholds all things (John i. 2; Col. i. 16, 17; Heb. i. 2, 3, 10, &c.); is named God (Acts xx. 28; Rom. ix. 5; Heb. i. 8); is worshipped as God (Rev. v. 12, 13); is exalted to universal dominion (Phil. ii. 9-11; Eph. i. 20-23; 1 Pet. iii. 22).

If it is argued, as it sometimes is, that this is a late apostolic development, not found in the simpler representation of Jesus in *the Synoptic Gospels*, the reply is, that the Synoptic Gospels came from the hands of the very men who held and taught the Apostolic doctrine, and that they saw no contrariety in the representations. The picture in the Synoptic Gospels, not less than that in the Epistles, is the picture of a Person superhuman in origin, character, claims, endowments, work, and destiny. Born of a Virgin, free from all sin, announced as the Messiah who should baptise with the Holy Spirit (Matt. iii. 11), Founder and Lord of the Kingdom of heaven, Saviour from sin (Matt. i. 21; Luke ii. 11; xix. 10, &c.), future Judge of the world (Matt. vii. 21-23; xxv. 31 *ff.*), Fulfiller of Prophecy and Goal of Old Testament Revelation (Matt. v. 17; Mark ix. 12; Luke xxiv. 27, 44, &c.), controlling nature by His word, rising from the dead, with His disciples everywhere to the end of the world (Matt. xviii. 20; xxviii. 20)—it will be difficult to maintain that a less exalted Person than the Fourth Gospel and the Epistles depict is needed to sustain such dignity and such prerogatives! It is, as before seen, into Christ's name, equally with that of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, we are baptised—rather the threefold name is one (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

It is less necessary to dwell on the evidences of *the true humanity* of Christ, since this, in these days, is seldom disputed. The tendency is rather to resolve everything

into it. Jesus was born a true man (Gal. iv. 4); He grew from childhood to manhood, developing in wisdom as in stature (Luke ii. 40, 52); He hungered, He thirsted, He was weary, He was tempted; He was made in all things like unto His brethren; "yet without sin" (Rom. viii. 3; Heb. ii. 14, 17; iv. 15). He died upon the Cross, and was buried (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4). Every view of Jesus which detracts from the entire reality of His humanity—whether by pronouncing it a semblance (thus the Gnostics), or by saying that the divine Logos took the place of the rational soul in Jesus (Apollinaris), or by denying the reality of Christ's human development, and His voluntary assumption of human limitations—is shown by the facts of the Gospel history to be in error.

IV.

How, it may naturally be asked, can such *apparently contrary aspects* in Christ's Person co-exist? God and man; in the "form of a servant," yet as God retaining His undiminished power and glory; on earth, yet "the Son of Man who is in heaven" (John iii. 13). We are not called upon to solve these problems; nor does belief in the divine fact depend upon our power to solve them. Probably if we could sound the depths of our own personality we should find that mysteries enough are contained there also—seemingly contradictory aspects, depths that connect in strange ways with the invisible world, which our ordinary consciousness does not pierce. We read of "oversoul," of "subliminal consciousness," of "multiple personality"; a pantheistic philosophy will even have it that each finite personality is a "reproduction" of an "eternal consciousness" with which it is in nature identical. This is *not* true of each finite personality, else every man would be God, as Christ was. But it is strange that such statements should be made, yet

difficulty be felt at the co-existence of different modes of being in the one Personality of whom it *is* true.

One thing which may help to relieve difficulties on this point is that man and God are *in nature akin.* Man was made in God's image. His nature is receptive of the divine; of believers it is even said that they "become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4). Humanity, as a whole, it was before seen, has its ground and origin in the Logos (John i. 3-11). There lies, therefore, in the very constitution of man, the possibility of such personal union with God as is involved in the Incarnation. The Logos, or Son, in assuming our nature, only takes to Himself what was His own, and makes it the vehicle of His personal manifestation.

There is another way which, in modern times, has been attempted of removing the difficulty of the two states of Christ's being while on earth, viz., by affirming a complete surrender of all divine functions, and even of divine consciousness, by the Son, during the period of His earthly humiliation. This is the so-called "*Kenotic*" *theory* of the incarnation. It is based on the statement in Phil ii. 6, 7, that the Son, "existing in the form of God," voluntarily "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." This is taken to mean that, during His earthly life, the Son ceased to exist in the form of God, even as respects His heavenly existence. The place of the Son in the life of the Godhead was for the time suspended. The Son gave up His glory, even His self-consciousness, and consented to be born as an unconscious babe in Bethlehem. He grew into the consciousness of His Godhead, as He grew into the knowledge of His Messianic dignity. Only after His resurrection and exaltation did He resume—now in our humanity—the glory He before had with the Father. The difficulties in the way of this conception of the temporary obliteration

of consciousness and activity on the part of one of the members of the Holy Trinity appear insuperable. The Son's relation to the universe—not to say to the Godhead—is not of the contingent, unessential kind that could be suspended at will. "In Him all things consist" (Col. i. 17)—"Upholding all things by the word of His power" (Heb. i. 3). These are not functions that could be arbitrarily abdicated. Nor is this meaning required by the terms in Phil. ii. 7. The "emptying" of Christ has relation, not to His divine mode of existence, but to His earthly humiliation. He, the Son of God, took upon Him "the form of a servant," and, voluntarily renouncing all prerogatives of Godhead, submitted to poverty, suffering, rejection, ignominious death. In this, surely, there is "kenosis" enough to satisfy the most exacting.

V.

But what, it will still be asked, of the state of humiliation itself? If, in becoming man, Christ voluntarily forebore the use of His divine prerogatives; submitting to the conditions and limitations of a real humanity—"*growing* in wisdom and stature"—how does this bear upon His *human knowledge*, and especially on the ascription to Him by many in modern days of ignorance and positive error? There is no more dangerous type of error than that which consists in the abuse of a truth; and the abuse of the admitted truth of Christ's submission, in knowledge, as in other things, to the limitations of a real humanity, is a signal illustration of the danger. It has opened the door to an imputation, ever growing freer and more reckless, of ignorance and mistake in our Lord's judgments, which goes far to annul His authority as a Teacher altogether. It is allowed, no doubt, by some, that on the central parts of His message—those directly connected with His Messianic mission—His teaching may

be accepted; but the line is very wavering between essential and unessential, and there are many qualifications. Much has still to be allowed for the influence of contemporary conceptions of Christ's views of God, the world, man, the Scriptures, Messiahship, the future. His eschatology must be put aside. The permanent religious element in His teachings must be disengaged from the forms, often *näive* and unscientific, in which His mind clothed it. The peril arising from the prevalence of this type of thinking is undoubtedly very great.

Let it be granted that, in His earthly state, Jesus submitted to such *limitations* as a true manhood imposed on Him. He neither claimed nor exercised, as man, an absolute omniscience in matters of natural, or even of divine knowledge. No one imagines that Jesus carried with Him through life, from manger to Cross, in his *human* consciousness (nothing is said here of His divine), a knowledge, *e.g.*, of all modern sciences—astronomy, geology, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and the like. Such things were foreign to His calling; He had no need of them, else they would have been given Him. On divine things such, *e.g.*, as the time of the Advent, He distinguishes between His own knowledge and that of His Father, who had set the times and seasons within His own authority (Acts i. 7), and says expressly: "Of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32). It is, however, a very wide and unwarrantable inference to draw from this, that on the things on which Christ *did* pronounce, His mind was in error. The conclusion to be deduced is rather the opposite. If Jesus had not the knowledge of the day and hour of the end, He said so, and gave no utterance on the subject. He was conscious of what He knew, and of what it was not given Him to know. Within His knowledge He spoke;

on what lay beyond He was silent. In what He did say His utterances were authoritative.

A first mistake in this theory, therefore, is the confusing of *ignorance* with *error*. If there was limitation of knowledge, it is assumed that there must be necessity of error. But this in no way follows in regard to the mind of the divine Son. That mind was unlike every other in being pure from every taint and flaw of sin in thought, will, or judgment. It was a pure mirror of the truth. Jesus even speaks of Himself as "*the* Truth." It was unlike every other, further, in being in absolute, constant touch with the Source of all truth. There was an intersphering of knowledge of Son and Father which has no possible analogy in anyone else. Think only of such utterances as these: "No one knoweth the Son save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him" (Matt. xi. 27). "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing. . . . For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth" (John v. 19, 20).

Is not this enough of itself to guard Christ in thought and in speech from error? It means that Christ's consciousness moved in *a sphere of revelation* as in its natural environment. There are other sayings that might be recalled, as "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: For He giveth not the Spirit by measure [unto Him]. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand" (John iii. 34, 35). Does this leave room at any point for error in Christ's consciousness? Finally, it is never to be forgotten that, while the Son submits to the conditions of humanity, it is still *the Son of God* who so submits, and behind all human conditionings are still present the undiminished resources of the Godhead. Omniscience, omnipotence, all other divine

attributes, are there, though not drawn upon, save as the Father willed them to be. Whatever the relation of divine and human in Christ's Person, they dare not be held so far apart as to allow of His falling into either sin or error.

We therefore conclude that, in all that relates to His Messianic work, Christ's humiliation deprived Him of nothing needed to constitute Him Perfect Revealer and Perfect Mediator.

VIII

Christ and Salvation: The Atonement

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IT has been seen that the doctrine of Christ's Person stands in indissoluble relation with the work He came to do as Redeemer. The Bible does not mock us by giving us a merely human Saviour—a mortal struggling with sin and weakness like ourselves. It gives us One who, in a true sense one with us, as entering into our nature and temptations, yet is, in His divine Personality, the "strong, eternal Son of God"—"mighty to save" (Is. lxiii. 1). We have seen how the doctrines of the Bible in this connection fit in together. We began with the doctrine of the Trinity, and the divinity of Christ in the heart of it. Now we see where the divinity of Christ comes in, in the doctrine of our salvation. This is where Unitarianism breaks down absolutely. It cannot yield us a Saviour adequate to our need. The question we now come to ask is: What has Christ done for human salvation? What specially has He done in making atonement for sin?

I.

It is well at this point to be on our guard against *unduly narrowing* the idea of Christ's redemption, as if the word "atonement" summed up the whole of it. It does not even sum up the whole of the *priestly* work of

Christ, for that is continued in His heavenly intercession for us (Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 25; 1 John ii. 1). Theology has been accustomed to sum up the redeeming work of Christ under the heads of the *three* great "offices" of "Prophet," "Priest," and "King," and there is scriptural warrant for this distinction. Christ is "Prophet" as the Revealer of God and of His will to men (Acts iii. 22); He is "King" as the Founder and Lord of the Kingdom of God (John xviii. 37). The prophetic office was mainly exercised on earth—though it is continued in the mission of the Spirit (John xiv. 16, 17; xv. 26; xvi. 13, 14), and the preaching of Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor. v. 20). The kingly office was exercised on earth, but is now specially and manifestly exercised in heaven, where Christ has been exalted to the throne of universal dominion (Acts ii. 34-36; Eph. i. 20-23; 1 Pet. iii. 22). It is as "the King" that the Son of Man will come in His glory at the judgment (Matt. xxv. 31, 34, 40).

Still, it is in the *work of atonement* for sins which Christ accomplished by His death that Scripture always concentrates the efficacy of His appearance for our salvation. It was there that "propitiation" was made for sin (Rom. iii. 25; Heb. ii. 17; 1 John ii. 2; iv. 10); that "reconciliation" was effected, and "peace" made between man and God (2 Cor. v. 18-21; Rom. v. 9, 11; Eph. ii. 13-17; Col. i. 20, 21); that the one "sacrifice" was offered by which sin has been for ever put away (Heb. ix. 26-28). The atonement is the basis on which the whole superstructure of redemption rests. To deny it is, in effect, to take the foundation from the Gospel.

Yet, strangely enough, it is this very doctrine, the glory of the Christian Gospel, which has been, in recent times, the object of special *disfavour* and *assault*. No one familiar with the currents of modern thought will deny that for many years there has been a very considerable

alienation of mind on the part of multitudes from the idea of expiatory atonement in connection with Christ's death. The doctrine is not preached as it used to be in our pulpits—certainly is not made the *centre* of preaching; or, if it is preached, it is generally with some new interpretation which one feels instinctively is not the meaning of the Apostles. I do not wait to analyse the causes of this dislike. It may be that the churches are themselves partly to blame, in giving the doctrine too formal and scholastic a cast; it may be that newer theories, in some cases, are attempts to find a place for aspects of truth that had been unduly neglected; it may be that the doctrine really stood in need of interpretation on lines more spiritual than had been customary.

In my own judgment the *principal cause* of aversion to the doctrine lies in a different direction—in the prevalence of philosophical and scientific theories which take the foundation from those Biblical doctrines which are the presuppositions of the doctrine of atonement, so compelling either its rejection, or a new and unscriptural interpretation of its meaning. That doctrine, however, can never really be extruded from the Gospel. Despite all that men can do or say, it is certain to come back—there are already many indications that it is coming back—and will as surely resume its place in the centre of the Gospel as the sun will rise in the heavens to-morrow!

II.

I have alluded to the drift of the mind of the age away from the *presuppositions* of the Biblical doctrine of atonement. This is a point on which there should be a clear understanding at the outset. There is no use studying the doctrine of atonement in the Bible unless we are prepared to do it in the light of the Bible's own presuppositions, especially in the light of its teaching on the

character and *holiness* of God, and on the *sin* of man. That God is holy—that He can never look on sin but with abhorrence and displeasure—can never call sin aught else but what it is, or tamper with the condemning testimony of His law against it; this on the one hand, and, on the other, that sin is sin, a thing inherently evil, condemnable, punishable, the result of voluntary transgression, laying the world and the individual transgressor under God's just condemnation, these are postulates of the doctrine of atonement without the admission of which the doctrine becomes meaningless. If these presuppositions of the doctrine are denied, or are displaced by some modern view which proceeds on opposite ideas, I despair of ever making the atonement appear real or reasonable.

Take, as examples, the two presuppositions that have been mentioned :—God's holiness and man's sin. Suppose that under the influence of some form of the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, the character of God as holy Judge of the world and Punisher of sin is called in question; or that, under the influence of some evolutionary theory of man's origin, the gravity of sin is minimised, its guilt extenuated, the condemnation of God resting on the sinner weakened; or that, on yet higher metaphysical grounds, sin is taken up into the world-process, and represented as a necessity of human development—an element in the life of God Himself—then, plainly, there is no basis left for a doctrine of atonement, and we need not wonder that men fight shy of it, or scoff at it.

It is on the basis of the Biblical conception—not on those of non-Biblical philosophical or scientific theories —that the study of the atonement is here approached. So approaching it, what must first strike the impartial student is, how *largely* and *vitally* this doctrine enters into the representations of both Old Testament and New.

Many, it is to be feared, who discuss the subject, have never taken the trouble to make a careful study of the Bible teaching in regard to it. They deal with it on general principles that commend themselves to their own minds, and pay little heed to what the Bible itself has to say on the matter. This is a mistake, for the Bible throughout has a definite and coherent doctrine on atonement for sin, and those who give attention to it will probably be surprised to find how uniform and unambiguous are its teachings.

III.

The doctrine of propitiatory atonement is deeply inwrought into the structure of the *Old Testament.*

1. It is found first and most prominently in the *doctrine of sacrifice,* which meets us from the beginning, and has, even in its simplest form, that of the burnt offering, an expiatory significance (*cf.* Job i. 5 ; xlii. 8-9). The blood, in which was the life, was a sacred thing, and, when presented to God, had a sin-covering efficacy (*cf.* Lev. xvii. 2). The covenants were ratified by sacrifice (Gen. viii. 20-23 ; ix. ; xv. ; Exod. xxiv. 5-8 ; *cf.* Heb. ix. 18-22). The blood of the passover lamb, sprinkled on the doorposts and lintels, protected the Israelites from the destroyer (Exod. xii. 7, 13, 22, 23). It is in the *Levitical ritual,* however, which there is no good reason for carrying down to post-exilian times, that the idea of propitiatory sacrifice attains to completed expression. Of divine appointment, the Levitical system is constructed for a definite end, that of mediating the approach of a people in whom there is sin to a holy God, and has, as a leading part of its design, the *making atonement,* or propitiation for sin. This is constantly declared of the sacrifices, except in the case of the peace-offerings, where, in the imposition of hands and sprinkling of the blood (Lev.

iii. 8), it is implied (Lev. i. 4; iv. 20, 26; v. 18, &c.). The word rendered "to atone" means literally "to cover," the idea being that the blood presented on the altar covered the person of the sinner, or covered his sin, from the eyes of the holy God (Lev. xvii. 11). On the great Day of Atonement, the blood of the sin-offering, shed for the sins of the people, was sprinkled upon the mercy-seat (Lev. xvi. 15, 16)—intercepting, as it were, the condemning testimony that rose up from the tables of the law beneath to God. The writer to the Hebrews illustrates with profound insight the significance of the law and the priesthood as at once a foreshadowing of good things to come, and a temporary institute which had not the power of itself to effect that which it foreshadowed (Chs. ix., x).

2. A different, but equally instructive, line of development is seen in the psalms and prophets in the delineation of *the righteous sufferer*, which culminates in the definite taking over of the sacrificial idea of the law upon the "Servant of the Lord" in Is. liii. In this wonderful chapter—the most explicit prediction of the sufferings and death of Christ in the Old Testament—you have a Righteous Sufferer too, one "despised and rejected of men" (ver. 3). But the distinctive thing is, that His sufferings are now atoning, expiatory, a means of removal of the guilt of sin. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (ver. 5). His soul is made "an offering for sin," or as the word literally is, "a guilt-offering" (ver. 10). The Lord "laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (ver. 6); He bears iniquities (ver. 11); "He poured out His soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He bear the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (ver. 12). His death

is followed by a signal triumph. By the knowledge of Him many are justified (ver. 11). He sees His seed, prolongs His days, rules and conquers (vers. 10, 12). It is not surprising that this remarkable prophecy was often in the mind of Christ Himself, and is frequently alluded to in the New Testament (Luke iv. 17-21; xxii. 37; Acts viii. 27-35; 1 Pet. ii. 24, &c.).

IV.

Next, as to the *New Testament*.

1. That an atoning efficacy is ascribed to the sufferings and death of Christ in the *Epistles* few will dispute. The idea is not only there; it *saturates* the writings of the New Testament. It is present in the Epistles of Paul, of John, of Peter, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the Book of Revelation. In every variety of language it is declared that Christ died for us, bore our sins, was made sin for us, redeemed us by His blood, made reconciliation by His death, was a propitiation for our sins, obtained for us forgiveness of sins, &c. (*cf.* Rom. iii. 25; v. 8-11; 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. i. 4; iii. 13; iv. 4; Eph. i, 7; Col. i. 20-22; Heb. ix. 26-28; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; ii. 24; iii. 18; 1 John i. 7; ii. 2; iii. 5; iv. 10; Rev. i. 5; v. 9, &c.). Paul names this as the first article of the Gospel he had "received," "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. xv. 3). In this, however, it is often said, as before, that we have a contrast between the Epistles and the Gospels, and that in the teaching of Jesus Himself, especially in the first three Gospels, this doctrine of atonement is wanting. Penitence and faith, it is declared, are there the only conditions of salvation. The parable of the Prodigal Son is pointed to, in which there is no suggestion of a need of atonement in order to forgiveness.

2. In this not infrequent *opposing of Gospel to Epistle* there is again a strange oversight. In one sense, indeed, there *must* be a contrast. Gospel is not yet Epistle. It was not to be expected that, at a time when even His Messiahship had not been publicly proclaimed, Jesus should be found speaking of the connection of salvation with His sufferings and death—speaking of His Cross, when the Cross had not yet been reared. Fact must precede doctrine. The atonement had to be made before it could be fully preached. Yet Jesus did not altogether keep silence on His approaching death and its significance, nor do the Evangelists represent Him as so doing. Such teaching is not to be looked for in the parable of the Prodigal Son, which has its own lesson to convey, and leaves other aspects of salvation untouched. If atonement is not mentioned, it may perhaps occur that the same objection would apply to *all* mediation of salvation or forgiveness by Christ, for Christ does not appear in the parable either. Yet nothing is more certain than that, in all the Gospels, Jesus appears as the Founder of the Messianic Kingdom, and bringer in of the Messianic salvation, the blessings of which depend on His Person and work.

Not only, however, in this general sense does Jesus connect salvation with His Person; in many utterances He gives unmistakable indications of His consciousness that the redemption of the world is to be accomplished through *His death.* Such, in John's Gospel, is the utterance to Nicodemus, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," &c. (John iii. 14-16); the statement at Capernaum about giving His flesh for the life of the world (vi. 51-96); His words on the Good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep (x. 10-18); the remarkable saying, "I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto myself" (xii. 32). Then, in the Synoptics, is

the pregnant declaration: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28; Mark x. 45); above all, the words at the institution of the Lord's Supper as to His body broken and His blood shed for the remission of sins, and the founding of a new covenant between man and God (Matt. xxvi. 26-28; Mark xiv. 22-24; Luke xxii. 17-20; 1 Cor. xi. 23-26). Christ's death was much in His thoughts in the latter part of His ministry, and He expressly connected it with the fulfilment of prophecy, the appointment of God, and the accomplishment of His mission (Matt. xx. 17-19; Luke ix. 22, 31; xviii. 31-33, &c.)

Is not, in truth, *the whole appearance* of the Son of God in our humanity in this humbled, suffering condition a mystery without the light which this doctrine of redemption sheds upon it? The Gospels give the key for its understanding when they say: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21); "There is born to you this day in the City of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke ii. 11); "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 21). Jesus Himself shows His consciousness of the significance of His death as a turning point in the relations of God and man, in His post-resurrection injunctions to go and preach remission of sins in His name to all nations (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 15, 16; Luke xxiv. 44-49). The Apostolic teaching is but the consistent interpretation, in the fuller illumination of the Spirit, of the facts and statements which the Gospels already contain.

V.

Distinction is often made between *fact and theory* in the doctrine of atonement; but it will be evident from

what has been said that an element of what is called "theory," *i.e.*, of doctrinal significance, attaches to even the simplest statements of Scripture on this subject. "Fact" and "theory" are at all times relative terms. The Copernican "theory" of the heavens is now accepted as an established "fact" of nature. "Gravitation" was once "theory"; it is now universally treated as "fact." The bare "fact" in Christ's death is that a man, called Jesus, was once crucified. So soon as an interpretation of that death which sets it in relation to human sin is given—so soon as doctrinal significance is attached to it—we enter the region of what is misnamed "theory." If, however, the explanation is of the essence of the "fact"—if it is in its relation to sin that the death of Christ has its chief meaning and importance for the Gospel—the distinction between "fact" and "theory," so far as the relation is revealed, disappears. The New Testament will not allow us to believe that everything remains vague and undetermined in the meaning we are to attach to Christ's doing and dying for our salvation. It is not every conception of the Cross that suits the full and varied representations given of it in Scripture. Many questions, doubtless, remain, into the answers to which an element of human "theory" enters; and no view of the atonement can claim to be adequate to the divine reality. Our thoughts here, also, are ever enlarging. But the great basal lines of the doctrine are laid down from the first with unmistakable clearness.

In seeking a connected view which shall do justice to the manysidedness of the truth of the atonement, and help to correct the misapprehensions and remove the difficulties sometimes felt in regard to it, it is very important to see clearly where the *difficulty* about the atonement principally lies. The real difficulty does not lie where it is often put, viz., in the mere fact of *the innocent suffering*

for the guilty. It does not lie there, for this is not a thing confined to Jesus Christ, though He is the most glorious example of it. The world is full of the suffering of the innocent for the sins of others. More than this, the world is full of substitutionary, of vicarious, forces—of the *voluntary* enduring of suffering for the sake of others. This is the point in Bushnell's book on *Vicarious Sacrifice*, and it is true and good so far as it goes. Bushnell lays stress on the substitutionary forces at work in human life, and shows how, in His perfect sympathy with men, these were at work at their maximum in the case of Christ.

It is not there that the difficulty lies, but *here :* how this suffering of Jesus, the innocent for the guilty, should *become expiatory*. Here other elements enter which a mere theory of sympathy does not explain. The Old Testament, as we have seen, has much to say of the sufferings of the righteous for the sins of others (*cf.* Ps. xxii.); but it is not till we come to Is. liii. that we have the representation of One whose sufferings are *atoning*. Suffering for another's sins has in and of itself no expiatory character. It is an *aggravation* of the sin ; not an atonement for it. A prodigal breaks his mother's heart ; but the grief he causes her does not wipe out his sin. It adds to its enormity. A martyr perishes at the stake, but this does not atone for the crime of his murderers. Jesus declares that on Jerusalem would come all the blood of prophets and righteous men (Matt. xxiii. 34-36). Christ's own crucifixion was an unspeakable crime for which repentance was demanded (Acts. ii. 23 ; iii. 14-19).

VI.

What, then, was it in Christ's death, in distinction from that of a martyr sufferer, which constituted it an atonement for the sins of the world ?

1. *Subjective* theories here fail, which seek the explanation of Christ's reconciling work solely in the *moral* effect of the spectacle of suffering love in breaking down the enmity of the sinner, and bringing him to repentance. The Gospel is such a "moral dynamic"; but the efficacy lies not in the bare exhibition of suffering goodness, but in the conviction that Christ suffered thus *for our redemption*—that through His death we have pardon and peace with God. The fault of all such theories is that they leave out of account the God-ward aspect of Christ's work—that aspect which Scripture peculiarly emphasises in speaking of His death as a "propitiation." Bushnell did good service in laying stress on the deep and vital *sympathy* of Christ as a qualification for His work as Redeemer (Heb. ii. 14-18; iv. 14-16). But Bushnell himself came to see later that he had done less than justice to the idea of "propitiation," and sought to find a place, though still an inadequate one, for it in his theory.

2. Shall we, then, with others, seek to find the essence of Christ's sacrifice in the yielding up of His *holy will* to the Father? Sin, we are reminded, has its essence in self-will—in the setting up of the human will against God—and Christ has retracted this root-sin of humanity by offering up to God, under experience of suffering and death, the well-pleasing sacrifice of a will wholly obedient and self-surrendered. "Lo, I am come to do Thy will" (Heb. x. 9). "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). There is again deep truth in this. It was assuredly not the mere physical suffering in Christ's death that pleased God—so much torment. Christ's sacrifice was an act of "obedience" (Rom. v. 19; Phil. ii. 8). Christ's obedience as a whole—not in His death only—constitutes our standing ground before God. In saying this, however, we do not state the *whole* truth, and the

most characteristic declarations of Scripture remain unexplained, if we do not go further and see in Christ's death for our sins a relation, not only to the *preceptive* or *commanding*, but also to the *condemning* and *punishing* will of God—to the aspect of sin as *guilt*, and to God's *judgment* upon it.

3. Is this, moreover, not an essential aspect of any adequate doctrine of atonement? If Christ, as the upholders of these previous views admit, completely identified Himself with us, must He not have taken part and lot with us in our *whole position* as under sin—not simply as under law, but as under a *broken and violated law* and exposed to God's just condemnation on that account? It was part of His identification with us that He took His place with us, as Paul phrases it, "under the law"—the law that had entailed a curse upon us (Gal. iii. 13; iv. 4). Jesus could not be under that law, and refuse to take account of its righteous condemnation of sin, or be without desire to do honour to it. How, indeed, if the law was not "magnified" in this respect as in others, could atonement be made? The very fact in our situation which necessitates atonement is that we stand in this condemnation before God. How then can that fact, in any act of atonement, be disregarded? We have seen that, in the full Scriptural view, it is not disregarded. All that is written of Christ bearing our sins, being made sin for us, redeeming us from the curse, reconciling us to God, taken in connection with what is taught of our condemned position before God, and the effects of Christ's death in delivering us from that condemnation, imply this truth. Jesus, in His death, is regarded as doing honour to the *condemning* as well as to the *prescriptive* will of God.

VII.

If, going further, we press the question of *how* Christ in this way *bore our sins*—what made His endurance of

suffering and death an atonement for sin, we have to confess ourselves in presence of a mystery on which only partial light is available. Yet in the larger context of Scripture certain considerations present themselves which serve as aids to comprehension. As bearing on the possibility of atonement, there is the *dignity* of Christ's person as Son of God, and His actual *sinlessness*—"a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. i. 19). Deeper still, there is Christ's unique relation to our race, formerly emphasised, which creates the possibility of a *representative* relation such as no other could sustain. There is again the *organic constitution* of our race, which permits of His entrance into it as its new Head, to redeem it by His obedience and death from the ruin entailed upon it by the disobedience of the first Adam.

These are conditions of the *possibility* of atonement; for the *essence* of the atonement itself we must doubtless think of the *complete honour* which Christ, in our name and nature, standing in the relation to God and to humanity that He did, was able to render to the divine righteousness in His endurance of death for us. Here, first, is the historical fact that Jesus, in His complete identification with us, did voluntarily enter into the penal conditions of our state as sinners, and, at the last, into death, the culminating form of these evils, and expression of God's judgment on sin. But this was no mere outward experience for Jesus—no simple fate overtaking Him. Christ, in these sufferings, entered, we must believe, as no other could have done, into the whole meaning of the sin of the world before God, and into the whole mind of God in relation to that sin. His sympathy was perfect with *both* God and man. As representing man, He took the whole burden of the sin of the world upon His heart—palliating nothing, acknowledging all, justifying God in His condemnation of

it, passing Himself under the doom of it (2 Cor. v. 21). Thus He became one with the sinner to the uttermost point to which love could carry Him. In God's adorable wisdom and grace He was permitted to enter into the whole realisation and experience of what death for sin meant, that His atonememt might be complete. He was made *our sin-bearer*. There were mysterious elements in Christ's sufferings in the Garden and on the Cross which showed that it was not death only as an outward fact which He endured, but death with all the darkness and horror, the separation from the comforts of God's presence, which belong to it as the wages of sin (Mark xiv. 33-36; xv. 34). He *tasted* death for every man (Heb. ii. 9). Entering into His experience, there went up from His innermost soul, in J. McLeod Campbell's expressive phrase, an "Amen" to the judgment of God upon our sin, which had in it all the elements of a true and perfect atonement for mankind, and was accepted by God as such. Through His death for us, we live.

From what has been said it will be evident that, when the Scripture speaks of "*reconciliation*" with God, more is meant than simply the reconciliation of man *to* God: a change of heart and will on man's side. On God's side also there were obstacles to forgiveness and fellowship. Though God loved the world, its sin had still to be dealt with. There was a guilt that had to be put away, a wrath that rested on the sinner (John iii. 36), a condemnation that had to be lifted off (Rom. viii. 1). The work of reconciliation on God's side is accomplished on the Cross—the grandest expression of His love (Rom. v. 8; 1 John iv. 9). God also is reconciled to the world. We are no more "enemies" (Rom. v. 10, in the objective sense; *cf.* xi. 28). What remains is for man to appropriate the reconciliation thus brought to him, and to be himself reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v. 20).

IX

The Spirit in Salvation: Union with Christ and its Blessings

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THE work of Jesus for salvation, all complete as it is, cannot and will not, it need hardly be said, benefit any sinful soul without something else, viz., individual *appropriation* of Christ and of the salvation He has brought. That Christ has lived, and died, and risen again, of itself saves no man who is in a state of unbelief, or so long as he remains so (John iii. 36). It will be to such an one, indeed, for his greater condemnation (John iii. 19; 2 Cor. ii. 16). To share the blessing of salvation, we must be found, as the Scripture expresses it, "in Christ." We must, *i.e.*, be united with Christ spiritually, as parts of His living body. It is this truth, introducing us to the work of the Holy Spirit, as distinguished from the work of the Father and of the Son, which is now to engage us.

Doctrinally, the truth in question is commonly expressed by saying that salvation is dependent on *Union with Christ.* "He that is joined unto the Lord," says Paul, "is one Spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17). "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself," says Jesus, "except it abide in the vine, so neither can ye, except ye abide in Me. . . . Apart from Me ye can do nothing" (John xv. 4-7). This union with Christ is effected, on the divine side, by *the Holy Spirit,* and on the human side by *faith.* The work of the

Holy Spirit in the soul, uniting to Christ, is spoken of as *regeneration*, and it is this work of regeneration, or of the new birth, we have first to try and understand.

I.

Regeneration, or the *new birth*, or the becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus—for all these terms are used to express this great change—may be described as a work of the Holy Spirit, imparting a new and holy life to the soul, through which those experiencing it are vitally united to Christ, and become, in a real sense, children of God, and members of His Kingdom. The classical passage on this subject is the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus in John iii. 1-12. There the necessity of the new birth, and the agency of the Holy Spirit in effecting it, are emphatically set forth, and the hesitations of the Jewish ruler are dealt with. Yet there are many—many even in our churches—who still feel that there is something strange in the teaching of this passage, and are disposed, like Nicodemus, to marvel that the Lord should say: "Ye must be born anew" (ver. 7, R.V.). . . . "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into [in ver. 3 "see"] the Kingdom of God (ver. 5) . . . . "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (ver. 6). There is a feeling in their minds, as there was in that of Nicodemus, of the strangeness of this spiritual demand. They repeat the ruler's question: "How can these things be?" (ver. 9), and in their inmost hearts do not believe in, or realise, this need of regeneration. Yet, if we think truly of the nature of this change, not only will we feel that there is need for this work of regeneration, but the deep conviction will be wrought in us that only a divine Agent —God's own Holy Spirit—can accomplish such a work in the soul.

The Spirit in Salvation

1. The doctrine of regeneration, in truth, is only *a corollary* from what the Bible teaches, on the one hand, of man's natural condition, as turned aside from God in disposition and desire, and, on the other, of the magnitude of the change necessary to fit a man for being in the Kingdom of God. Consider: What is this spiritual change of which the Lord speaks? Put in plain terms, does it not amount to this: Such a revolution in a man's soul that a man who has been living, and thinking, and feeling, in his ordinary worldly way, is brought round from that worldly way of thinking, and feeling, and willing to *God's point of view*—to harmony with the mind and will of God—so that he now sees things as God sees them, thinks of things as God thinks of them, feels about things as God feels about them, judges of things as God judges of them, loves what God loves, hates what God hates, sets before him God's ends as his own? But if this is the true nature of the change—if regeneration means really such a revolution in a man's being as is here described—will anyone who reflects seriously on what human nature is, as we experience it in ourselves and see it in others—who knows how spiritually impotent and disinclined to holiness the natural heart is—doubt for an instant that, if this change is to be effected, it can only be through a higher power entering the nature, and working that change — can only be effected through the omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit of God? To talk of a man effecting this change in himself is as unreasonable as it would be to speak of a man taking himself by his own waistband and lifting himself into mid-air!

Nor is there any mystery in the statement of Jesus that, without this change, a man cannot "see" or "enter into" the Kingdom of God. For what, again, is it, in Christ's sense, to enter into the Kingdom of God? It is not a

local change. It is not going from one place to another, as one might go from London to New York. It is a change of mind, of heart, of disposition. To enter into the Kingdom of God is just to enter into that mind and spirit I have been describing. In the very act of entering into that state—of coming round to see things as God sees them, to feel about things as God feels about them, to judge about things as God judges about them, to love what God loves, and hate what God hates—we are entering into the Kingdom of God, and if we are not in that state, then we have not, in Christ's judgment, entered into the Kingdom of God at all.

Scripture, therefore, is always very emphatic on these three points—that this change is necessary, that it is a revolution in a man's being by which he becomes literally "a new creature," or "new creation" (2 Cor. v. 17); and that nothing can effect this change but an *act of omnipotence* of the Holy Spirit in the heart—an exercise of power as supernatural and marvellous as that by which God raised Jesus from the dead (Eph. i. 19, 20; ii. 1). The passage in Ephesians is a remarkable one. It will be observed that in the verse, "You did He make alive when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins" (ii. 1), the words, "did He make alive," are not in the text, but in italics. The reason is that this verse stands exegetically in connection with the verses in the preceding chapter (i. 19, 20), where we are told of "the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead." "And you," Paul adds, resuming this thought, "when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins," did He make alive (*cf.* ver. 5). A similar idea lies in his figure of a "new creation" (2 Cor. v. 17). It is the omnipotent act of God in creation which is here in view (*cf.* iv. 6).

Nothing could more strongly emphasise the power which is involved in regeneration.

2. This being the nature of the change, the next thing to be remarked about it is, that while a supernatural change, it is not a *magical* change; that is, it is not bound up with any outward rite, like baptism, so as to be effected by the mere performance of that rite, or to be inseparable from its administration. This is the error of the sacerdotalists. I am far from saying that baptism has no connection with the change. It has a most intimate connection with it as representing it, and being the symbol of it—as pledging and sealing its blessing to the believer—but there is no such necessary connection as that baptism *ipso facto* effects regeneration, or that regeneration requires baptism as its condition. We read of those on whom the Spirit fell, who were baptized afterwards (Acts x. 44, 48).

II.

On the other hand, when we look at the means or instrumentality by which the Spirit of God effects this change, we find it to be in Scripture always one thing, and that is *the Word*. The passages which connect regeneration with the word of God are numerous. When Christ, the Sower, goes forth to sow, it is "the word" which is the seed (Luke viii. 11). "Having been begotten again," says Peter, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth" (1 Pet. i. 23; *cf.* Jas. i. 18). It is the word received into the heart—the word believed—through which the spiritual change we call conversion or regeneration is brought about (Eph. i. 13; Col. i. 5; 1 Thess. ii. 13, &c.). I do not, of course, mean that, in the case of those who have not arrived at years of intelligence, God is bound to this way of regeneration. Regeneration may be (in Christian homes ought *normally* to be) in infancy;

its fruits then become manifest in the believing appropriation of, and obedience to, the word, as character develops. I speak of those who, still unchanged, have come to years of understanding, and the rule of God's dealing with such is, unquestionably, regeneration through the word. Hence we cannot sufficiently exalt the life-giving power of "the word of the truth of the Gospel" (Col. i. 5; Heb. iv. 12). We cannot exalt sufficiently the reading of the word (Acts xvii. 11, 12), the preaching of the word (Mark xvi. 10; Acts xi. 20, 21; Rom. x. 14, 15), instruction in the word (Luke i. 4; 1 Tim. iv. 13-16; 2 Tim. iii. 15; iv. 2)—or foretell what marvellous results may follow from the believing reception of even a small fragment of that word!

III.

If this is the general character and origin of the change we call regeneration, then regeneration has what may be described as its *psychology*—that is, there is a process which the mind goes through in the experience of this spiritual change. It is not necessary, indeed, to be able to analyse this spiritual process of regeneration in order to be regenerated any more than it is necessary to understand the philosophy of perception in order to perceive things around us. Still, it is of interest, and may guard us from errors, to have as clear an idea as we can of the process of this change, as it is realised in the experience of the individual. There is, of course, a danger here of unduly narrowing the action of the Spirit. The Spirit of God has innumerable ways of dealing with human souls. It is probable—indeed certain—that no two souls are brought into the Kingdom in precisely the same way. On the other hand, if we look closely into spiritual history, and are careful not to seek to crush every one's experience into one particular mould, we will find that there are certain elements which do, in some degree, enter into all

Christian experience in regeneration, and it helps as a test, and a guard against delusion in ourselves and others, to remember what these things are.

1. The first step, it seems to me, towards this work of regeneration is *the awakening* of the soul out of its customary state of spiritual insensibility and dormancy. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee" (Eph. v. 14). Who does not know how deep is the insensibility and torpor to spiritual things in which every natural mind is involved, the spiritual sense sealed as in a deep slumber to those higher realities in which the awakened mind lives and moves, and has its being (2 Cor. iv. 18). Scripture, accordingly, describes this state as a "sleep"—a sleep from which the sinner would never awaken unless he were roused from it by the Holy Spirit. It speaks of it even as a "death"—a spiritual death from which there is no natural awakening (Eph. ii. 1). Obviously, then, the first thing necessary for regeneration is that somehow this sleep should be broken in upon, this dormancy disturbed, the mind aroused to a realisation that there is a spiritual world to which it stands in relation, and whose calls and claims it is neglecting. How this comes about is a matter of individual experience. There are numberless ways in which the Spirit of God acts upon a soul to arouse it to a sense of spiritual things, to awaken it out of its habitual indifference and lethargy. An earthquake did it for the Philippian jailor (Acts xvi. 26-30). Outward troubles or misfortunes do it for some; a word, a remonstrance, an arrow struck home to the conscience, may be the quieter agency in the case of others.

2. It is not every kind of awakening, however, which results in regeneration. The peculiar kind of awakening which comes into view here is that which has its origin in conscience, and takes the form of *conviction of sin* towards

God. It does not seem possible that anyone can truly undergo this spiritual change without being really and inwardly brought to a realisation of his sinful condition before God—the realisation that he stands in a wrong relation to God, is under His displeasure, needs His forgiveness and cleansing. He will be brought to confess: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in Thy sight" (Ps. li. 4). "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8).

As bringing about this conviction of sin, older writers were wont to lay the chief stress on *the law of God.* There was a phrase used for conviction which expressed this idea. It was called "law-work." Now, certainly, there was a truth in this. Unless the law of God—the holy, just, and good law (Rom. vii. 12)—were applied with power to men's consciences, they would not be convinced of sin. What it is necessary here to remark is that the law of God alone will not produce in any soul spiritual contrition such as we have to do with in regeneration. The law—the holiness—of God, brought home to men will terrify, will repel, will drive them to despair; it will not of itself melt and subdue their hearts. For that there is needed the exhibition of the *love* and *grace* of God. It is the Gospel, after all, which is the supreme agency in melting the heart into contrition on account of sin. It is the exhibition of the *mercy* of God in Christ which convinces men of sin, and brings them to repentance. The Spirit will convince of sin, says Jesus, "because they believe not on Me" (John xvi. 9).

3. In this awakening of the soul to the consciousness of sin, there is already present a measure of *enlightenment*, and the next step, I apprehend, in the work of regeneration, is the growth of this enlightenment in the definite form of *enlightenment in the knowledge of Christ.* God has

revealed to the soul its sin. He has discovered to it its need of salvation. Now He reveals to it more and more clearly the provision made for its need in Christ. This enlightenment of mind, as much as awakening and conviction of sin, is in Scripture always attributed to the Holy Spirit. "It is God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6). Paul's prayer for his converts is that God will give them "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him [Christ]" (Eph. i. 18). It is the Spirit's work to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us (John xvi. 14, 15).

4. But the work of regeneration is still not complete; there is something needed beyond enlightenment. The will of God for our salvation has not only to be understood; it has to be obeyed. There is *the will* still to be laid hold of—the will, that centre and citadel of the personal being. The work of the Spirit, therefore, is directed, finally, to *the renewal of the will.* It is directed to this end—(1) In the form of *persuasion.* It need hardly be said that the Holy Spirit does no part of His work in the soul by violence. There is no attempt to override the freedom of man. Everything that God accomplishes, even in the most striking exercise of His power, is accomplished in accordance with the laws of the nature He Himself has given us. He uses no force, but most graciously, most lovingly, brings His persuasions to bear upon men's wills, and by the power of appropriate motives, sweetly draws them to the acceptance of Christ (Hos. xi. 4; John vi. 37, 44). (2) But more is needed than persuasion. There is not only the persuasion, but what I would venture to call the *potentiation* of the will—the *enabling* of the will; that is, the imparting to it of the power that is needful in order to the laying hold of Christ

in firm and fast faith. We read of believers as "strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man" (Eph. iii. 16). We have just read of the believer as raised from the dead by the power of God's might (Eph. i. 19, 20). This is the might of God manifested in the will of man, giving it the power, the strength, to do what otherwise it could not do. (3) The work of regeneration is completed when the soul is brought to the point of *absolute surrender* of itself to Christ—when, persuaded and drawn by the Spirit, enabled by the Spirit, raised from death by the power of God, it yields itself up with full assent to God in Christ in the Gospel, receives Christ as its Saviour and Lord, thenceforth to live in reliance on Him and in union with Him. In the same act it enters into the life—the salvation—of God. Thus on its twofold side—the Spirit uniting the soul to Christ, faith appropriating Christ as its own—union with Christ is effected, and the new life of regeneration is begun.

IV.

By faith we are united with Christ on the human side, and it has been seen how faith springs up in the soul, and is an act of *the whole nature*, quickened by the Holy Spirit. *Faith* is not a mere act of the understanding, or mere act of the will, or mere act of the affections; it is the laying hold of Christ with the whole self—mind, will, heart—as the Gospel presents Him to us—and the cleaving to Him, for all the ends of His salvation. It is this *consent* of the will, as the older theologians described it, to the *assent* of the understanding, with the resulting surrender of heart and life to Christ as Saviour and Lord, which constitutes *saving faith*. In using this expression it is not meant as if there could be any genuine faith in God which was *not* saving. But the Gospel being that revelation of God in which peculiarly His saving will is set forth, and Jesus

Christ, in His Person, death, and resurrection, being the centre and substance of that revelation, He is, in the nature of the case, the particular object of faith in relation to salvation. It is in faith that the bond is constituted between Him and the soul which effects salvation. This is God's command, accordingly, that "we believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John vi. 29; 1 John iii. 23).

It will be observed, however, that with faith, in Scripture, is generally comprised another grace, viz., *repentance*, as a condition of salvation; and the question has often been raised as to the relation of these graces; in particular, as to which has the priority. "Testifying," says Paul, "both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xx. 21). Does repentance, then, precede faith, as these words might seem to imply, or does faith precede repentance? The true answer to this question is that the acts distinguished by these terms are really inseparable, and spring from the same state of soul, of which they are little more than different poles or aspects. Repentance is a turning *from* sin to God; faith is a turning *to* God in Christ for salvation; and it would be as reasonable to ask, in the case of a man turning from east to west, whether his turning *from* the east, or his turning *to* the west, came first, as to ask whether repentance precedes faith, or faith repentance.

This will appear at once when the *relations of faith and repentance* are more closely considered. Is it not, on the one hand, the case, that there can be no true "repentance toward God" which has not a germ of *faith* in it—not only of faith in God Himself (Heb. xi. 6), but a germ of faith, of hope, in the *mercy* of God? You cannot call men to turn to God in repentance unless there is mercy for them to turn to; and it has already been seen that it needs faith in this mercy to draw men to God. The

Westminster Assembly's answer on "Repentance" in its Catechism brings this out very beautifully. It describes repentance as "A saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and *apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ*, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after, new obedience." On the other hand, is it not as true that there can be no real "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ"—no genuine saving faith—which does not spring from a heart broken and contrite on account of its sin? Faith, in short, takes us up just where repentance leaves us. Repentance leaves us at the footstool of the divine mercy, confessing our sins, acknowledging the justice of God's condemnation of them, and imploring His forgiveness. Faith points us to Him through whom forgiveness and salvation come.

The two states, therefore, are *inseparable*. There is a "sorrow of the world" which "worketh death" (2 Cor. vii. 10), but this is not evangelical repentance—the "godly sorrow," which "worketh repentance unto salvation." There is a "faith" which trembles at God's word—"the demons also believe, and shudder" (Jas. ii. 19)—but it is not "the obedience of faith" (Rom. xvi. 26) which springs from a truly penitent heart, and is fruitful in every good work (Gal. v. 6; Jas. ii. 18).

V.

In this state of union with Christ, brought about through living faith, it now results that the soul is put in possession of *the blessings* of Christ's salvation in their proper relation and order. I speak of "relation and order," because, although a full salvation is at once assured to faith (Eph. i. 3), and "earnests" of it are bestowed (Rom. viii. 23; 2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 14), the believer is not at once put in actual possession of all its

blessings. The full and perfect salvation is reserved for the future, *e.g.*, in the resurrection, and eternal life in heaven (Rom. viii. 23; Phil. iii. 20, 21; 1 Pet. i. 3-5). "In hope were we saved" (Rom. viii. 24). And I speak of the "proper" order in the bestowal of these blessings, for in the nature of the case one blessing is conditioned by another. Pardon, *e.g.*, is a condition of sanctification; holiness is a condition of "seeing the Lord" (Matt. v. 8; Heb. xii. 14); fidelity is a condition of reward (Matt. xxv. 16-30; Luke xix. 12-27). Looking at the blessings bestowed in the earthly state on every soul that is brought to true faith in Christ, we specially distinguish these three, which embrace within themselves many others.

1. There is forgiveness, and that setting of the soul right with God with reference to its guilt and condemnation, which is designated by Paul its *justification*. The word "justify" in the Apostle's use has often been twisted from its true meaning in the attempt to give it a sense which does not belong to it. As every Greek lexicon will show, the word "justify" does not, and cannot, mean the "making righteous" in the sense of inwardly sanctifying. It has but one meaning throughout the New Testament. It means to "pronounce" or to "declare" righteous. It is the opposite of to "condemn." The Apostle says: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; Who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. viii. 33, 34). Here the antithesis is clearly apparent. The believer is cleared from all charge; is set free from condemnation (Rom. viii. 1). The Roman Catholic Church and others change this into making a man *inwardly* righteous. They confuse justification with regeneration and sanctification, and connect it with baptism as its instrument. This is not Paul's teaching. To "justify," in Paul's sense, means that God declares us to

be clear in His sight from all the guilt and condemnation that rested upon us in our sinful condition.

Well, but, it may be said, is not this an unreal thing—a species of "legal fiction"? No; it is not unreal, and not fiction. Justification means forgiveness, but it is more. It is not mere amnesty. It is forgiveness of the sinner on *a righteous basis*. And what is this righteous basis? It is simply the complete atonement that Christ has made for sin. The sinner is pronounced free from guilt because, in his union with Christ, he actually is so. Christ has met and satisfied every claim the law had upon him; so that "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1). "Being justified freely through His grace," the Apostle says elsewhere, "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in His blood. . . . for the showing of His righteousness at this present season: that He might Himself be just, and the Justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 24-26). There is, therefore, nothing unreal in the position which the justified person occupies towards God. Unrighteous in himself, he acquires a righteousness through His union with Christ by faith. Still to quote Paul: "Him who knew no sin He [God] made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. v. 21). As Beza put it: "O Christ, I am Thy sin; Thou art my righteousness."

Justification is *by faith alone*, though "not," as Luther also said, "by a faith which is alone." In it sin is blotted out, and the believer stands as righteous before God. Righteousness is reckoned to him apart from works (Rom. iv. 6). This is expressed in various ways. "To him that worketh not, but believeth in Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for [or unto] righteousness" (Rom. iv. 5). Or he "becomes the righteousness

of God" in Christ (2 Cor. v. 21)—the "righteousness of God" here and elsewhere denoting the righteousness *provided* by God for sinners in the Gospel (Rom. iii. 21-26). Or he "is found in Him [Christ], not having a righteousness of [his] own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Phil. iii. 9). In this new relation he is interested in every blessing which Christ, by His obedience and death has won for men (Rom. v. 17, 21).

It is in Paul that this doctrine of justification is most fully developed, but everywhere in the New Testament the blessing put in the forefront of the Gospel is the forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God, as an act of free grace to believers, on the ground of Christ's propitiatory death. And this is the Pauline doctrine in essence.

2. Justification has to do with the *judicial* aspect of God's character; but there is another aspect of that character which must not be overlooked—the *personal* or *paternal*; and this finds expression in the New Testament in the place given to *adoption* as a blessing of salvation. This is a side of Christian truth which has not always received the attention it deserves—a neglect the more to be regretted that the doctrine furnishes the reply to the objection sometimes made, that "justification" presents our relations with God in salvation in too exclusively "legal" a light. It would do so if it stood alone; but it does not stand alone. Adoption, by certain writers, has been treated as part of justification—as the positive side of it, in *acceptance*. But this is not warranted. If it is wrong to merge, as many do, God's character as Judge in that of Father, it is as wrong to merge His character of Father in that of Judge, and overlook that God's relation to us is personal as well as judicial. God does not merely pardon the sinner by way of legal acquittal. There is the

outflow of paternal tenderness, paternal forgiveness, paternal grace (*cf.*, the Prodigal, Luke xv. 20-24); and the soul that comes to Him is received by Him into a relation of sonship—not merely that forfeited sonship which was its destination by creation, but a relation of honour, nearness and privilege, analogous to Christ's own. "If children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17).

This is the idea of "adoption" of which Paul makes so much, and which is sufficiently distinct from the judicial acquittal to warrant special mention. But the idea has its spiritual side as well. To the act of adoption corresponds *the new nature* received in regeneration, and the spirit of sonship bestowed on believers. Believers are "born" or "begotten" of God, and are His children through the new life received from God (John i. 12, 13; 1 John iii. 9, 10; v. 4). On those who are His children God bestows His Spirit (Rom. viii. 15). "Because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. iv. 6). Sonship in the Gospel is thus an act of grace, and no terms are deemed adequate to extol its privilege (1 John iii. 1, 2.).

Here, again, the question will be asked—"But are not *all* men sons of God?" I sought before to show what truth there is in this idea of a universal fatherhood of God to men. Sonship doubtless lay in the creation destiny of man. The filial spirit is the ideal in man's relation to God. This is true, but man by sin forfeited that destiny —made it impossible of realisatiou on a creation basis. If it was to be realised at all, it could only be on a basis of redemption. It is the redemption of Christ alone which can restore the lost privilege of sonship. But Christ does not merely bring us back to the creation standing. He introduces us into the far higher, nobler, diviner relation to the Father already described. Hence it is that in the

New Testament we read so little of the merely natural relation, and so much of the glory of the spiritual relation of sonship to God. "Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 12).

3. The third great blessing which springs from union with Christ is that life of progressive holiness which we describe by the word *sanctification*. To "sanctify" is to make holy. The word "holy," it is well known, has two meanings in the New Testament. It means (1) that which is separated or set apart for the service of the holy God; and (2) in respect of moral beings, it means the possession of the actual character of moral purity answering to that separation. So Paul speaks of believers as "called saints" (1 Cor. i. 2)—*i.e.*, holy persons set apart by their very calling for the service of a holy God, consecrated to Him; but in respect of character, the same persons are exhorted to the realisation of holiness—"Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. vii. 1).

In one sense, therefore, sanctification is, or ought to be, *complete* at once, *i.e.*, the believer is, in the true idea of his calling, a person from the first entirely God's—wholly separated to God (Rom. xii. 1); in another sense sanctification is *progressive*—a holiness of character which is only gradually or progressively attained. But it is always the consciousness of the standing which should prescribe the aim, and govern and control the effort. "Even so, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ" (Rom. vi. 11). Even where holiness is imperfect—and in whom is it not?—consecration may at least always be perfect in aim, in spirit, in motive, in desire. This is what the Bible means by being "perfect," or whole-hearted, towards God (Num. xiv. 24;

Job. i. 1, 8; Ps. xxxvii. 37; ci. 2, &c.). Sanctification on one side is the progressive development of the life already imparted in regeneration, and *the Agent*, as in regeneration itself, is the Holy Spirit of God, or God Himself working in the soul, "both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13; Heb. xiii. 20, 21). But sanctification, as a progressive work in which man co-operates, has laws and conditions which create obligation and call for effort. In respect of this human side, sanctification has both a *negative* and a *positive* aspect—the one expressed by what Paul calls dying to sin; the other by living to righteousness (Rom. vi. 2, 11, 13, 16, &c.). The former, which has for its motive the thought of *having died to sin* with Christ in His death (Rom. vi. 2-11), includes the mortification of sin in the flesh (Rom. vi. 12; viii. 13; Col. iii. 5), habitual self-denial in what is ungodly and wrong (Tit. ii. 12), and the keeping of the body under that the spirit may rule (1 Cor. ix. 27). The latter, which connects itself with the thought of *having risen with Christ* to newness of life (Rom. vi. 4, 5; Col. iii. 5), includes the growth and strengthening of all the elements of holy character through growing knowledge of Christ, and increasing participation in His Spirit, with the use of all bodily and mental faculties in the service of righteousness (Rom. vi. 13, 19).

It follows from this description that the *indispensable conditions* of sanctification are the possession of the Spirit of God, and walking in the Spirit (Rom. viii. 1-16; Gal. v. 16-26). In this connection an important distinction is to be drawn between the work of the Spirit in producing faith, *i.e.*, in initial regeneration, and the bestowal of the Spirit on those who have been brought to faith. There is a work of the Spirit which *precedes* and issues in faith, and there is a reception of the Spirit *through* faith, which results in what is peculiarly termed the indwelling of the

Spirit. Till faith is present, the Spirit is, in a sense, still acting *on*, rather than *within*, the soul; when faith opens the way for His entrance, He can unite Himself with the being in its inmost recesses—become its very life. Hence such language as that of Jesus: "He that believeth on Me. . . . from within him shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 38); and His promises that He and the Father will take up their abode with those who love Him (John xiv. 21-23). Hence such passages as Rom. viii. 14-16; 2 Cor. i. 22; Gal. iv. 6—"*Because* ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of the Son into our hearts"; and Eph. i. 13—"In whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise," with many more.

The standard of sanctification is the divine perfection —nothing less. So declares Jesus (Matt. v. 48); and so says, or implies, every writer in the New Testament (2 Cor. xiii. 9; 1 Thess. v. 23; Heb. xiii. 20, 21; 1 Pet. i. 14-16, &c.). This means, for the Christian, perfect conformity to the image of Christ (2 Cor. iii. 18). "An unattainable ideal," some one will perhaps say, "better give us something lower." Spurgeon, in dealing with a similar objection, once said: "No, when I wish my child to learn to write, I give him the most perfect copy I can find." This does not mean, even in the most Spirit-filled person, the attainment of the ideal, so that he dare say, "I am without sin" (*cf.* 1 John i. 10). The writer once heard Mr. Spurgeon, in his illustrated lecture on "Candles," make a pertinent remark on this head. He took a full, clear-burning wax candle, and, pointing to its bright flame, said, "There is your perfect man." Then, holding over it a polished reflector, he showed how the interior was soon covered with a fine soot. "What shall we call it?" he said, "The 'superfluity of naughtiness'!" This only we know, that what is not attained here, will

be attained hereafter. Presented "holy, and without blemish, and unreprovable, before Him" (Col. i. 22)—"Not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. v. 27)—"We shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is" (1 John iii. 2).

X

Eternity and its Issues: Advent and Judgment

Eternity and its Issues: Advent and Judgment

I AM to speak in this last study on the future, on which we have the light of prophecy, shining as in a dark place (2 Pet. i. 19), to guide us, but regarding which there are still many things on which Christian people differ, and are perplexed. I shall not enter into these minuter points of difference, but, keeping to the plan I have been following, will deal with those great, outstanding truths, that seem to belong to the essence of the Christian faith.

I.

The issues of redemption are in eternity, and are connected in Scripture with the *Lord's "Parousia,"* or Second Coming. To this subject, therefore, I first direct attention.

It is disputed by hardly any that our Lord did predict His Personal return in glory to judge the world, and bring in His everlasting kingdom, or that this was a fixed article of belief in the Apostolic age. What is said in criticism of the belief is that "the mere effluxion of time," as Prof. Huxley put it in one of his *Essays*, "has demonstrated it to be a prodigious error." The critics do not doubt that this Coming was predicted and looked for. But they remind us that nearly 1900 years have gone by, and Christ has not come yet. Therefore these beliefs and

hopes of the early Christians are proved by events to have been a mistake. There were in Peter's time already those who asked: "Where is the promise of His coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation" (2 Pet. iii. 4).

Now the fact on which these objectors base must be acknowledged: viz., that well-nigh 1900 years have gone by, and Jesus has *not returned yet* in Personal glory. The declarations in the New Testament that "the Lord is at hand" (Phil. iv. 5; *cf.* Jas. v. 8), and all the other statements that seem to look for the near coming of the Lord, have to face this fact, and in some way be reconciled with it, if the hope is not to be given up. My own attitude is that of faith in the final Personal return of Christ. But the fact remains that this long interval has elapsed since the promises were given, and it may fairly be asked, "If nearly 2,000 years have already elapsed, why not 3,000, or more?"

In seeking a solution of this problem helpful light may be obtained by keeping in view some of the features of *Old Testament prophecy* of the approaching "Day of the Lord." For in the Old Testament also you have a steady outlook on a great consummating day of the world's history. All through prophecy there is this "Day of the Lord" looming up as the background of the particular crisis in which the nation was at the time involved (Assyrian, Babylonian, Maccabæan); you have it depicted as the goal to which all events in time are moving on; whatever obscurity may rest on the steps by which the end is to be reached, there is no dubiety felt about the end itself. God's purpose shall be accomplished; His kingdom shall triumph; whatever opposes itself to that and resists it shall be shattered and destroyed. By observing the principles which regulate Old Testament

prophecy on this subject, we gain a clue to some of the difficulties in the predictions of the Lord's Coming.

One or two remarks are necessary at the outset to set the subject in its proper perspective.

1. The first remark is, that I do not think we can, in the light of the New Testament, affirm that it was given to the Apostles, or to the Church, to know *the precise time* of the Lord's return, or the interval that would elapse, in the Father's counsels, before that event would take place. The fact itself they knew, but it was not given to them—it was definitely withheld from them—to know *when* the event should be. There can be no doubt about this, because it is clearly stated. "It is not for you," Jesus says to the disciples, "to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority" (Acts i. 7). And there is that far stronger passage, to which I formerly referred, in which Jesus says: "But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32; *cf.* Matt. xxiv. 36; Rev. v.). The Son Himself did not know.

2. The second thing is, that it is far from clear that Jesus predicted, or that the Apostles believed, that the Advent would necessarily be in that generation, or in quite so short a time as is sometimes imagined. I do not mean that the Apostles postponed the Coming in their thoughts to a far distant time; but I mean that there are many things in the sayings of Jesus, many things in the parables, many things in the Epistles, many things in the Book of Revelation which point to a somewhat prolonged development. Jesus speaks, *e.g.*, of a period of delay which would try the faith and patience of His servants (Matt. xxv. 5, 19; Luke xviii. 7, 8; xix. 11*ff*); of manifold persecutions, when His disciples would be brought before governors and kings of the Gentiles (Matt. x. 18); of a secret growth of His kingdom (Mark iv. 26-28),

and the gradual ripening of good and evil in the world till the final harvest (Matt. xiii. 30, 39-42); of a protracted interval, filled with world-shaking events, during which the love of many would grow cold (Matt. xxiv. 12, 13). He speaks of a world-wide evangelisation, of a preaching of the Gospel to every creature, of disciples gathered from all nations (Matt. xxiv. 14; xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 15; Luke xxiv. 47; Acts i. 8).

Paul, in like manner, when the Thessalonians thought that the Lord's Coming was "just at hand," writes to them in his second Epistle to *warn them* not to be shaken in mind, as if that day was immediately impending (2 Thess. ii. 2), and goes on to tell them that that day would not come till there had been a great Apostasy, and the Man of Sin had been revealed: even then, apparently, would not come till that which was hindering (the Roman Empire?) had been taken out of the way (ii. 3-10). And again, in Rom. xi., he sketches, on a large scale, a kind of philosophy of history, in which events are mentioned, as the ingathering of the Gentiles, and the conversion of Israel consequent on that (verses 25-32), which necessarily must consume much time. It could not be supposed by anyone reflecting on the subject that a month, or year, or many years, would suffice to cover all these events. Yet no one, I think, would have been more surprised than Paul, or any of these early Christians—their hearts would almost have sunk within them—if they had been informed that Christian people in the twentieth century would still be discussing the question as to when the Lord was to appear!

II.

Reverting to our principles of prophetic interpretation, let us look at their bearing on this problem of the time of the Lord's Coming.

Eternity and its Issues

1. It has been observed in regard to Old Testament prophecy how neglectful it is of the *element of time*, and how regularly the consummation on which the prophet's eye is fixed is regarded as rising immediately behind the series of events which fill the foreground of his vision. Times and seasons were not known to him, and it was left to Providence to unfold the steps leading up to the final Day of the Lord; but what the prophet *did* know was that the coming of this Day was certain, and was *the* event to which all other events were hastening on. To the prophet's faith and expectancy, therefore, this event seemed always near; as a high mountain on the verge of the horizon always seems at hand, so this event loomed up behind whatever phase of Providence was immediately in view.

Is it, or could it have been, otherwise in the New Testament? The Lord's Coming was, beyond doubt, the great fact on which the hope of the Church was set; it was the great event ever to be watched and waited for (Mark xiii. 35) to which eye and prayer ought always to be directed. Its time, beyond general indications, was unknown; it stood out, therefore, at every point, behind the immediate conflict with the powers of the world—behind Gospel preaching, behind persecution, behind heresies, behind fall of Jerusalem, behind collapse of Gentile empires—the one thing to be looked for, watched for, worked for, prayed for, and, as far as human effort could aid it, *hastened*.

2. This last remark leads to the mention of another principle in connection with prophecy apt to be overlooked—I mean its *conditionality*. This is a principle to which, often, justice is not done in asking the question: "Why has the Lord's Coming been so long delayed?" Have we ourselves—has the Church of Christ—no responsibility for that delay? We are apt to think of the Lord's Coming

as something which has its fixed date, to which our own faithfulness or unfaithfulness has no relation. This is a mistake. From the point of view of God's absolute knowledge, no doubt, the day and hour of the Advent—like that of every event in time—is immovably fixed. God knows all the circumstances that condition that event, and the very moment when it will take place. In that sense the Father, and He alone, knows the day and hour. But from the human point of view, it is not given us to know this, for the very reason that the nearness or farness of the Coming depends on many things with which we have ourselves to do.

Take our human life. It is quite certain that God knows the precise moment when everyone of us will die. Our times are in His hand; the hour of our death is known to Him; yet from our *human point of view*, we know that the time of our death depends, in part at least, upon ourselves; that by proper care we may, in all probability, prolong our life, as, on the other hand, by carelessness, profligacy, or exposure to unhealthy conditions, we can certainly shorten it. We may fire a pistol, or take poison, and end our lives on the spot. Do these things conflict? They do not conflict at all. So with reference to the Lord's Coming. In the Westminster Shorter Catechism the second petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come," is thus explained: "That the Kingdom of grace may be advanced, and the Kingdom of glory may be *hastened*." But why "hastened" if we have nothing to do with it, no responsibility for its retarding or advancement? Does anyone believe that, if the Church had been watchful, and diligent, and faithful, as it ought to have been—abounding in faith and love from the beginning—things would have been as far back as they are to-day; that the end would not have been nearer, or, perhaps reached, long ago?

3. There is yet another consideration. I believe we cannot fairly read the New Testament without seeing that there is a Personal Coming of the Lord Jesus in the future, which is the great hope of the Church. But it seems to me just as plain that, in both Old Testament and New, the Coming of the Lord is a large and comprehensive phrase—that the "Coming" has, so to say, many providential anticipations—designates, in short, a *process*, rather than the one single event in which it culminates. Comparing Christ's sayings in the Gospels, it appears to me that, when He speaks of His Coming, He does not always mean by that expression precisely the same thing. Jesus says, *e.g.*, in John: "A little while, and ye behold Me not, and again a little while, and ye shall see Me . . . I will see you again" (John xvi. 19, 22). This evidently refers to His resurrection. Again, He speaks of Coming in the Spirit. "I will not leave you desolate; I come unto you" (John xiv. 18; *cf.* xvi. 13). Again, He speaks of that tremendous judgment which was to overtake Israel in the destruction of the holy city and dispersion of the people, as a phase of His Coming (Matt. xxiv.). Behind all stands the final *Personal* Coming of the Lord—His Coming in the future.

Only thus, I think, can *Christ's sayings* be brought into harmony, *e.g.*, when He says: "There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom" (Matt. xvi. 28)—a saying which Mark gives in the form: "Till they see the Kingdom of God come with power" (Mark ix. 1), and Luke gives yet more simply: "Till they see the Kingdom of God" (Luke ix. 27); or, again, when He says: "Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come" (Matt. x. 23), I cannot think it reasonable to believe that He is referring to events that lie, perhaps, 2,000 years in the

future! It is easier to believe that in the former passage Jesus is referring to His Coming in the power, and spread, and successes of His Kingdom, after the Spirit had been given; and in the latter, to the great providential judgment on the Jewish nation. Even in Matt. xxiv. careful observation shows that, while Christ quite clearly connects His Coming with the great catastrophe that was to overtake Jerusalem, He yet as clearly distinguishes that national judgment from the greater event that lay behind it, of which it was the prelude. The contrast is indicated in the distinction which He makes between "these things" and "that day and hour." Of the former it is said: "This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished"; of the latter: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only" (vers. 34, 36, R.V.).

The one thing that stands out clear and indubitable from all these discussions is that *the Lord shall come*, and that His Coming shall be (1) *Personal*—in like manner as men saw Him ascend (Acts i. 12); (2) *sudden*—flashing on the world in a time of unexampled crisis, with all the force of a great surprise, therefore unmistakable (Matt. xxiv. 27); (3) *glorious*—in the glory of the Father, with all the holy angels (Matt. xvi. 27; xxv. 31); and (4) *decisive*—reducing all opposition to nothingness, and determining for good or evil the destinies of mankind (2 Cor. v. 10). There should be no difficulty in believing this to anyone who really believes in the resurrection, ascension, and present glorified life of our Lord in heaven. If the Lord is really risen—if He is really within the veil wearing our humanity in glory—is it reasonable to believe—can Christian faith rest in the idea—that He will remain always thus invisible? Is it not the most reasonable thing in the world to expect that there will be a manifestation of

this glorified One in connection with the winding up of earthly affairs, and the bringing in of His everlasting Kingdom? Does someone say: "He will be manifested in heaven?" Yes, but a great deal will happen before the heavenly Kingdom is reached, and is it reasonable to think that in the transition from earth to heaven—from history in time to the new order of things in eternity—there will be no revelation, no manifestation, of the Son of Man? The Bible says there will be, and it gathers it up in the hope of the Lord's Coming.

III.

Here numerous questions and difficulties emerge into which it is impossible to enter at length in this brief study. It is interesting to notice that, in accordance with the state of the case just described, the Creeds of the Church have always maintained *a wise reserve* on the details of the Lord's Coming. They have announced the fact, but they have not presumed to define times and seasons, or to settle details. Much has always been left to private Christian speculation on these subjects, and opinions among Christians have widely varied. One difficulty is that, if we take the prevailing form of representation in the New Testament, we might reasonably infer that, after a shorter or longer period in the world's development, during which both good and evil would ripen and reach a climax, a terrible antichristian apostasy (the germs of which were already present in the Apostolic age (1 John ii. 18, iv. 3) would be revealed, the course of events would be suddenly terminated by the Lord's appearance (2 Thess. ii. 8), carrying with it the resurrection of just and unjust, the final judgment, and the dissolution of the existing earth and heaven.

On the other hand, if we turn to the Book of Revelation, we find that, in harmony with Old Testament

prophecies, and with hints in the words of Christ and His Apostles (Matt. vi. 10; Mark iv. 28; Rom. xi. 12, 25-27, &c.), this Book would seem to point, though not till after long delay, and the experience of terrible conflicts, to a prolonged triumph ("a thousand years") of the Kingdom of Christ in the world—the "*millennium*," as it is wont to be termed—during which the forces of evil will be restrained, and the powers of good will be at their highest potency. This period is preluded by great judgments on the antichristian powers, and by the resurrection of the martyred saints, who reign along with Christ. Then is to come a new falling away, and the final Advent, resurrection and judgment (Rev. xx.).

How is this picture of the end of the present dispensation of things to be interpreted? Is the picture wholly symbolical, as the general character of the Book might suggest? Is the crisis or world-judgment which introduces the latter-day glory purely providential; or does there shine through the picture the idea that it will be attended by visible, supernatural attestations of Christ's presence and power? Is the reign of the saints with Christ purely spiritual, or is there suggested the idea of a literal "first resurrection" of the martyrs and faithful? These questions I must leave to be answered by others. My own opinion is that the distinction between symbol and outward fact must remain more or less an uncertainty till the time itself shall declare it.

There is in itself no contradiction in supposing that what, from the point of prophetic intuition, as in the Old Testament, is pictured as one event, may resolve itself on nearer survey into a series of events, or successive stages of one event; just as stars, which to the naked eye appear single, are resolved by the telescope into binary stars—two stars in inseparable relation.

But this I would confess, that the idea of a latter day of

glory on this earth of ours—a period of Sabbath rest and realisation of righteousness—has a charm to my mind, and seems to me to have its roots in so much Old Testament prediction, that I cannot willingly forego it; nor can I doubt that, if such a happy day dawns for our world, it will be a period of open vision and of actual intercommunion between heaven and earth, such as we now know nothing of—a period that brings back those days which, just because of their inconformity to our present experience, we are apt to think of as left behind, or to relegate to an age of fancy—the days of Eden and the Patriarchs, when God was near to men and communed with them—a period when the gates of intercourse with heaven will be reopened, and the angels of God will be seen ascending and descending, as in Jacob's vision (Gen. xxviii. 12), but now "upon the Son of Man" (John i. 51).

But nothing earthly endures, and even that blessed time, if I have thought upon it rightly, is not the end. There is a relapse (Rev. xx. 7-9)—a new crisis—and last of all the *final decisive appearing* of the Lord—His appearing in His glory, and in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels (Matt. xvi. 27, xxv. 31; Mark viii. 38). Then shall come about the dissolution of all earthly things, the resurrection of the dead, the great white throne of final judgment. It is the end-all of earthly affairs. Time is finished; thereafter eternity rolls its unending course.

IV.

On these dread "last things," solemn and impressive as they are, I can only permit myself to speak very briefly. It has already been seen how the doctrine of *the resurrection* enters as an integral element into the general system of Christian truth—how it is implied in the Scriptural doctrine of man as a compound personality, in the idea of death as the consequence of sin, in the facts of Christ's

own incarnation and resurrection, in the idea of a complete redemption. Paul counted it a serious error to say that the resurrection is past already (2 Tim. ii. 18)—*i.e.*, to interpret it in some purely spiritual sense. The intermediate or disembodied state of believers—happy as that may be (2 Cor. v. 6-8; Phil. i. 23; Rev. xiv. 13)—is still not one of perfected bliss. The Christian waits "for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. viii. 23). The pledge of that redemption is given him in the resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. xv. 20).

To all questions as to how this marvel can be brought about, Christ only gives the answer—"Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt. xxii. 29; *cf.* 1 Cor. xv. 35). Only let this caution be given, which may relieve some part of the difficulty. The essence of the doctrine of resurrection does not lie in any thought of identity of material particles between the old body and the new. Such identity did exist in the case of Christ, who rose in the very body which three days earlier had been laid in the tomb. It will exist in the case of the saints who are alive at the Advent, whose bodies will be "changed" (1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thess. iv. 15-17). The question now is, however, as to "the dead in Christ," whose bodies have long decayed; and here the idea of identity of material particles is excluded by the language of the Apostle himself. Using the analogy of the seed-corn, he says: "Thou sowest not the body that shall be. . . . but God giveth it a body even as it pleased Him (1 Cor. xv. 37, 38). There is here identity between the old and the new, even as regards the body; but plainly it is not identity of material substance.

In truth, as a little reflection will convince us, the *identity* of our earthly bodies in no case consists in sameness of material particles. The matter in our bodies is continually changing; in the course of a few years has

entirely changed. There is no more identity in substance between the body of to-day and the body of ten years ago, than there is between the waters flowing past a given point on successive days. The bond of identity lies in something deeper—in the abiding organising principle that is the thread of connection amidst all changes. That endures, is not destroyed at death; quickened anew into activity, it stamps its individuality and the marks it inherits from the old body upon the new.

But there is *a glorious change*. "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. xv. 42-44). It is "fashioned anew," "that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself" (Phil. ii. 21).

V.

The resurrection is the prelude to *the judgment*. That God shall call men into judgment is one of the most deeply-ingrained convictions of the human heart. Conscience, which is itself a kind of tribunal of divine judgment, is a perpetual witness to it. Heathen religions had anticipations of it. Egypt, in particular, gave large prominence to the idea of judgment after death. There is a judgment of God in history; and in the Gospel we have the assertion of a present judgment wrought by the manifestation of Christ (John iii. 18, 19). But the doctrine of the general judgment in the New Testament passes beyond all this. It is connected with the end of the world; it is public and universal; and it is *final*—decisive of the destinies of mankind (Matt. xxv. 31-46; Rom. ii. 5-11; 2 Cor. v. 10; Col. iii. 24, 25; Rev. xx. 12-15).

If the predictions of the Lord's Advent leave us in

dubiety about details, this is even more true of pictures of the judgment, which are necessarily couched, in large degree, in *figurative* or parabolic form. But nothing can be clearer than the great outstanding features of the event. The judgment, we learn, shall be absolutely *universal*—universal alike as regards the persons brought into it, and the matter included in its survey. It will be minute, searching, exhaustive, yet most just, for God is no respecter of persons (Acts x. 34). Yet in the case of the righteous, it will be a *saving judgment*. It could not be so if, like others, these stood or fell by what was written of their own deeds. The holiest could not face the All-Holy on these terms (Ps. cxxx. 3). But the believer appears in his union with Christ, with his Saviour's blood to atone and his Saviour's righteousness to plead. Hence he stands. *Another* book than that of works is opened—"the book of life"—and his name is written there (Rev. xx. 12). Even in the believer's case, however, works—the evidence of his faith—have an important bearing. If not the ground of his standing, they are yet the rule of his reward (Matt. xxv. 20-23; 2 Tim. iv. 7, &c.).

One solemn fact which deserves attention in its bearing on what is called "second probation" is that, in every representation of the judgment which we possess, the judgment proceeds on the record of *the present life*—on the basis of "the deeds done in the body" (2 Cor. v. 10). The whole state after death is regarded as one of "judgment" (Heb. ix. 27), and no suggestion is ever made of that state being essentially altered by anything that takes place, or can take place, beyond death. Every ray of warning, remonstrance, appeal, promise, in the Gospel, is concentrated in the present. "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. vi. 2).

The other great fact that arrests us in regard to the judgment is that its sentence is *definitive*. The stamp of finality is on it (Rev. xxii. 11). There is not the faintest hint in the Scripture anywhere of the reversal of its decisions. As the man leaves the judgment seat, so is his state and place in eternity.

VI.

With this word *eternity* I close these studies. I know the dark and difficult problems which the word opens up, for which I can profess to offer no satisfying solution: the doom of the unsaved who have rejected Christ; the lot of the millions of the heathen who have never heard of Him; the awful meaning of such words as "destruction," "the second death," "fire unquenchable" (Matt. iii. 12; xiii. 44; xxv. 41, 46; 2 Thess. i. 9; Rev. xx. 14, 15). Whatever the solution of these mysteries which God holds in His own hands, I feel persuaded that the solution means neither universal salvation nor yet the extinction of being for the lost. The continued existence of the unsaved is implied even in the passages that tell of the doom that falls upon them at the judgment. They "go away" into that doom (Matt. xxv. 46). These two things only I would venture to say. (1) We may be absolutely certain that the mercy of God will reach as far as ever it is possible for it to reach; and (2) there will be no lack of *discrimination* in the judgment. Even within the circle of those who are grouped as the unsaved, there will be gradations of penalty—the "few stripes" and the "many stripes" (Luke xii. 46, 47). Jesus says it will be "more tolerable" for some than for others in the day of judgment (Matt xi. 20-24). This again implies continued existence. The heaviest condemnation falls on those who, having had the light, have loved the darkness rather than the light, their deeds being evil (John iii. 19).

There the mystery must be left. We can bless God that this dark side of the picture of eternity is not the only or even the principal one—that the vision of eternity which chiefly fills the Scriptures is that of the *everlasting life* of blessedness and glory of the good. For the redeemed in Christ there is no cloud of sadness, but felicity in both soul and body for evermore. Holiness and joy are perfected. "And there shall be no curse any more; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein; and His servants shall serve; and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads" (Rev. xxii. 3, 4). In Christ's simpler words: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (Matt. xiii. 43).

Yet even in this glory, as said before, there are degrees, and those who serve Christ most faithfully in His kingdom here—the most loving, patient, prayerful, self-sacrificing, diligent, earnest in saving others—are the highest there. "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown."

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