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SOME REASONS
OF
OUR CHRISTIAN HOPE.



SOME REASONS
OF
OUR CHRISTIAN HOPE:

BEING THE

HULSEAN LECTURES FOR 1875.

BY

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TO THE MEMORY OF
HENRY ALFORD, D.D.

LATE DEAN OF CANTERBURY,

THESE LECTURES

ARE INSCRIBED,

AS A RECORD OF A FRIENDSHIP

BEGUN IN EARLY DAYS,

AND ONLY ENDING

WITH LIFE ITSELF.

PREFACE.

THE Lectures which this volume contains were delivered in Great St Mary's Church, Cambridge, in December and January last, in fulfilment of the office of Hulsean Lecturer for the year 1875. The duties of the office, as prescribed by Mr Hulse's will, have been modified by various orders of the Court of Chancery and of the University Commissioners. Parts of the Lectures were necessarily omitted in the delivery for want of time.

Their general plan is as follows. I have endeavoured first to define the nature of our Christian hope, and to shew that it is adapted to certain real and deep wants of human nature¹. I have recognized, secondly, the history of our Lord's earthly life, His death and resurrection, as the only basis on which that hope can be rested ; and have

¹ Lecture I.

sought to shew further that some such history is required to account for the origin of the Christian Church, and for the admitted facts of the Christian life, as these have been experienced, in the largest possible variety of circumstances, during the last eighteen centuries¹. I have sought, thirdly, to determine by strict examination the real value of the *direct* evidence of the truth of the Christian history, afforded by the various books included in the Canon of the New Testament².

I have then gone back to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and have sought to shew that they afford convincing proof of a divinely guided preparation for the coming of the Son of God³. I have sought finally to consider carefully certain difficulties which are very generally felt to be involved in those conceptions of Revelation and Inspiration which, in *some* shape, seem to be necessarily implied in our Christian faith⁴.

¹ Lecture II. ² Lecture III. ³ Lecture IV. ⁴ Lecture V.

The Lectures are intended to meet a want which I believe to be real and pressing. The wonderful progress of inquiry, historic, scientific, and philosophical, in recent years, has given a new shape to many old objections, and has produced many which were apparently unknown to the generations in which our great English works on the evidences were written. The difficulties of belief have been eagerly and skilfully paraded in books which have gained a more or less wide circulation; and are continually alluded to, often with an implied assumption that they are insuperable, in much of the popular literature of the day. For the last few years an impression has prevailed widely, even among those to whom it was most unwelcome, that recent investigations have greatly weakened, if they have not altogether destroyed, the force of the formerly accepted evidences of Christianity.

Many of those who have been and are dis-

quieted by this apprehension, however intelligent and well informed on general subjects, are unable or unwilling to read large books, or to enter upon profound and difficult investigations for themselves. Those writings on the subject, whether popular or philosophical, which satisfied a former generation, do not deal directly enough with the sceptical difficulties of our own day, to make the real force of their argument felt by those to whom I wish especially to address myself. I have endeavoured to supply their want of a statement of the Christian argument, in a shape adapted to the difficulties of the present day, which shall be clear and true, as far as it goes, and shall serve in some measure as a guide to further study of the subject.

My aim in these Lectures has not been controversial. I mean that I have not wished to reply to any particular writer. I have aimed to speak as a Christian to Christians, with regard to the

nature and the grounds of a hope in which we have a common personal interest, but which we have no wish to retain if it be not really founded in truth. I have hoped to shew them that the history which is the basis of our Christian hope is as fully proved as any history can be ; and that the faith which that history implies is reasonable in itself, and is adapted to the real wants of man with a profound wisdom plainly betokening its divine origin.

I am well aware that my aim, as above defined, is a limited, and comparatively humble one, but that, even so understood, the work undertaken is difficult, and that I am very imperfectly qualified for it. The argument which I have treated is indeed one on which I have thought continually through life ; and I have endeavoured to urge nothing which I do not entirely believe, after long consideration, to be worthy of the place which I have given to it in the proof. But the subject is vast ; and a life spent in active parochial work has not

allowed me time for that deep research, or even for that patient consecutive thought on difficult questions, without which no man can hope to offer contributions at once new and trustworthy to apologetic theology. My hope has been that I might help some, who have not time for extensive reading, to see that they have within their reach, in facts and considerations of which the truth can scarcely be denied, ample ground for a reasonable conviction that the Christian creed, and the life which should result from its acceptance, are realities, not illusions.—Some too, I hope, who are entering on a wider range of reading, may find what I have written useful, as an introduction to study, and a clue through the labyrinth of detail in which a young student sometimes becomes bewildered.

It would be impossible and useless to acknowledge all I owe to others who have treated parts of my subject. The books to which I am directly indebted are generally well known and easily ac-

cessible. But the writers to whom one owes most in reality are often just those to whom one can least express one's obligations by reference to particular passages. They have helped to form one's habits of thought. They have suggested subjects of inquiry. It is scarcely necessary to say that I have used freely, and am deeply indebted to, the works of the Dean of Westminster, of Professors Westcott and Lightfoot, with Professor Pusey's invaluable introductions to and commentaries upon the Minor Prophets. Sometimes I may seem to have borrowed from these and other recent writers results at which I had really arrived independently, in years long past, and which I have only been deeply thankful to find afterwards confirmed by authority so much higher than my own.

I have found it pleasant and useful to myself to have been engaged, during the preparation of my lectures, with the great truths which lie nearest to the roots of our Christian life, and should therefore

be dearest to all to whom that life and its Lord are dear. I can only wish that some of those who read them may find something of the same pleasure and benefit. From a deep and fairly earned conviction of the certainty and paramount importance of these great verities, there should follow immediately a deeper feeling of brotherhood with all who receive them, however they may be apparently separated from us by differences about matters of less primary importance. We may hope for a yet further consequence, in a deeper charity toward those also who still find it difficult to receive them, yet are often, by the purity of their lives, and their high moral aims, an example to believers.

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LECTURE I.

*OUR CHRISTIAN HOPE CONSIDERED
AS MEETING THE DEEPEST
WANTS OF MAN.*

LECTURE I.

1 PET. III. 15.

Be ready always to give an answer to every man which asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, [but] with meekness and fear.

EVERY one feels that during the last few years there has been a very general unsettlement of old-established opinion upon almost all questions connected with religion and philosophy. Nearly every question is regarded just now as an *open* question. Any one of many answers to it may possibly prove true; and it is more likely than anything else that no final and conclusive answer will ever be found.

Those who would fain hold fast what they and their fathers have believed and practised are naturally pained by this. To them it is simply terrible to think of the limitless and unfathomable ocean into which human life seems to be drifting without chart and compass. The world

seems as firmly convinced as it can be of anything, that the old chart and compass are delusive or outworn. We shrink from the bewilderment, the loss of salutary restraint, the absence of guidance in life and of hope in death, which appear to await our children.

Nor is the behaviour of those whose sympathies are with the general movement usually such as to diminish these natural apprehensions. Their tone and manner constantly betray a want of any just sense of the momentous import of the questions which they are raising. They seem either never to consider, or, if they do consider, to presume upon, the want of fitness for any serious and patient consideration of these questions, under which a very large part of the audience to which they address themselves—the inexperienced, the half-educated, the uninformed on philosophical and historical subjects—is necessarily labouring. They seem to forget that, if belief has its prejudices and obstinacies, scepticism has also its supercilious pride of superiority to prejudice, and

its emancipation from irksome restraints ; and that these may commend it to an unreasoning acceptance, with many who will never take the trouble to form a real conviction either way. They seem unaware, or not displeased, that many wish to live for this world only, and will welcome as a relief from all check upon worldliness, the gospel (as it would be to them) that the unseen world has no certain existence, and consequently no claim upon recognition in their plans of life.

I am not at all sure that this is more the case now than it has often been before. Bishop Butler complained that it was so in his day¹. Wilberforce, a generation or two later, says somewhere that before the Great Revolution of last century it was so everywhere in the upper circles of English life. Much of the apparent unbelief around us is rather apparent than real, and does but float on the still surface of society. It seems to be widely diffused among men of the literary

¹ See 'Advertisement,' prefixed to the *Analogy*, dated May, 1736.

profession, which has become so important an estate of the realm within living memory. It is natural to suppose that the popular literature of an age indicates the general current of its thought and feeling. And, no doubt, in quiet times the world does accept, without any audible protest, the pleasant food provided by the periodical literature of the day. But whenever any great emergency makes the world serious for a few months, it becomes impatient of the scepticism of its self-constituted teachers. At such times a deep undercurrent of religious belief manifests its unsuspected strength. And the energy of Christian feeling displaying itself in various forms, and the amount of self-denying Christian labour which is being expended in well-doing on every side of us, are tokens of the reality of Christian life existing in multitudes, such as may well make any Christian thankful and hopeful, on a broader view of our time, rather than dejected.

Still, after all abatements have been duly made, it seems the fact that for some years past there

has been, and probably for some years to come there will be, a general impression among educated and intelligent men that the grounds of Christian belief have been considerably weakened by the progress of scientific, philosophic, and historical inquiry. It is very generally assumed by many popular writers and speakers, and the world is impressed by the assumption, that the Christian scriptures are irreconcilably at variance with ascertained facts in science:—that the evidence of their credibility is proved by historic criticism to be considerably less than was formerly supposed:—that many of the fundamental conceptions implied in Christianity and its alleged evidence have been proved by an accepted philosophy to be impossible. That this impression does exist in very many minds, may and must be confessed alike by those who regret and those who rejoice in its existence.

What then shall be the attitude towards this popular scepticism of those who still believe that the foundation of their faith stands firm? Not, I trust, one of fear, or of anger. That can only be

possible to those who have some secret misgiving as to the truth of their Creed. In them it may be natural enough. For

When men are tost
On tides of strange opinion, and not sure
Of their own selves, they are wroth with their own selves
And thence with others¹.

But he who truly believes is sure, in the poet's sense, of his own self; and therefore can afford to be patient with those whom he believes to be in error. Still less one of contempt. That is of all feelings the most alien from a Christian's mind toward those who (possibly with little fault of their own) are casting away what he knows to be the greatest blessing. Nor yet of such averseness from the task of examining the foundations on which our faith rests, as shall either make us refuse to inquire, or become incapable of fair dealing, and of hearty sympathy with any really earnest doubt and difficulty which exists in the mind of others.

Neither shall we be hopeless, as some would

¹ *Queen Mary*, Act III., Scene iv.

tell us that we ought to be, of any really good result from serious examination of the nature and the grounds of our belief.

Of course there can be little hope of good at present from discussion with those who are not in earnest, because they think that truth and falsehood in religious belief or non-belief differ little, and are of little import to individuals or to the world. But many of those who feel doubt and difficulty, and even incline at present toward unbelief, are yet men of deeply religious instincts, and of lives of which the truthfulness, the purity, and the unselfishness may put that of many Christians to shame by comparison. These men have a right to be reasoned with patiently and kindly as well as fairly. We are bound to shew those who approach the question thus, what we believe, and why we believe it. If they cannot yet receive the truth we live by, we trust that many of them will hereafter feel their way toward it, as the discipline of life forms in them a maturer wisdom, deepens their knowledge of human wants, and opens their hearts to receive

the divinely given satisfaction of those wants which our faith alone, as we believe, can afford.

And there are around us and them the many who have no adverse prejudices to overcome ; who have been trained in Christian belief, and are living, or trying to live, Christian lives. These men and women, for they are both, reasonably ask us, who are older, and have made these matters the subjects of our study, to shew them, if we can, that they have no need to be ashamed of the belief which they have learnt first in its simple elements from a mother's lips ; which was then unfolded more fully in the Christian teaching and worship which have been among the best influences of their home and school and University. They demand of us, and often with a very touching meekness and fear, a reason of the hope that is in us. They would very gladly cherish the same hope in themselves, if only they can be shewn that it is no delusion, but a truth which may be tested, which does not fear inquiry, and which has its own appropriate proof,— a proof practically sufficient to sustain its weight.

I can best hope to make useful my fulfilment of the office intrusted to me, by trying to do the work of which I have thus sketched the outline. I do not address myself to philosophers and scientific or deeply learned men, *as such*. They will seek from others the removal of those doubts which their special gifts and studies have made peculiarly perplexing to themselves. They will not expect satisfaction from one who has no claim to be regarded as their compeer upon their own ground; still less as their instructor.

I attempt a much humbler but I believe not at all an unuseful work. I would address myself, if I could hope that my words would reach them, to the general mass of my intelligent and educated fellow countrymen and countrywomen, on those great matters which most deeply concern us *simply as human beings*, whatever our condition in life, our acquirements, or abilities may be. I wish to lay before those who will give me their attention some plain and simple considerations, which satisfy me, and which, after long consideration, I think

ought to satisfy them, that a Christian's hope is *a reasonable hope*; a Christian's rule of duty is *a divinely given law*; the Christian belief, on which both depend, *a divinely revealed reality*. I wish to give them an antidote, God enabling me, to the cavil and the sneer which flippant speakers and writers too often throw before those who, as they well know, will not, perhaps cannot sift them.

I wish, if it may be, to shew such persons that any philosophy which recognizes all the facts of human nature must needs recognize the existence and many of the attributes of a Divine Being; on whom we and all nature depend; and for the knowledge and love of whom man was made. Such a philosophy must therefore leave room for the possibility, and ought to confess the desirableness, of a revelation of further truth concerning that Being to man. I wish to shew them that real historic inquiry, proceeding according to the laws which govern all reasonable investigation of history, ought to result in a conviction that the history which is the basis of the Christian revelation is substantially

true. I wish to shew that it is only a misapprehension of the design and nature of the Christian revelation, which has ever seemed to bring it into collision with well-established truths of physical or moral science. I wish above all to recognize and give reason for a deep conviction that the Christian life, really lived as it may be and has been lived by many in every age, is the best evidence of its own divine original; and that he who will honestly try to live that life will in due time find a better witness given him within himself than any external proof, to which yet he does well to give heed, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in his heart¹.

It will be my aim then to do this, as far as possible, I know that it must be very imperfectly, within the narrow limits necessarily assigned to my work. And in doing it I wish to keep steadily in view the truth of which St Peter's word '*hope*,' rather than '*faith*,' seems chosen to remind us. '*Faith*' is very apt, and perhaps was so even before the age of the

¹ 2 Pet. i. 19.

Apostles ended¹, to degenerate into an expression for the hard and dry belief that certain things are true. 'Hope' does still retain, and can scarcely ever lose, its connotation of a looking for something in which our own personal interest is made sure. "The hope that is in you" means evidently the expectation of some good thing for which we look as *promised to ourselves*. One man cannot properly be said to hope for that which is promised to another, in which he himself has no part.

Yet let me guard by anticipation against a popular misinterpretation of the word hope, or false inference from its use. Never let us think of a Christian's hope as relating to blessings altogether future. They are such in part; and the perfection, and the full enjoyment of them all, is matter not of present possession, but of future expectancy. But the future for which a Christian looks is not something altogether new and unlike anything to which he can attain in his present state of being². His future life, if we listen at all to any of those

¹ Jude 3. James ii. 14.

² John v. 24. 1 John iii. 14.

whom the Church has accepted as its teachers, from the Apostles downward, is the development, in their full perfection, of capacities and habits which have their beginning in this life, and their appropriate exercise in its daily trials. It is the full enjoyment, unbroken and without hindrance, of that which has its foretaste given even now, though it be only known in part, through many hindrances, in much imperfection.

The aim then of this first Lecture will be to shew you, or remind you, what the blessings are substantially, or as to their essential nature, which a Christian believes that he has now, and which he hopes to have much more fully hereafter. In so doing, we must mark distinctly the connexion, in a Christian's belief, between those blessings and the Person of the Saviour in whom he lives. We must notice also how remarkably they meet all the facts of human nature, and satisfy its wants. In the subsequent Lectures I must endeavour to shew you some of the reasons which assure us that in so believing and so hoping we

have not *followed cunningly devised fables*¹, but are maintaining truth as surely proved as it is full of comfort to those who hold it in reality.

Our interest in the inquiry on which we are entering must depend in great measure, of course, on our answer to the question, what those blessings are, which, as Christians we have in part, and hope to have more perfectly. Is it little or much which we have personally at stake, when we ask whether our Christian faith has the rock for its foundation, or some shifting sand? We do not wish to accept for proof that which is not really proof, because the thing to be proved is what we might wish to find true. But neither do we wish to enter into the evidence in a state of cold indifference as to the result of the inquiry; which takes away all earnestness and reality from the investigation. We will watch, by God's help, against all self-deception, as we proceed; but we will not affect or try to forget that the reality of the blessings which faith gives us is a matter to us of life and death;—of life and

¹ See 2 Pet. i. 16.

death to ourselves if we are truly Christians;—of the very greatest possible moment to the world, whatever our own personal attitude towards the Christian's hope may be. Moreover, it may well be argued that what so satisfies man's heart must come from Him who made it.

We must begin by recognizing some of those facts of internal consciousness, common as we believe to all mankind, which our Christian faith presupposes, and of which the recognition is necessary to give meaning to its hopes.

First among them I place the sense, common I believe to all men, of dependence on an unseen Power; which is the elementary basis of all religion.

I place next the sense of right and wrong with regard to our own voluntary actions; implying of course, what I believe that no subtlety of analysis can get rid of, the consciousness of *will*; that is of something in ourselves which is not subject to any law of invariable sequence, such as rules (we believe) in outward nature. Conscious of freedom

to will, we are conscious also that the exercise of that will is subject to responsibility. We know that regret and remorse are feelings essentially different from each other. When we think of our own voluntary acts, and of those states of feeling which accompany or follow on them, and of these alone, we perceive that some of them deserve blame, and others approval. I do not aim to analyse these facts, nor yet do I assume that they cannot be analysed. For our present purpose it is enough that, whether elemental or compound facts, they are undeniable facts in human nature, attested by all human language and action.

A third point, which I simply state in the same way, is that this fact of conscience is 'closely connected with that other fact of the sense of dependence; so that we do instinctively connect our sense of right and wrong with the will and the judgement of that unseen Being on whom we depend. He approves what is right in our voluntary actions, He disapproves what is wrong.

I am well aware, of course, that fierce controversy rages still as to the nature of some of these facts, and their import. I only put such controversy aside, as one of which our Christian faith and hope do not absolutely require the determination. In that broad practical meaning in which alone we assume them, they are almost indisputable.

These facts being first recognised, certain others must also be recognised, either as implied in these, or as presupposed in order to give them meaning and consistency, or as proved by long and wide experience.

Such are the following. The nature of that Being on whom we depend;—His mind towards ourselves;—the state of our own actual relation to Him;—must be matter of the deepest import to us. Our mind and heart alike crave for some acquaintance with Him. Our natural affections toward our parents have surely their yet nobler counterparts in love and reverence toward Him in whom we live. Conscience surely is the witness to us of something in Him of which it is the image.

It is the utterance of His mind, the reflexion of His character.

And what then if, as is the case, what we see around us, and what we are conscious of within ourselves, be in great part displeasing to Him?—That sense of guilt when we have done wrong, that shame, that anxiety, which accompanies remorse;—are not these some indications of His displeasure?—And if the guilt and shame of wrong doing are found in our own heart, and if we hear them uttered, and see proof that they are really felt, by those around us;—do we not all greatly need some answer to the question, whether the God in whom we live and move and are, is or is not displeased with sin; and if He be, then whether any reconciliation with Him be possible, and in what way effected?

And if, which surely is the fact, there is something in us which anticipates the continuance of existence, and of conscious existence, after that death which awaits us all and must sever us, we know not when, from those whom we love better

than we love ourselves;—then must not all this anxiety with regard to our relations with the unknown God become far more deeply intense?

Who can look into his own heart and retrace his past life without discovering much guilt there? which, if conscience be indeed the echo of the voice of God within us, takes the name and nature of *sin*. Who can look upon the world around him and not see that sin has a wide dominion there? And who is there really anxious to purify his own life and heart, that is not painfully conscious of another truth; namely, that his efforts to overcome evil, either within himself or amongst his fellow-men, are very often ineffectual because of a weakness, sometimes even a perverseness of the will?

Again, we are social beings, members as we say of a vast human family, with our fellow-members of which we have various relations, with whom and for whom we *must* live in part; and who in their turn must live for us in part;—we depending in a thousand ways on them, and they in turn, or some of them, influenced by and depending

in part upon ourselves. We find ourselves placed by nature itself in families; placed by the actual order of the world in nations; dwelling together as citizens. Have these facts any basis in a divinely appointed social order?—Is there any higher and better union between man and man than that which we call civil, or natural, or even family life? Any bond of union which shall underlie all these, and give them holier and better meanings than a merely earthly view of them can support; be wider in their scope than the widest of them—more intimate than the closest of them—more lasting than the most enduring of them all?

Is there, again, we ask further, anywhere any power which may be available for the improvement of the world;—for the regeneration not of the individual man only, but of the society, of the race?—Any motive which shall animate the individual man to live for his fellow-men; shall assure him that so living he shall not live in vain, either for himself or for others; shall tell him that, even when apparently defeated, the cause of truth and

right is really the winning cause, and shall at last prevail? These surely are wants most real; well deserving to be numbered amongst the observed facts of human nature.

And one thing more we must place surely in the same class with these, as even more undeniably real than any other;—the fact of death, and of our need of something which shall enable us to meet death in its inevitable hour. Without this, human life remains not only a mystery unexplained, but a thing mournful and hopeless, just in proportion as it is deepest and fullest. When the ideal of man is most nearly attained, in all that depends upon himself;—when his mind is ripest and most richly stored with knowledge;—when all the lessons of practical wisdom have been most truly learnt from long experience;—when the moral nature seems most completely developed;—when the affections are expanded to their full perfection and directed to the objects which of all on earth come nearest to satisfy them;—full often just then—not falling gently after a season of calm decay, like the leaves

in autumn, but rudely torn and shattered in the midst of their fullest strength and tenderness—death comes, and mars man's purposes, destroys his hopes, blots out and abolishes all that he has treasured, tears from him what he loves: and if this life be all, so it is that the most perfect and noblest thing on earth is utterly despoiled and frustrated. This surely is a fact in human nature, this fact of death, which needs, I will not say to be explained;—but to be met in some way with a remedy, *a counterfact*, if I might use the word, which shall balance if it may not remove the fact of death, and so relieve human life from a depression too heavy to be endured.

I speak with a purely practical aim. I do not propose to offer a complete enumeration, far less analysis of these facts of consciousness. But I believe that these are some of the main facts of human nature, with which any system purporting to be the divine satisfaction of human wants, must necessarily deal in some way, if it is to establish its claim to be attended to by thoughtful men. The

sense of dependence on a Being in whom we live ; the sense of responsibility to Him for the exercise of our own will ; the craving for friendship and fellowship with Him ; the sense of guilt incurred by acts done contrary to our duty towards Him ; the sense of moral weakness, disabling us for the attainment of that which we know that we ought to attain ; the sense of human fellowship, and of the want of some divinely ordered way of entering into that fellowship, and working for our fellow-men ; and, finally, the craving for some reversal of, or remedy for, the universal doom of death : of these wants, I say, any system, whether it be a confessedly human philosophy of human life, or a so-called revelation from above to man, must needs take account : it must in some way attempt to meet them, or it is self-convicted of futility.

None, I think, will deny that our Christian hope does recognize and deal with them all in a way of its own. It has its answer for each question which we have asked. We have to ascertain in the remainder of this Lecture, what that answer

is, and in future Lectures to shew some reasons for believing it to be the divinely given answer to our need.

The Christian's answer must be understood as including much which it pre-supposes and postulates, rather than affirms as distinctively part of itself. It assumes, and so implicitly reaffirms a great deal concerning man which it never claims to have made known to the world for the first time. It fully recognizes all the most important facts of human nature; the will, the conscience, the affections, the sense of dependence on a Being, in whom we live, with whom we are all in the most intimate contact through conscience, which it teaches us to regard as His voice in us. It reaffirms, what even without it we might surmise, nay, go far to prove for ourselves, that He has made and governs the world; that He is one whom we may venture to call a Person,—a Being, that is, having will and affections and moral character,—the archetype of man, as man ought to be; in whose likeness, as it expressly tells us, we were made; designed for communion, friend-

ship, fellowship with Him, most mysterious yet most real; and finding in this fellowship the highest aim, the truest dignity, the best happiness of our nature, the only true rest and satisfaction of those immortal longings, which we have in us until we quench them.

So far I believe that the Christian's hope is telling us only what a true analysis of the facts of consciousness would teach the few who are capable of making it. But it soon passes on to affirm something new. It tells us that this God of truth and righteousness, in whom we live, and for union and communion with whom we were made, has always cared for man. It tells us that, from the earliest days of man's existence upon earth, God has been caring for man, with regard to those moral and spiritual wants, in which he differs from and rises above the other creatures which God feeds and clothes and sustains. From the early ages of the world God has spoken as a Friend, a Father, to man, that He may bring man into fellowship with Himself, and maintain him in that fellowship.

God has not been willing to cease caring in this way for man, when man seemed little careful to feel after God that he might find Him. Whatever else the Bible is, or professes to be, it is first and above all the record of God's revelation of Himself to man, as Friend and Father, righteous, holy, yet full of compassion. It claims to be a faithful record of the way in which God has made Himself known to men, and of the response which God has drawn forth from the spirit of man.

And in the whole course and progress of this revelation of God to man, it professes to unveil man also to man himself. It recognizes, as we have seen, and reauthenticates all which man can read within himself, as to his moral and spiritual being; the existence of conscience, and its rightful supremacy over the affections, and control of the will. But it thereby casts also a light upon the existing derangement and disorder of man's inner being; it convicts him of SIN, that is, *of wrong, considered as done against God*. It compels man to attend to, and to acknowledge the fact that con-

science is habitually either openly disobeyed, or put to sleep by a process of self-flattery or self-deception. It shews us that everywhere within the world of man's life, whether we regard him in his relations to God or to his fellow-men, all is fatally disordered. Sin defiles the past and the present; and a certain moral impotency of the will, which does not choose the good it sees above, but the evil to which it is attracted from beneath, overcasts, if it does not wholly destroy, all the hope of the future.

Our Christian hope therefore assumes as its foundation the fact that it is a hope given to a sinful being, by an act of Grace resting upon an Atonement made; a hope of full redemption, as we shall see presently, of perfect restoration; but that hope granted to one who, if left to himself, might have had reason to despair.

I do not now trace the history of what we affirm to have been God's preparation of the world for the mission of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That will be the subject of my Fourth

Lecture. I only wish now to remind you that our Christian hope does assume the fact, that God's care for man as a spiritual being, did not begin with the Incarnation, but culminated in this, for which the whole previous history of the world, regarded on its divine side, was a preparatory discipline. No Christian understands his own position who does not feel that it has for its basis a preparatory dispensation, no less divinely ordered than his own, though confessedly imperfect, because earlier and preliminary. I wish now to begin where our Christian creeds begin to add something to that recognition of the Creator and Lord of all, which is necessarily their first word.

Our distinctively Christian hope, then, or the belief on which it rests, is that which the Church has embodied in its Creeds, and claims to substantiate by the Scriptures; but which in its substance is older than the Creeds or the Scriptures of the New Testament themselves; as old as the days in which the Gospel history was told by the lips of those who had themselves seen the Lord, and were

gathered in His name in some upper chamber at Troas¹, or at the house of Justus which joined hard to the synagogue at Corinth². Our hope toward God rests primarily upon our belief that after a long season of preparation,—after speaking to men for ages, in many parts and in varied ways, by the prophets and righteous men of the Old Testament,—God did eighteen hundred years ago speak to them by One who was His Son in a way and meaning in which no mere man ever was or can be. Our hope, as beings conscious of sin and moral helplessness, has for its foundation the belief that Jesus of Nazareth lived that life and died that death which our Gospels, at least in their broad outline, describe; that He rose again from the dead, and was seen alive after His passion by certain chosen witnesses; in whose presence He ascended into heaven, in the reality of glorified human nature; that He is now in heaven, and holds all the power of His Father in heaven and earth.

We believe that when Jesus died and rose

¹ Acts xx. 7, 8.

² Acts xviii. 7.

again, He accomplished the redemption of the world. We dare not indeed attempt, the Church's wisest teachers never have attempted, to frame a theory of Atonement. We believe that all human conceptions of the nature and efficacy of the redemptive act must needs be most inadequate ; and that if any one of them, however practically true for its own purposes, be taken as expressing the whole, and pursued into its consequences, it will land us in conclusions repugnant alike to our moral sense, and to Scripture. But we confess, with all humility and thankfulness, that the death of Christ was the Atonement¹;—let us rather say, following more closely the language as well as the general tenor of Scripture, that *Christ Himself*, who died for us the death of the cross, *is the Atonement*, the Propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world². This truth we hold fast, as the firm foundation of

¹ Rom. v. 10, 11.

² Compare 1 Joh. ii. 1, 2; iv. 10, with Ephes. ii. 14 ff.; Col. i. 20 ff.

our hope. But we hold it remembering also, what Scripture teaches everywhere, that the Atonement itself is the gift of our Heavenly Father's love¹;—not the procuring cause of his love;—as though persuading One who did not love us to forgive;—but the way in which that Father's wise and holy love has wrought to reconcile us to Himself.

We believe further, as His first disciples did, that from Jesus Christ there has gone forth, in fulfilment of His own promise, the Holy Spirit of God, to renew the springs of human life, and in God's good time to restore all things. We believe that this Holy Spirit, speaking through the conscience, strives everywhere with the spirit of man. But we believe especially that, wherever the name of Jesus as the Saviour is made known to men, His Spirit so accompanies and works with Christ's Gospel, that some receive it into their mind and heart, and are gathered into the Church of Christ. That Society of Christian people, formed first under the ministry of the Apostles by their Lord's com-

¹ Joh. iii. 16, 17; Rom. v. 8; 2 Cor. v. 18—21, with the passages referred to in the last note.

mand, in the expectation of the Spirit's coming, was fully endowed and made diffusive on the day of Pentecost, and gathered in thenceforth believers from all nations, to be built up in the knowledge and love of God.

This Church then, we believe, has existed, and always will exist on earth, as 'a visible body gifted with invisible privileges'¹; a body constituted expressly for the nurture of believers in the knowledge and love of God, and as God's witness of His Son to the world. It has existed and spread itself, conquering first heathenism in the Roman Empire, then barbarism in the fall of that Empire. It has fulfilled, no doubt, but very imperfectly the great ends of its existence. It has been disfigured often by the distortion of the truth deposited with it; and still more by much unfaithfulness to their calling in its individual members. Yet still it has been the great source of nearly all ameliorating in-

¹ I think that the expression is Dr Newman's. Some remarks on the sense in which I use the word Church will be found in a note at the end of the volume.

fluences to the world, in which God has placed it, with a promise that it shall not perish until its Lord shall come in glory as the Judge and King of men. For to this coming again in glory all history and prophecy of God's dealing with men lead up, and in this it will be consummated.

These are the great objective truths included in our Christian faith. I have given them as simply as I could, and as nearly as possible in the form in which the Apostles seem to have taught them.

Let me add, that all who have entered into the spirit either of the Apostolic writings, or of the liturgic remains of the early Church, will agree that the faith and love and trust and hope of the Church in every age has had for its centre and root the recognition of our Lord as a Personal Saviour, at once truly man, and the Eternal Son or Word of God ; mediating for men in heaven, yet present evermore with his Church upon the earth ; sustaining, directing, animating by his own Holy Spirit, both each individual believer, and the whole community of the faithful, on earth, and in the

unseen world. The Christian faith, in short, has always had for its true and proper object, not a system of doctrine, but a Person; and that Person, the Son of God, who loved His Church, and gave Himself for it; and who, having once died, is now alive for evermore.

And now as to the appropriation of these truths by the individual believer, so as to make them the ground and rule of his own personal Christian life.

We believe, as the Apostles taught in their Master's name, that the Christian life is one which can only be worthily described as the life of his Lord communicated to him. "I live," St Paul says of himself as a Christian, "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me¹." "Your life," he says to his fellow-Christians, "is hid with Christ in God²." St John's expression for that life is to "abide in Christ³;" even as he tells us that "hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us⁴." Other Apostles may have entered less deeply into the secrets of the inner life, and certainly have

¹ Gal. ii. 20. ² Col. iii. 3. ³ 1 Joh. ii. 6, 28. ⁴ 1 Joh. iii. 24.

spoken less fully of them in their few remaining writings. The Church has always regarded these two great Apostles as its special teachers of spiritual wisdom, and has thoroughly accepted their declarations on this subject as part of the faith once delivered, and as having their counterpart in the experience of every mature Christian. But all our apostolic teachers agree to call the communication of this life to the soul a new birth, a birth from above, effected by the power of the Spirit of God. On this point St Peter, and even St James, speak as distinctly as St John or St Paul. "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth," St James says, "that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures¹." St Peter speaks of his fellow-Christians as "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever²."

¹ James i. 18. Though early external testimony to the authorship of the Epistle is scanty, the internal evidence, coupled with the early recognition by the Syrian Church, seems decisive. See Alford's *Prolegomena* to the Epistle, for a fair summary of the evidence.

² 1 Pet. i. 23.

Even as St Paul speaks¹ of the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He poured forth on us abundantly, as the chief fruit of God's goodness and kindness toward man, whereby we are saved; and as St John tells us that we are "born of God²," born "not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God³."

Led by these guides, we believe that in varied ways, and through divers means, according to His own will, God by His Spirit speaks to the spirit in man, and awakens it to hunger and thirst after communion, a loving fellowship, with Himself, through Jesus Christ as the Redeemer, who is the Atonement for their sins. And we believe that He who implanted the desire satisfies it in due time with the blessing desired. The heart which seeks Him finds Him. He draws nigh to those who draw nigh to Him. His love desires our good; His Spirit yearns to lead us through Jesus Christ to our Heavenly Father; His Father and our Father, His God and our God⁴. Sometimes from the first

¹ Tit. iii. 5. ² 1 Joh. v. 1. ³ Joh. i. 12, 13. ⁴ Joh. xx. 17.

opening of consciousness in the child, sometimes after much resistance or indifference to the divine call,—after many wanderings and much experience of famine in the far country, away from God,—God in His great mercy brings His child to the knowledge of His mercy, and the full experience of His love. And when this is so, there follows, as the fruit of the Spirit's indwelling, patient continuance in well-doing, earnest pursuit of holiness, a life and heart renewed in the likeness of that Saviour whom His servant follows evermore with true heart, though sometimes with faltering steps.

Day by day, as we advance in the Christian life, we feel perhaps only the more deeply those two great and most pressing wants of every heart, which is not sunk in sensuality or worldliness, or absorbed in an intellectual self-worship;—the want, I mean (as I have said already), first of pardon for sin, and peace with God, perpetually renewed; and then, of strength not our own, in which to overcome the power of evil. And day by day the experience is more fully given to those who

try to live by faith in Christ, and seek God's own teaching in humility, that He in whom we live supplies this need and every other. He lives, and we live in Him. He has overcome, and we in his strength are enabled to overcome also. He is made to us of God indeed, as his Apostle tells us, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption¹;" according to our daily need of each.

And as in the present conflict with evil we find Him in whom we live all sufficient, so it is promised that we shall find Him in the illimitable future, to which the spirit of man looks forward with irrepressible longing. Death remains before the Christian, as it does before other men. But the Christian does not, like the child of this world, regard death as the end of his connexion with that for which he cares, the spoiler who scatters and breaks in pieces the accumulated treasures of a life-time. He believes that to depart is to be with Christ, which is far better². He believes that all the appointed discipline of life, both its joys and its

¹ 1 Cor. i. 30.

² Phil. i. 23.

sorrows and its temptations, yield, to him who makes his spiritual union with Christ a reality by faith, the fruit of a continual growth in faculties and habits and dispositions of soul which will find their freer exercise and their perfect development in the world which lies beyond death¹. When sorrowing for those who go before him, he does not sorrow without hope². They will rise again, and he himself will rise, through Him who is the Resurrection and the Life³. He does not ask very anxiously what form he shall give by anticipation to that hope of resurrection. He is very willing to leave in his Lord's hands the solution of all questions with regard to the relation between his present body and the spiritual body with which he expects his spirit to be clothed again at the day of Christ's appearing⁴. But he does believe (if he believes with the Apostles) that some wonderful organism, very different⁵ from the soul's present instrument of perception and action, will in that day restore the

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 17. ² 1 Thess. iv. 13. ³ Joh. xi. 25; v. 28, 29.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 44.

⁵ ἀλλαγησόμεθα, 1 Cor. xv. 52.

spirit to its capacity for serving God in activity as well as in contemplation. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him¹."

Nor is this personal hope for the future one in which a Christian stands insulated, as thinking of himself alone. His great business in this present state is to follow his Lord in *caring for others*, *working for others*, in true love to them and to Him who has redeemed them. For all those who bear his Saviour's name he is ready to care. With those who shew anything of his Saviour's character he has the closest sympathy. For all mankind—made in his Heavenly Father's image, redeemed by the same Saviour who has loved him and given Himself for him—he has a very loving compassion. He finds his strength to work in the cause of true freedom, of sound improvement, social and political, as well as directly religious, in the same faith which is the support of his own inner life.

If it has ever seemed otherwise; if sometimes

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 14.

Christianity has been made an excuse for indifference to national life, or for resistance to sound and useful progress; the fault has lain either in some disturbing accident,—as when the nation or its government has opposed or persecuted Christianity, or by some corrupting influence has enervated it;—or else in the imperfect apprehension which Christians have too often had of their own principles. Necessarily the Christian life works *from within*. It does not deal directly with the outward forms of the social or political system which it finds existing, but aims to purify their springs in the individual man. And sometimes good men have failed to see that in a Christian nation, public life and its improvement form an important part of the service in which their Saviour has called them to occupy¹ until He come. They have not seen, and so have failed to fulfil, the obligation laid upon them by their Saviour's law². We cannot wonder if the less obvious consequences

¹ Luke xix. 13, *πραγματεύσασθε*.

² See note at the end of the volume.

of a principle are sometimes missed by those who nevertheless honestly intend to accept it entirely.

And, finally, a Christian regards the day of his own final redemption as the day also of blessing to the whole world. Whatever dark shadow may and must rest upon some points in the future of some parts of the human family, he believes that the day of the resurrection will be a day also of the restitution of all things¹. He believes that then all the sin which pollutes this earth will have been cast out; and all the sorrow which troubles human hearts will have passed away for ever. He believes that "the tabernacle of God will then be with men, and He will dwell with them; and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away²."

¹ See note at the end of the volume.

² Rev. xxi. 4, 5.

I think that I have not exaggerated or misrepresented the Christian's hope. If not, surely it is a hope which we may well be unwilling to lose. Really to believe this; to live in the belief of it; so to live that my own part in it might be sure and certain;—this would indeed be life. It would be assured peace in the midst of outward change and uncertainty. It would be strength for well-doing alike and for suffering. It would be light shining more and more unto the perfect day.

Is it a hope, then, of which the grounds are sufficient?—I must endeavour to answer this question, as honestly as I can, in the remaining Lectures of this course.

LECTURE II.

*THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND LIFE
MUST HAVE HAD A SUPERNATURAL
ORIGIN.*

LECTURE II.

I COR. xv. 17.

If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain ; ye are yet in your sins.

IN my last lecture I endeavoured to state as simply and yet as fully as I could, the nature of our Christian hope.

In so doing I have assumed, or if you please have conceded, that the basis on which every Christian who understands himself must rest that hope, is the belief expressed in that earliest Creed, recited here by St Paul, as the substance of the Gospel which he had preached everywhere, and which all who learnt their faith from him had received ; the belief, namely, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures ; and that He

was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.

Indeed it seems perfectly clear that any confession of Jesus Christ which recognizes Him at once as truly man, and as in any real sense a Saviour, must imply the belief of His resurrection. One can understand, I suppose, the ground taken by those early heresies which denied the truth alike of the resurrection and of the death of Christ; making Him man in appearance only; some Being of superior order; shewn for a while on earth, and snatched away. But this ground is entirely alien from modern thought, and fails otherwise at every point. And the true humanity, implying a real death, demands also a resurrection and a continued life in heaven, as the conditions of a present trust and love to Him who died. Without this, Jesus Christ might be proclaimed as Teacher, as Pattern, as Martyr; but not as a Redeemer from death; not as the source and sustainer of the life of His people; not as a present Friend and Helper; not as a Conqueror for them of death.

Nothing certainly can be more distinct than the Apostle's assertion, in the text and everywhere else, that with the loss of this belief of the facts of Christ's death and resurrection all Christian faith and hope must perish. There were some, it seems, even among those who had learnt the truth once from St Paul's own lips, who deceived themselves into thinking that they could have Christianity in some sense, apart from this historical foundation, and from the confession of the hope of the resurrection from the dead. But St Paul at once brands this thought as delusive. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain¹:" "ye are yet in your sins²." St Paul accepts this as the issue joined between the Christian and the denier of Christianity. The one must needs affirm, the other must needs deny, or call into doubt, the fact of our Lord's resurrection, as an historical fact, proved or not proved by human testimony.

I am well aware that some whom we esteem

¹ Verse 14.

² Verse 17.

and love would flinch from the severe simplicity of the issue thus joined. Some even who, we would fain think, do not themselves doubt the fact of our Lord's resurrection ; which we affirm, as St Paul did, to be the key-stone of the arch on which our faith and hope rest ; would yet shrink from admitting that the affirmation or denial of this fact is of absolutely vital moment. They dread to drive into unbelief some who revere Jesus of Nazareth, as the greatest of all Teachers of moral and spiritual wisdom, though they have persuaded themselves that the historic basis of St Paul's creed is one which cannot be proved, or indeed believed, to be real.

I have the greatest sympathy with this tenderness towards all who would fain hold fast what they can of Christian ideas, while parting with the Person in whom they centre, and the historic facts through which that Person has been revealed to us. But I may not and dare not speak otherwise on this matter than as those spoke whom all Christians, from the first generation downward,

have acknowledged as the heroes and exemplars of the Christian faith and life. There may be piety, but not Christian piety; there may be lofty aims, but not Christian faith and love and hope, where Christ is not believed to have died for our sins and risen again for our justification. I accept at once the question whether these alleged facts of the Christian creed are truly facts or not, as the question which is really at issue, and on the answer to which our whole attitude towards Christianity must depend. This is the question then with which we have to deal now, and in the remainder of these Lectures. It must be our aim to deal with it as fairly as we can, God helping us, and as fully as our narrow limits of time will allow.

I address myself to educated people, who have grown up under Christian influences, taking for granted, in early years, the truth of the creed in which they have been nurtured. I suppose that they wish now to consider fairly whether there is reasonable ground for receiving with a personal assent, as grown-up men and women, what they

have hitherto in a good measure taken provisionally upon authority. They wish to know, as St Luke speaks¹, the certainty of those things wherein they have been instructed: they wish, as St Paul bids them², to prove all things, and hold fast that only which is really good. I would encourage them to examine rigorously and thoroughly the grounds of their belief. There is something hollow in a belief of which the grounds have never been examined, though the capacity for examining them has come. Whether that hollowness ends in producing unbelief one way, or a careless and listless acceptance of all which professes to come with authority in the other way, it has in either case been very mischievous.

In trying to help them a little in the enquiry, I wish most earnestly to watch in myself against the spirit of advocacy, which unfairly exaggerates evidence and depreciates difficulties. And I may claim in return, that those who wish the sifting to

¹ Luke i. 4.

² I Thess. v. 21.

be honest and real shall not (like some recent writers) foreclose the enquiry by a preconceived opinion, resting on à priori ground, that *no miracle can be proved by any amount of evidence.*

I am not qualified, nor if I were should I feel disposed, to deal in this place with the philosophical question. That has been treated by others, at whose feet I am content to sit¹. The discussion is one which few ought to undertake, because very few are capable of entering into it thoroughly. I think that for our present purpose it will be enough to assume something which probably all who hear me will grant, namely, not that this opinion is *proved false*, but that it is *not by any means conclusively proved true*. One simple consideration seems to outweigh much argument. We are conscious of *something in ourselves which is self-determined, and is not subject to any law of invariable sequence*. To deny this of ourselves is to annihilate our moral freedom and responsibility. The

¹ See note at the end of the volume.

reign of that law then is not universal. There are limits to its supremacy. There is a realm into which it does not enter. And believing this, we have reason to believe that there is also, out of and above ourselves and all other human beings¹, *a supreme will*, guided by a wisdom and goodness of which conscience in ourselves is the reflexion. We are disposed to believe that, as our own will can act on matter, so this supreme will is the ground and root of all the phænomena of nature:—the laws of nature being in truth the manner in which this all-creating and sustaining will acts in and on the world of nature which it has called into existence². This concession then, *that the miraculous is not absolutely incredible*, I must claim on the one hand from those who accompany me in the present enquiry. But on the other I concede of course, most willingly, that unusually strong and weighty proof may well be required, where the facts to be alleged are so unusual.

¹ See Xen. *Mem.* Book I. iv. 8, for a somewhat similar inference.

² See note at the end of the volume.

At what point will such an enquirer as I have supposed be willing to begin his investigation of the grounds and reasons of belief?

He will do well, I think, to begin with some undeniable facts in the present state of the world in which he finds himself, and to ascend from these to their causes in the past.

I. The first fact of which we must take account is *the present existence of the Christian Church*. I use that word in the widest sense in which it can be applied to anything existing upon earth. I use it, as our Prayer Book does¹, to express the whole company of those who profess and call themselves Christians, wherever scattered, however organized. I should perhaps prefer to use the word Christendom; if that word had not almost lost the religious aspect of its meaning in the political one of an aggregate of kingdoms or nations of which the governments do some homage to Christianity. But express the truth as we may,

¹ See *Prayer for all sorts and conditions &c.*; *Prayer for the Church militant*; and Art. xix.

it is a fact, undeniable, and surely most remarkable, that almost the whole of that new world beyond the Western and the Southern Oceans, in which so much of the hope of mankind for coming ages is bound up, and almost all the dominant and growing portion of this older continent, should in some sense and measure be included in this great Society, and own allegiance to Christ as its unseen Head.

It is quite true that the allegiance yielded with the lip, whether by individual men or by nations, has too often very little influence upon the heart and life. None can deny that it has some influence everywhere. Upon the whole face of society, upon law and government, upon the social and family relations of men, upon the general conduct of men one toward another, the general acknowledgement of the history, and character, and legislation, and above all the divine yet human Personality of Christ, has had an influence which, though often thwarted by contending agencies, and always limited and checked by many hind-

rances, has yet been very great and most beneficent. Christianity has in fact been (to say the least) one of the very chiefest purifying and ameliorating influences at work in the world of human life, ever since, as a new and persecuted faith originating in an obscure corner of the earth, it penetrated and subdued the Roman Empire.

The very existence, surely, after so many centuries full of infinite change, of this great Society, claiming to be the one divinely appointed fellowship for the whole human race, as the children of one God and Father, brethren of one family, redeemed by One Saviour, intended to be guided and animated by One Spirit, is, to say the least, one of the most remarkable phænomena of history. Evidently some most remarkable cause is needed to account for it. Evidently some wonderful power must have been at work. The system and the institution must have met some very deep wants in the mind and soul of man. The Society could not otherwise have outlived first the days of heathen persecution; then the dissolution of the

Roman Empire, and the birth of modern Europe ; then the great shock of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, and the Revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth. *What, we ask, is the mysterious power which has given cohesion and vitality to a mass so large and (when we view it as a whole) so imperfectly organized?*

2. But this is only an outward and superficial view of the fact before us. Looked into more closely, studied more patiently, it becomes even more remarkable.

It seems at first sight that, whatever the influence of Christianity in its broad outlines may be upon society and national life, its hold upon individuals is feeble. Many (it might perhaps be said *most*) of those who bear the name of Christ have but little faith or love to Him, and neglect or violate some of His plainest directions. And this is too true. Yet in the midst of those many who call Jesus Lord, and do but little of the things which He says, there are some scattered here and there who are really making it their first aim to

live by His law, and who do reflect something of His likeness in the holiness and loving-kindness of their own lives.

These true followers of Christ are widely separated from each other by social position, by country, and race, and culture, by all their habits of outward life and inward thought. The outward form given to the worship in which their faith finds expression, and to the organization in which they are combined for purposes of mutual fellowship and of action on the world, have differed, and do differ very widely. But they agree in this, that they acknowledge One Father in heaven; and live the life which they now live in the flesh by faith in the Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself for them; and are animated by One Spirit flowing forth from Him to form His likeness in them; and continue patiently in well-doing for His sake, serving their generation in doing or suffering according to God's will. Differing much from each other;—sometimes, alas, anathematizing each other;—these true believers in Christ all

agree in tracing up their inward life to Him as its source no less than its pattern. And in their best and happiest moments they know and feel that there is between Him and themselves and all who are truly His, an inward unity deeper than any outward diversity.

And however careless and scornful men may scoff, those who have a truer wisdom than the scorner's will feel that such persons as these are to be listened to with deep respect, as still speaking no dream, but a sober certainty of waking bliss, when they tell us that the truth of what they believe concerning Christ is assured to them by an inward experience, which can scarcely be more deceptive than their consciousness of existence. All of us have known, I trust, some persons of whom this may be truly said. They are found sometimes in palaces, sometimes (we have known such men amongst ourselves ;—some of them very lately missed from our society) among philosophers and men of science ; far more often among the lowly ; oftenest of all among the suffering. Some of you,

as I speak, will think of a mother, a father, a sister, or elder brother, who has watched like a guardian angel for your life;—gone perhaps now where all care and suffering, even all anxiety for you, is swallowed up in the full sunshine of God's own presence. You will recollect how, in the presence of such persons, sin became hateful, and doubt became almost impossible. You could not think that unreal which they felt to be so certain.

It cannot be denied that there is force in this consideration. Christianity claims to be a practical thing, a remedy for a great evil, the power of a new life, to whoever will receive it into his heart. These witnesses tell us simply that they have tried the remedy, and it has fulfilled its promise. They feel the power of the new life within them, and shew it in its appropriate action. Can all this be mere delusion?—And if it be at all real, does it not throw light back upon all the visible forms in which Christian life has been embodied, and through which it has been transmitted to ourselves?

Surely we may add to our former consideration this second result of enquiry;—the effect of the Christian Institution upon those souls into which it enters fully as a reality, and which are really moulded by its influence. These are the special fruit of the venerable tree;—so rugged perhaps in stem; so encumbered perhaps with unsightly and almost fruitless branches; but yielding still, here and there, a fruit so good and beautiful, in heavenly lives lived among earthly care and toil, in souls evidently ripe for heaven, as to convince us that its root and power of growth must be indeed divine. We do not know how human life could bear the impoverishment which would follow, if it were indeed discovered that the hope which had sustained and ripened these souls was a delusion; and that they who had fallen asleep in Christ had perished.

3. So far, we have been dealing with facts existing before our eyes. It is time that we look back to trace their connexion with a long past history, in which they evidently have their roots.

And as in the present, so in the past, we have two distinct aspects of Christianity to contemplate. We have to trace both the corporate existence and action of the Society, and the development and realization of the faith in the individual life. We begin with the former, as the more obviously definite and tangible.

For the existence, age after age, of the Christian Society is, after all, one of the most conspicuous facts of history. An adversary may say that it has been *painfully conspicuous*; and a Christian will not dispute the word, though he may well claim to add (what no candid adversary will deny) '*not always painfully; often most gloriously, most beneficently conspicuous*;'—*painfully*, we may venture to say even now, in the outset of our retrospect, just in so far as the Society has forgotten its own ideal, and its true principles of thought and action; *beneficently*, just in so far as it has been true and faithful to them both.

The Society which now subsists in a divided state, so far disorganized that superficial or

pedantic observers may hesitate to account it as a society at all, existed already before the Reformation of the sixteenth century. That modified in many ways its conditions of existence, but did not anywhere wholly destroy to create a society altogether new. Changes were made with regard to the precise relations between the Christian Society and the several forms of national life, and between the clergy and the mass of Christian people. There were partial changes as to the doctrine taught, the forms of worship used, the special embodiments of Christian activity. And all these were important in their own place; but still they presupposed a certain continuity of existence between the reformed and the unreformed society, scarcely less real where the spirit of innovation was strongest, than where (as in our own country) the spirit of conservatism manifestly presided over the reform. Those who changed most did it in the name not of the creation of a new thing, but of the restoration of a prior and better order of things. Those who changed least were agreed that all which was

retained must be tried by the test of its conformity with a standard of truth once given and essentially unchangeable.

And great as the changes were, they left the supreme objects of faith and of worship, the supreme standard of truth, the supreme rule of duty toward God and man, formally unaltered. The Scriptures remained; the Creeds remained; the Sacraments remained; the Christian ministry remained; the great outlines of holiness remained. Explanations of each, theories about each, the circumstantial form of each, might be changed;—the things themselves did not pass away.

Nay, when men's view is no longer confined, as it cannot be now, though it very naturally was so at the time, to the Patriarchate of the West, it is seen that the Reformation was not even the first dislocation of one compactly organized society into several, some more some less completely organized. East and West had long been separated as far as the acts of rulers could separate them. The Eastern Church itself had been broken up

for centuries into portions deeply alienated from each other. And yet this apparent disunion only made the inward unity which underlay the outward division more remarkable to a true observer. In every fragment there remained something of the same life, and the consciousness (perhaps some might say the dream—but if so it was a dream which had deep truth behind it) of some earlier and better state, when the life was fuller, and the union more complete.

And so, as we rise backward, to the age when the conflict of the Church with paganism ended in the outward submission of the Empire to the throne of Christ. Still we have the same fundamental unity in diversity;—still the same recognition of one Body and one Spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, as the true ideal of the Church,—imperfectly realized, but never destroyed.

There is no difficulty in reconstructing from abundant evidence the actual state of the Christian Society; either in the fourth century—when the

new relations between the Empire and the Church were greatly modifying the previous condition of each—or if we wish it, as we do for our present purpose, from, at least, the beginning of the next previous century. Still everywhere that which gives cohesion and aggressive force as well as inward vitality to the Society, is not any framework of semi-political organization, but a certain ideal of Christian life, resting on the firm belief of certain historic facts ;—those facts being such as to reveal certain spiritual realities, for which the heart of man yearns, and without the knowledge of which human life is homeless and without hope.

We will grant for the present all which a severely sceptical historic criticism can claim, as to the obscurity of the history of the Christian Society during the age before that of which we have just spoken. All reasonable criticism will grant us that we do know what Christians generally believed and taught, and how they were organized for joint action, at the end of the second

and beginning of the third century; the age when Irenæus was an influential teacher in Gaul, Tertullian in Africa, Clement in Alexandria. We do know that they believed in substance what Christians generally believe now with regard to God and Christ, and the rule of duty and the salvation of man. But above all, we do know that those men (whether they interpreted them always rightly or not) referred to the same writings, within narrow limits, for their knowledge of truth and duty, to which Christians refer now. There is a small margin of disputed books, admitted here, excluded there, from the circle of books received as authentic records of the revelation made to men by God in Christ Jesus. But we may safely say that in the last quarter of the second century the appeal was made, on all questions of belief and duty, either to the tradition, believed to be unbroken, of certain Churches founded by Apostles, or to certain writings believed to be sanctioned by Apostles; and that these two witnesses were believed to agree. We may say further, that in the

list of books then believed to be of Apostolic authority were included our Four Gospels, the Acts, thirteen Epistles of St Paul, and two at least of the Catholic Epistles. We may add that no trace remains in this period of any other account of the origin of the Christian Faith and Church than that which those writings contain. If any other ever existed, it had been lost beyond recovery some years before the close of the second century.

This basis of fact, either admitted or distinctly proved, with regard to the Church of the last quarter of the second century, enables us finally to infer much, with regard to the obscure three quarters of a century which precede. As the geologist infers with confidence the nature of his earlier formations, from the traces which he finds of them in those which overlie them, and are formed from their ruins: so the Christian infers much, with regard to the earlier age of the Church, from that which next succeeded it, and was necessarily moulded by its influence.

We have indeed very scanty remains of the

Christian literature of the end of the first century, and the earlier portion of the second. We have therefore very little direct and positive evidence as to the history of the eighty dark and troubled years which passed between the death of the last surviving Apostle and the age of Irenæus. Ingenious men may make almost what they please out of the fragments which remain to us from them, if they look at them as mere literary fragments, apart from the admitted history of the following age. We have letters of two bishops trying to set right disorders in distant churches for which they care ; a few in which another pours out his heart in the prospect of martyrdom. We have the pleading of an apologist or two, giving necessarily a very guarded and external account of Christian faith and practice. We have a story or two gathered by some lover of the traditions of a more heroic age than his own. And these are almost the only relics of a time in which men were living their faith and dying for it, rather than thinking or writing about it.

One thing which strikes us in the Fathers and Apologists of the close of the first century and the early half of the second, is that they are men evidently oppressed, and almost enfeebled, by their consciousness of inferiority to a giant race who have gone before them. A glance at those writings which the next following generation certainly received as Apostolic, at once explains this depressing sense of inferiority. The vigour and the freedom and the largeness of view which mark the Pauline Epistles, tell us why Clement and Ignatius and Polycarp felt themselves to be the puny successors of a race of giants. They were so indeed. Yet if any other than the Christian theory of the origin of the Christian Church and its Scriptures is to be accepted, it must be one which shall make the pigmies the creators of the giants. If the Apostles were not really what we believe them to have been, they were but the creatures of the fancy or the fraud of those who felt themselves unworthy to be their followers.

Two or three things are abundantly clear from the remains of the second century.

The first of these is that, though a few traditional acts and sayings of Jesus were extant then, which appear to have been derived from other sources than our Canonical Gospels, no other history of our Lord's earthly life was known than one substantially the same with those which our present Gospels contain.

It is equally clear that no other history of the origin and early years of the Christian Church was known than one perfectly consistent with all which the Acts and Apostolic Epistles supply.

Nor yet is there any consciousness of a 'cataclysm' between their own and the previous age, in which an earlier Church or an earlier history can have perished, and a later and different one have been created. If our accepted records be not true, the whole history has perished, and any attempt to recover or reconstruct it is futile.

The next important inference from the existing remains is that the early half of the second

century was entirely incapable of inventing either the character of Christ, or the New Testament history of the Apostolic age.

A third important result is that the admitted facts of the second century can be explained by the assumption of the substantial truth of the New Testament history, and cannot be satisfactorily explained upon the supposition that that history is a fiction. This consideration, if it does not prove the details of the history, raises a strong presumption in favour of its general truth.

4. But we have something further to consider in our retrospect of Christian history. I have been speaking of the Society, and tracing the story of a corporate life, and that on its external side. There is another side which demands recognition, the individual life of Christian souls within the large and often loosely organized mass of the Society.

Every society, I suppose, has its inner circle of energetic and representative individuals. Certainly the Christian society has and always has

had such souls, in every one of its sections. We have taken notice of this fact as seen in the Church of our own day. Let us observe that it has been seen in every past age from the first. From its very nature we can only see the fact in part. The individual life is but imperfectly expressed even in the actions which are the surest indications of its reality and worth. Yet in various ways the life does manifest itself to discerning eyes, and has always done so.

Some in each age have so believed the common creed of all as to make it the determining principle of their life. Each portion of the Christian body has produced its saints ; and their good works have spoken to the world in a way which the world could often understand and appreciate.

The Church of the eighteenth century had its Thorntons, and Wilberforce, and Whitfield, and Wesley, and Fletcher, and Howard, and Butler. Ken, and Evelyn, and Baxter, and Howe, and Usher, and Hammond, and Hooker, and the martyrs of the Reformation, shewed that the Church

of the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries in our own country, was not dead, though it may have slumbered. Felix Neff, and Oberlin, and Eugenie de Guérin, and Lacordaire and Besson in France almost in our own day ; with Fenelon, and Antoine Court, and Philip de Mornay, in evil times of old ; and still earlier, Thomas à Kempis, and Savonarola, and St Francis, in the ages next before the Reformation ; with Bernard, and Augustine, and Chrysostom, and Basil, and many scarcely less illustrious than these ; shewed the reality of the divine life in other branches of Christ's Church. All these caught from the Gospel history, and the witness of the Church to its Creed, a divine fire, which made them living witnesses of the truth and energy of the Christian life, not to their own age only, but to all coming time. And in all ages doubtless the most impressive of all witnesses have been found in lowly places and dark corners. The poor and suffering have always been the special heirs of God's Kingdom on earth, as its King prepared us to expect they would be.

When we are repelled (as who has not been?) by the dryness of Church history, as it has too often been written, let us turn gladly for refreshment to this inner side of the same story. The teaching of our Divine Founder bade us expect to find the tares among the wheat ; but let them never hide from us the true seed which springs up and bears fruit beside them.

There is yet another point which we should carefully mark in our study of these records of the inner Christian life. It is the likeness of these true and faithful servants of the One Lord to Him and to each other. They have all tried to follow His steps ; and the lineaments of His truthfulness, His patience, His loving-kindness, His self-sacrifice, have been more or less perfectly reproduced in each of them.

What then has been the source of this life ? and by what power has it been sustained ? If we listen to those who have lived it, it has come to them from their Lord, and has been sustained by union with Him. He was its source, and its sustainer, as well

as its perfect pattern. Without Him believed in as a real Saviour, a living Friend in heaven, who had once really died for them, and by His Spirit lived in them, they tell us, (and shall we not believe them?) that *their life would have been impossible.*

This witness is made all the more impressive by the very diversity of outward form and circumstance out of which it comes to us. Let any one who doubts the worth of this argument study as wide a range as he can of the records of really heroic or exemplary Christian life, in the different sections of Christendom past and present. No study can be so beneficial morally and spiritually. But even apart from its higher uses, it compels us to recognize the real oneness of the Christian life, in various forms; and its real beauty, even when marred by many imperfections and narrownesses.

And then again, finally, from this perception of the reality and beauty of the Christian life, two conclusions may well be drawn. The first will be a deep conviction of the divine origin of the life

itself. The other will be a firm persuasion that those who have lived the life speak truly when they tell us of the connexion between their own life and that of their Lord and Saviour. All tell us that the life is really His, not their own. We cannot set this testimony aside, as wholly fancy. If it does not supersede further inquiry, we cannot regard it as worthless. They tell us that they were sick, and they went in spirit to Christ as the physician, and He has healed them. They wanted rest, and He has given it to them. We dare not think this experience wholly delusive.

5. Nor is it only on a small scale, so to speak, and in its power to sanctify individual life, that we see proof of the vitality and truth of the Christian's creed. Sometimes men speak as if that creed might once have had some energetic vitality, but had now become exhausted and effete, except in a few specially predisposed individuals. I think we can give proof to the contrary. What shall be said of the course of men like Havelock and Moffat and Patteson and Selwyn and Livingstone and

Goodenough? But, you will say, these are individuals still. I ask then that you will take account of what Christianity has done on a larger scale, since the beginning of this century, in New Zealand, and Melanesia, and Western Africa, and in many spots in India and Burmah. I ask you to go into the dark corners of almost any one of our great cities, or scenes of mining and trading and manufacturing industry, and observe what Christian faith is doing to animate self-denying labour to recover the lost, and bind man again to man. The salt, it seems to me, has not yet lost its savour.

And remember that the very variety and laxity of form and order under which the Christian Society appears in our own day gives greater emphasis to every manifestation of self-denying activity in the cause of Christianity. A perfectly organized and vigorous despotism may force its troops into successful action, in a cause for which the soldiers personally care very little. There have been times and places where such an explanation of Christian activity might have gone some

way toward accounting for Christian work. But in modern, and especially in Protestant Europe, any such explanation is manifestly impossible. It is the very opprobrium of our present condition, that we are said to be on the verge of absolute dissolution as a visible Society. Organization and government are supposed to have reached their utmost point of enfeeblement.

There is some truth in the charge. Yet still Christian work goes on;—with a great waste of power no doubt, for want of more unity of direction; but with great force of individual energy. Now when we see a half-disciplined militia maintaining war effectually, we are sure that the impulse of patriotic ardour must be strong and genuine. Let us draw the like inference from what we see of Christian self-denial in well-doing on every side of us at home and elsewhere. The Christian life must be vigorous indeed which attempts much, and accomplishes something, in circumstances apparently so disadvantageous.

LECTURE III.

*THE WEIGHT OF THE DIRECT EVIDENCE
OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL
HISTORY.*

LECTURE III.

ST JOHN I. 14.

*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,
(and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only
begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

OUR Christian hope claims to be a new life, having its root in the life of a divine Person, who once revealed Himself on earth as man; first living the divine life in our nature; then dying and rising again; now living in heaven, as the divine yet human Son of God.

We want to ascertain whether the belief on which this hope depends, practically as well as theoretically, is a reasonable one. To do this, we have been tracing backward the story of the Christian Church, as far as unquestionable evidence will

enable us; that so we may connect the life as it is now seen and felt, both in the Christian Society and in the individual believer of our own day, with the history in which it claims to have had its origin.

The process is surely a legitimate one. The existing fact is evidently the outgrowth of a past history, which must explain a great deal of it. We know that history well, and on abundant evidence, as far back as (we will say) the last few years of the second century of our era. We find in the history of the centuries between that point and our own day, a great deal which has modified the fact with which we are concerned, but nothing which can have created it. At the furthest point to which direct and undisputed evidence will carry us, the twofold fact which we are tracing, namely, that of the Christian Society and the Christian life lived in that Society, exists, the same essentially which we see it now. Its causes then must lie yet further back.

We know, from pagan historians and statesmen, that *in some shape* the Christian Society existed,

and compelled the notice of the Roman government; in Asia Minor, in the early years of the second century¹; at Rome², and in Judæa³, within the third quarter of the first century. We want to learn what we can from itself about this living germ, which must have had a living cause. It has been developed doubtless under many influences, but none of those influences could have given it being. We want to find how it began to be.

It has its own account of its own birth; a very wonderful one; but one which certainly, if we believe it founded in truth, seems adequate to explain all. At the end of the second century it gave the same account, in the main, which it gives now. It referred then to the same records to which Christians refer now. If these records are

¹ See Pliny's well-known letter to Trajan (*Ep.* x. 97), with Trajan's answer (x. 98), of which the probable date is A. D. 103. A translation of parts of these letters, and of the passage in Tacitus referred to in the next note, will be found as a separate note at the end.

² Tacitus, *Ann.* xv. 44. The date given by Walther is A. D. 65.

³ If the debated passage of Josephus (*Ant.* xviii. 3. 3) be spurious, the account of the death of James (*Ant.* xx. 9. 1) seems sufficient to warrant what I have said above.

credible, they explain a phenomenon which certainly seems unlike any other. It is time then to examine the records which come to us so recommended as authentic.

To examine the historic worth of these documents themselves will be our next undertaking. We want to ascertain, on their own internal evidence, whether they deserve belief or not. If the result of such an examination, fairly conducted, is not absolutely conclusive, it must at any rate be an important step toward the solution of the problem.

We include among the documents which, at the end of the second century of our era, were universally acknowledged in the Church as authentic records, our Four Gospels, the Book of Acts, thirteen Epistles of St Paul, the First Epistle of St Peter, and the First Epistle of St John. We will make no use at present of any other documents than these¹.

¹ See Westcott on the Canon, Part II. ch. i. p. 333, 4, of 4th edition. I extract a few words. 'With the exception of the Epistle

In the first instance we will confine ourselves within a much narrower circle. Even the most sceptical school of historical criticism in Germany accepts as genuine the first four of St Paul's Epistles. It admits consequently the historic reality of St Paul himself, so far as his character and history are set forth to us in those Epistles, or may be fairly inferred from them. Such as these Epistles represent him to us, he was; what they teach, he taught; what they imply of belief, was his belief;—the belief of a contemporary, though a rather younger contemporary, of the generation which (if the Christian history has any basis in fact) must have known our Lord according to the flesh. What are

to the Hebrews, the two shorter Epistles of St John, the second Epistle of St Peter, the Epistles of St James and St Jude, and the Apocalypse, all the other books of the New Testament are acknowledged as Apostolic and authoritative throughout the Church at the close of the second century. The evidence of the great Fathers by which the Church is represented varies in respect of these disputed books, but the Canon of the acknowledged books is established by their common consent. Thus the testimony on which it rests is not gathered from one quarter, but from many, and those the most widely separated by position and character. It is given, not as a private opinion, but as an unquestioned fact: not as a late discovery, but as an original tradition.'

the legitimate consequences, we ask, of this necessary admission ?

The facts of St Paul's own outer and inner life, as these Epistles present them, are surely most significant. He has been himself, in former years, a persecutor of the Church of God¹; well known to the Churches of Judæa as one of their bitterest enemies²; suddenly, as he himself believes, God is pleased to reveal His own Son in him³; and after some short interval of seclusion⁴ he becomes equally conspicuous as a preacher of the faith of which he once made havoc. He claims to be believed when he tells us⁵ that he has himself seen Jesus, whom he calls his Lord, his Master, his owner⁶, not in flesh upon earth, but alive again from the dead. He has spoken with Him⁷; has heard His voice; has received from Himself, without the intervention of any human instrument, the truth which he

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 9. Gal. i. 13.

² Gal. i. 22, 23.

³ Gal. i. 16.

⁴ Gal. i. 17.

⁵ 1 Cor ix. 1, xv. 8.

⁶ Παῦλος δούλος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, Rom. i. 1; τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν.
1 Cor. i. 2, 3, and *passim*.

⁷ 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

preaches everywhere¹, and in which he lives as the all-engrossing reality. How shall we account for this belief, of which none can question the sincerity?

‘He is a mystic’, men have said, ‘a dreamer;—one to whom what passes within his own soul is so real, and what passes without is so transfigured by some reflexion from within, that he is *a bad witness*; honest, as to intention;—this none can question;—but easily self-deceived.’ It is an obvious solution, no doubt, but yet one which can never satisfy any man who will judge fairly of the writer of these Epistles.

For, first, we are almost as much struck with the sobriety, the practical wisdom, the good sense, of this enthusiast, when he comes to deal with any question of Christian ethics², or with the passions and religious prejudices of other men³, as we are with his passionate earnestness, his deep affections, his quick and tender sympathies. This is not a

¹ Gal. i. 11, 12, ii. 20.

² See I Cor. v. vi. vii. viii.

³ Rom. xiv. 1—xv. 13. I Cor. viii. x.

man to whom things outside himself are unreal; though he regards them all as subordinate to a higher reality;—namely, the Saviour who has loved him and given Himself for him¹, and in whom he is brought near to God, as to a loving Father².

Again, though he does claim to know Christ and Christ's truth by a direct revelation made to himself; and though he expects that the change made in himself shall be evidence to other men³; he is by no means indifferent, nor does he wish that others should be indifferent, to the testimony which other men, claiming to be eye- and ear-witnesses, have borne to the great facts of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. He appeals expressly to that testimony when the hope of the resurrection is in question⁴. The actual sight of Jesus Himself dying, and of Jesus alive again from the dead, by Cephas, by the Twelve repeatedly, by James, by above five hundred brethren at once,

¹ Gal. ii. 20. ² Rom. viii. 16, 39, etc. Gal. iv. 6.

³ Gal. i. 11—13.

⁴ 1 Cor. xv. 1—7.

weighs with himself as confirmation of what he himself has seen, and he puts it before others as ground of their reasonable belief. These are not the words of a dreamer, who confounds the objective and the subjective in the one glamour of his devotion to an idea. They are words of soberness. It is very difficult to resist the conviction that they are words of truth. It is not easy to believe that he who so believed and lived the truth of Christ risen, was sustained by a fancy.

But another matter remains to be considered. St Paul is not alone in his belief, nor are those who share it with him, all of them, disciples of his own, who have learnt it wholly from him. Far otherwise. A large section of the Christian Church believes as firmly as he does, but has learnt all it believes quite independently of St Paul's teaching. While he was yet an unbeliever, there was a Christian Church in existence; for he devoted his life to destroy it¹. Consider what this implies. These Epistles were all written before St Paul's imprison-

¹ See Gal. i. 23. 1 Cor. xv. 9.

ment at Rome, or even at Cæsarea;—certainly therefore (as we shall see presently) before A.D. 60. Now when he wrote his Epistle to the Galatians he had been a Christian, it seems, for at least twenty years¹. Therefore within ten years of the death of Jesus there was a Christian Church, which not only existed, but was causing alarm to the Jewish rulers and religious leaders. How could that Church exist at all, unless Jesus was believed to have risen? A crucified man, a martyr at the utmost, was no Saviour in whom men could believe, in confession of whom, as Lord and Christ, a Christian Church could have been gathered. The belief of the resurrection must then in some way have been created, and made energetic, against enormous difficulties, in the very country, in the very city, where the death of Jesus took place, among those who had either helped in putting Him to death, or been driven to despair by the sight of their Teacher dying the accursed death of the cross. Are not these facts deeply significant? Can they be reason-

¹ Comp. Gal. i. 18 with ii. 1.

ably denied? And if they are admitted, is it easy to believe that the resurrection of Christ was a delusion?

But mark again another fact shewn by these unquestioned Epistles, and its significance. There was, as we have seen, an elder branch of the Church, consisting mainly of Jewish believers, in Palestine, and some parts of Syria. There was also a younger branch at Antioch, in Asia Minor, and Greece, gathered chiefly, but not exclusively, through St Paul's own teaching¹. Even at Rome, the Christian society, which neither St Paul nor any other Apostles had yet visited, counted many members, partly of Jewish, partly of Gentile birth and training². The Church existed, then, within thirty years after the Crucifixion, as a society very numerous, and very widely scattered. And it was not one entirely homogeneous body under one exclusive influence. It was divided into two great sections at least; one under Jewish influence, on the whole unfriendly to St Paul, and looking mainly to the

¹ See Gal. ii. 9.

² See Rom. xiv. throughout.

Apostles who were in Christ before him ; the other owing its existence mainly to him and those who had learnt their faith from him. These two portions of the Church were almost as separate from each other then as the Eastern and Western Church in the fourteenth century, as Catholic from Protestant bodies now. They had different forms of worship and of outward observance ; it might almost be said, different Apostles. For though St Paul claims a full recognition of himself and Barnabas by those who seemed to be the pillars of the Church of circumcision¹, it is evident that the Apostles of the Gentiles were still held in suspicion, if not disowned, by the Churches of Jewish origin.

Yet these two great sections of the Church alike believed in Christ as the Son of God, born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and set apart as the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead². Can this harmony in the foundation of the faith,

¹ Gal. ii. 9.

² Comp. Rom. i. 3, 4, with xiv. 9.

coupled with this diversity in feeling and outward observance, be accounted for, except upon the supposition of truth in the Creed common to both, and the facts on which that Creed rested? Those facts were the life, the death, the resurrection of Jesus. That Creed was, One God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him;—One Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him¹;—One Spirit, who divideth to all men severally as He will².

We pass on to notice the remaining nine Epistles of St Paul; excluding that to the Hebrews. Historic criticism has been busy with them all. Conceding the genuineness of the four great epistles, it has sought to shew that this or that of the remaining nine cannot be genuine, because it differs in style or character of teaching from that of the four. I believe that there is no single instance in which the argument will carry abiding conviction. The differences seem to me very far less important, in every instance, than the indications of a common

¹ I Cor. viii. 6.

² I Cor. xii. 11.

authorship. The writer, as disclosed to us in them all, seems to me manifestly to have the same strongly marked and unique individuality; only a little modified, in a way almost always easy to explain, by difference of age and circumstances, in the writer or the persons to whom the letter is addressed.

But whether we confine ourselves to the four, or take the whole of the thirteen into account, we have a most remarkable result when we compare the Epistles with another book, telling us much of the story of St Paul's Christian life and ministry, which found an admitted place in the Canon long before the end of the second century. At present we will consider only that portion of the book, beginning with its ninth chapter, of which it may be said with substantial truth that St Paul is the central figure. We find that the history and the letters fit into each other, and incidentally confirm each other, in the most remarkable way. I must not go into the details from which this singular proof of truth derives its force. It has been drawn out by Paley with his

own characteristic clearness and sagacity. Possibly now and then he may have pushed his argument a little too far. It is the fashion at present to depreciate its force. There are minds too subtle in their perception to be convinced by a proof which appeals to the common sense of men. But it is the special benefit of our English training that we can estimate the real weight of evidence in practical matters. And I believe that no healthy mind will deny that real coincidences exist between the Acts and the Epistles of St Paul, which can neither be ascribed to chance nor to design; and that these are so numerous, and so varied, as to be substantial indications that the history is true, and the letters are genuine.

Let us examine, then, the history which comes to us recommended by this remarkable internal evidence of truth. It manifestly purports to be written by a companion of St Paul. The writer is with him, as appears simply from the incidental change of a pronoun¹, not always, but frequently;

¹ Comp. e. g. Acts xvi. 8, 10, 17, 40, xx. 5 to the end of the Book.

he is shipwrecked with him ; he comes with him to Rome, probably in the spring of A.D. 61. The book closes with the simple mention of the fact that St Paul, for two years after his arrival there, abode as a prisoner, but in his own hired lodging, preaching the Gospel with all boldness and without hindrance. I can imagine no likely reason why the book should end just thus and no otherwise, except the very simple and obvious one, that the writer knew of nothing more which it concerned his intended readers to know. Now, supposing any one of the various possible terminations of St Paul's imprisonment to have taken place before the book was published, can the silence of the writer, after he has mentioned the two years of outwardly uneventful captivity, be naturally accounted for ? I think not. If St Paul had either been tried and acquitted, or tried and condemned, or had died in prison still untried, I cannot but believe that a writer so closely connected with him, whether remaining at Rome with him or not, must very soon after have heard of the event. I infer that the Book of Acts was com-

pleted and published not very long after the end of the second year of St Paul's imprisonment at Rome; that is, not long after the year A.D. 63.

If so, the history is the work of one who has lived through the time of which he writes; has known many of the leading actors in it; has not only been the friend and companion of St Paul for years; but has been the guest of Philip the deacon, the colleague of Stephen¹; has spoken with James and the elders of the Church of the circumcision at Jerusalem²; has dwelt at Cæsarea, the city of Cornelius³, within easy reach of the scenes not only of the early chapters of the Book of Acts, but of the Gospel history also. He is one, then, who has had the very best opportunity of knowing the true story of the time of which he writes, and has published his version of the story in the lifetime of the generation which has witnessed all.

Ingenious reasons have been imagined, why some author who lived long afterwards might leave off just where and as the Book of Acts does.

¹ Acts xxi. 8.

² xxi. 18.

³ xxviii. 1.

But none of these reasons seems to me at once consistent with the facts, and probable in itself. And if the simple reason which I have assigned be the true one, the Book of Acts must take its place among the very best specimens of historical evidence¹. It is very seldom indeed that the history of any great movement can be read in documents so near the source as this.

The story, then, which the book tells of, the origin and early development of the Christian Church, may well claim to be received as substantially a true record. The account is indeed evidently incomplete. It may possibly require correcting in parts, as it certainly requires filling up from other and less primary evidence, when that can be had. But as far as it goes, and in the main, it may claim to be received as authentic history, not fiction, or legend.

True, the history is in its nature a miraculous one, in great part. In other words, it is an *exceptional* history; one unlike ordinary experience.

¹ See separate note at the end of the volume.

I have shewn reason in my last Lecture for thinking that the origin of the Christian Church must needs have been supernatural ; certainly, if so, exceptional. But at all events, the nature of the story which it contains will not warrant us in shutting our eyes to the phenomena of the book itself, or in rejecting the natural inferences from them, as to its date, and its at least *general* truthfulness. That a miraculous history should obtain belief so near the time of its alleged occurrence, is a remarkable fact certainly ; a perplexing fact, to those who wish to deny its truth. They may possibly be able to explain the fact otherwise than by admitting the truth of the miracles. But the fact itself, that the history is almost a contemporary one, seems to me as clearly proved as any such fact can well be.

If this be so, some important conclusions will follow. In the first place, the incidental notices which the Book contains of our Lord's earthly life are contemporary evidence as to the belief of the earliest generation of Christians. The history which could be so alluded to, was one already ac-

cepted by those who had themselves been disciples of the original Apostles. What was this history? As far as scattered allusions will carry us, the same which we have now. The descent of our Lord from David is referred to as well known and undeniable¹. His mother and brethren are mentioned as living in Jerusalem at the day of Pentecost². His ministry of miraculous beneficence³, begun after John's baptism⁴; His rejection by the rulers and people of Israel⁵; His death by crucifixion⁶; His resurrection⁷; His present life in heaven, as the Lord and judge of men⁸; are all alluded to as facts too well known to need any explicit statement. The primary function of the Apostolic office is understood to be the bearing witness of our Lord's resurrection⁹. The greatest care is taken that a vacancy in the number of the original Twelve shall be filled up by one who has been himself a companion of our Lord and of the remaining Eleven, through-

¹ Acts ii. 30, 32, xiii. 23.² i. 14.³ ii. 22, x. 38.⁴ i. 22, x. 37.⁵ ii. 23, iii. 17, 18.⁶ x. 39.⁷ ii. 24, iii. 15, iv. 10 and *passim*.⁸ iii. 21, v. 31 and *passim*.⁹ iv. 33, x. 41.

out His whole ministry on earth¹; in order that he may be, even manifestly, a competent and independent witness of this cardinal fact.

It follows that the Gospel which the Apostles had preached in Jerusalem during the first years after the Ascension, as remembered by the very generation which had listened to it, was founded upon the very same history to which, as we have seen, St Paul's undisputed epistles bear a concurrent testimony, as known and received among St Paul's own converts in the same age. Two distinct lines of evidence assure us that this history found acceptance with those who had the means of knowing its falsehood, if it was false. This consideration will not touch the details of the story. But with regard to its main outline, and above all to its Christology, it seems to have great weight. The impression made upon those who had known our Lord in the flesh, with regard to His Character and Person, was just what the history which we have accounts for and justifies.

¹ i. 22.

But we may fairly draw another very important inference from our examination of the Book of Acts. It gives us firm ground from which to proceed to that examination of our Canonical Gospels, which must be the next step in our inquiry.

The Book of Acts is evidently a continuation of another history by the same writer, a history of "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach until the day that He was received up¹." The identity of authorship between the Acts and the third Gospel can scarcely be disputed. The internal evidence is decisive. The publication of that Gospel is thus carried back to a date not later than somewhere about the year A. D. 62².

Nothing can be more truth-like than the account of the motive and manner of its composition, which is given in the short preface to the Gospel³. The author does not claim to be himself an eye-

¹ Acts i. 1.

² The account of the Ascension in Acts i. obliges us to conclude that *some* interval had passed between the publication of the two books:—new information, explaining and completing the account, had been gained in the meantime.

³ Luke i. 1—4.

witness of what he relates. He claims simply to have written down and arranged in order¹ the account which was generally received in the Church on the authority of the eye-witnesses and ministers of the word. Others have already attempted the same thing. After careful inquiry, the author is convinced that he can give his friend a fuller and more exact account than any which has yet been given in writing. He is not telling a history previously unknown, but giving precision and certainty to truth, which his friend and others have already learnt by oral teaching.

This claim exactly agrees with what we have inferred about the author from the Book of Acts. He is one of the second generation of Christians,

¹ *Ἀνατάξασθαι*, and *καθεξῆς γράψαι*, which have been unduly pressed even by Tischendorf, need not imply any strictly chronological arrangement of incidents. No good biography attempts this. The words assert only that *some* principle of orderly arrangement has been followed, so as to give the work a natural beginning, middle, and end. The fact that the rejection at Nazareth evidently (see Luke iv. 23) took place considerably later than the commencement of our Lord's ministry at Capernaum, should have prevented harmonists from assuming that St Luke has followed the order of time. Kindred incidents are sometimes grouped together; e.g. vi. 1—11.

the much younger contemporaries of the original Apostles. It agrees also with what we have learnt indirectly from St Paul's Epistles, which presuppose a knowledge just such as St Luke here attributes to his own readers. Why should we hesitate to accept the account, so very nearly contemporary, so appealing to contemporaries to witness the identity of the history with one already known, as being at least substantially correct? It does little more than fill up the outline traced in St Paul's allusions, and the incidental notices contained in the speeches of the Apostles, as recorded in the Book of Acts.

If it be true that either the Book of Acts or the Gospel consists in part of previously existing written documents, which the author has incorporated with his own work, this supposition will only place us in even more immediate contact with the original actors and their first disciples. The previous records which are imbedded in histories published before A.D. 65, must at least be dated within half a generation of the Crucifixion. Until good cause be

shewn to the contrary, such histories have the strongest possible claim on our belief.

So far, I think, we are on very safe ground in our investigation: We are dealing with a virtually contemporary history. There has been no room for the growth of a legendary story, which shall be neither true, nor intentionally false. There has been no time even for the gradual and unconscious deflection of fact into fiction founded on an indeterminable basis of fact. We have in St Luke and the Acts either history substantially true, or conscious and intentional fiction. We must not shut our eyes to the alternative.

I will say nothing just yet of the nature of the story, or of the character and the teaching of Him who is its one central subject. Before we approach that part of our argument, we must first observe some other evidence which lies before us. Side by side with St Luke's Gospel we find two other books professing to give the same history. Neither tells us anything directly or indirectly about its author. But the story told in each is the same in

its general outline; the character and work of Jesus is the same; the account of the death and resurrection of Jesus is substantially the same. Yet clearly no one of these three accounts is an echo of either or both the other two. There is a general outline which is common to all, while each has also a great deal which is peculiar to itself. Incidents and discourses are numerous in St Matthew which are not in St Luke, and the contrary. St Mark, who might seem at first sight to have little of his own, who records few incidents, and only one parable¹, not contained in one or both of the other two, yet almost always tells what he does tell with a force and freshness, and an addition of minute and picturesque circumstance to his narrative, quite inexplicable if he were only a compiler from St Matthew and St Luke.

It would be impossible, within the compass of a single Lecture, to discuss satisfactorily the difficult question of the precise relations between the first three, or, as it has become usual of late to call

¹ That of the seed growing secretly. Ch. iv. 26—29.

them, the 'synoptic' Gospels. But it seems necessary to state shortly the conclusions to which long consideration has led me, upon a few of those main points in the question which alone affect their historic value; and to indicate at least the general nature of the reasons for my opinion.

In the first place, any possible form of what may be called the 'supplemental' theory of the composition of the three Gospels seems to me entirely irreconcilable with the actual facts of the case, when these are fairly and carefully examined. Every possible arrangement of the three among themselves has found some eminent supporter. But whichever arrangement we adopt, we are met by the fact of omissions of most important matter, which (on the supposition made) must have been under the eye of the later writer; of arbitrary alterations of order and collocation; of discrepancies, amounting to apparent contradiction, in the time and circumstance of incidents. All these variations are natural and easily explicable, if each Gospel was composed independently; but

seem inexplicable, if any one of the evangelists had the work of either or both of his predecessors in his hands. The failure (as I think any candid judge must pronounce it) of innumerable attempts to harmonize the three Gospels, in the sense in which that word has unfortunately been used—that of constructing out of the very words of the three Gospels, dovetailed into each other, one narrative which shall be complete, and perfectly consistent with itself and with each of the original documents—would be a real difficulty on this theory; while it is perfectly explained, if we suppose the three narratives to be independent portraits taken from different aspects, or (to vary the illustration) the notes of one chord, harmonious, not in unison. The theory to which I object, seems to me to miss probability in itself; and to be at variance with any natural view of the phenomena of the Gospels; when it represents each Evangelist after the first as writing with the work of his predecessor or predecessors before him, and intending simply to complete that narrative by addition, or to adapt it by

explanation and selection, to some new class of readers. I am persuaded that this theory will lose its hold in proportion as the subject is thoughtfully and candidly studied.

In the next place, we have to consider whether it be possible to explain the phenomena of the three Gospels, in so far as they have matter and language in common, by the supposition of an 'Original Gospel¹', committed to writing before any of them existed, and used by their authors as a common source of information. This supposition seems to me to become less credible just in proportion to the distinctness with which we attempt to conceive the contents and nature of the supposed document, and to adapt our hypothesis to the complicated facts for which it has to account. If the supposed Gospel contained only what is common to all our three Canonical Gospels, it must have been of a very meagre description indeed; a very bare outline of a very arbitrarily chosen cycle of incidents, such as can scarcely have

¹ The Ur-evangelium of German writers.

served any intelligible purpose. Moreover, in our Gospels, verbal agreement and divergence are much too rapidly interchanged to be easily accounted for (as on this theory they ought to be) by the mere presence in the supposed Gospel of a whole section, or its absence. Yet these are the very facts to explain which it has been invented. No direct evidence of the existence of any such document can be produced. We might naturally have looked for some clear allusion to it in the opening of St Luke's Gospel; but his words will not bear any such construction. They refer naturally to *oral* teaching¹ as the source of whatever knowledge his readers already had. They are not inconsistent with the supposition that portions of this oral teaching may have been already put into writing. But if so, they suggest fragmentary anecdotes, which St Luke himself, and others known to him, were undertaking to rearrange², rather than an authoritative and orderly history, such as the 'Original Gospel' must have been. If, as I think,

¹ *κατηχήθης*, Luke i. 4.

² *ἀνατάξασθαι*, Luke i. 1.

the hypothesis is as far from 'solving the phenomena', as it is from being externally attested, it must be abandoned as untenable.

For reasons then of which I have given a bare outline, but of which the real force depends upon the patient examination of a great number of minute particulars, it seems necessary to reject alike the theory which makes our Gospels mutually dependent upon each other, and that which makes them all dependent in great measure upon a common written original variously modified. I believe that the fair conclusion from sufficiently wide and careful induction will be that each of the three Gospels was composed by an author who lived very near the original witnesses of the history of our Lord's Galilean ministry, His last sufferings and resurrection, and was familiar with the narrative of these events as orally recited by the Apostles and their companions in the earliest days of the Church at Jerusalem. In this oral narrative (whether in part already committed to writing in a fragmentary form, or still passing only from mouth to mouth)

lies the explanation of the coincidence of language, and the general agreement in the selection of facts and discourses recorded, so far as these agreements exist. But I think it at least equally clear that each writer has worked independently of the other two, and has been in possession of special information, not included in the cycle of the recognized oral Gospel. St Matthew, for instance, has a knowledge at first hand of many of our Lord's longer public discourses, which is peculiar to himself. St Mark, if not an eye-witness, has been in close communication with a singularly gifted eye-witness of a great number of our Lord's actions. St Luke has learnt much from friends in Jerusalem and in Galilee, who have known the Mother of our Lord, and the other faithful women who accompanied him in his ministry. In one large portion of his Gospel he has apparently followed, in the main, the guidance of the current oral narrative; in another he has worked in almost entire independence of it. He has preserved for us a treasure of parables and discourses unknown to his fellow

evangelists. He thus shews us our Lord's teaching in new and most instructive aspects. He tells us how it dealt with the sinful and outcast¹; how it exposed the worldly to themselves²; how it taught the lesson of universal brotherhood with suffering humanity³.

I have thought it right to enter thus far into the consideration of a very interesting and difficult problem, because it has a certain bearing upon the value of our three Gospels as evidence of the truth of the history which they agree in telling. But the two results which alone seem to me really important in this view are independent of any hypothetic element. I think it completely proved that each of the three lived and wrote at least in the generation which grew up under the personal teaching of the Apostles, and either witnessed, or knew many who had witnessed, the facts which he related. I think it also clear that each wrote without any knowledge of the work of his fellow evangelists; so that his

¹ See e. g. Luke vii. 36, xv. ² Luke xii. 13, xvi., throughout.

³ Luke x. 30.

testimony is an independent testimony, not a mere improved repetition of another's testimony.

Indeed if the mutual independence of the three Gospels be conceded, it will follow almost necessarily that they were written very near the same time. A difference of anything like ten years between the date of the earliest and latest would have made it almost certain that the earlier written must have been known to the author of the later Gospel. Consequently, if St Luke's, as I have shewn strong reason for thinking, must have been written within some thirty years after the Ascension, the other two Gospels cannot be dated much earlier or much later.

There is strong internal evidence, quite independent of this consideration, to shew that the first two Gospels were written long before the end of the first century. It has been justly noticed, for instance, that the absence of any allusion to the fulfilment of our Lord's denunciations of judgment upon the apostate city and people would have been strange and almost unnatural, if the destruction of Jerusa-

lem and the consequent dispersion of the Jews had taken place before the Gospels were composed¹. In St Matthew and St Mark too, even more manifestly than in St Luke, the prediction of judgment on Jerusalem is mixed with and interpenetrated by the announcement of our Lord's coming again and the end of the world, in a way which it is less easy to conceive as possible after than before the one event had actually occurred². But far more weighty indications of the early composition of all the three Gospels are to be found in the language, the style, and cast of thought of each. Scarcely even in the earliest portion of the sub-apostolic age, scarcely at any time after the generation of the Apostles themselves had passed away, could any one of these have been exactly what they are. A generation later, Christian writers, if as familiar as the writers of the

¹ Compare Acts xi. 28.

² This is recognized indirectly even in De Wette's remark (on Matt. xxiv. 30, 31. Ed. 2. 1838.) "*Nur Luk., welcher wahrscheinlich nach der Zerstörung Jerusalems schrieb, scheint die Zukunft etwas hinauszuschieben, weil er den Römern für den Besitz von Jerusalem einen gewissen Zeitraum zumisst (xxi. 24) und die letzte grosse Entscheidung durch ein schwankendes καὶ einführt (v. 25).*"

Gospels are with Jewish habits of thought and feeling, would have been Christians of the Ebionite or Nazarene type; narrow, prejudiced, incapable of conceiving or representing faithfully the character and teaching of our Lord, as these Gospels represent it. If of Gentile birth and freer intelligence, they would have been probably ignorant of, certainly destitute of sympathy with, Jewish conceptions and practices. Judaism would have been to them a thing dead and of the past; or if living and present, an object of detestation; instead of being, as it evidently has been to the writers of our Gospels, the atmosphere which they have been used to breathe; the source from which their habits of thought and speech have been derived. Only men born and educated as Jews, but lifted above their Jewish prejudices, and imbued with wide and human sympathies, by contact with their Lord Himself or his chosen associates, could have thought and felt as these Evangelists do. Only men so born and educated could have written exactly as they write. Their language is the colloquial Greek of the East

largely modified by familiarity with the spoken Aramaic of Palestine, with the Hebrew of the Old Testament, with the literal rendering of that Hebrew into Alexandrian Greek. This is just what it ought to be, if our date for the composition of the Gospels be correct, and what it could not well have been, even half a generation later. It was scarcely possible for Christians of the third or second generation to be at once sufficiently Christian and sufficiently Jewish to think and write as the authors of our Gospels have done. It would be an anachronism equally in point of language and of religious position to ascribe them to any age but the first.

I venture then to assume, as sufficiently proved, first the mutual independence of the three Gospels, and secondly, their origin in the generation which had known the Apostles as living witnesses of our Lord's life and teaching. It necessarily follows that the history which they embody agreed substantially with that which the Apostles had delivered, and which was generally believed by the generation which had witnessed all.

This conclusion premised, we come to consider, in the next place, the general result of their combined testimony to our Lord's Person, Character, and Work.

A careful examination no doubt diminishes our first impression as to the great number of the miracles of which we have any detailed account given in the three Gospels. It seems probable that a few representative instances had been already selected and kept in remembrance. Some of these are so distinctly told with time and name and place and circumstance, as to make it clear that we cannot save the honesty of the narrators, if we refuse to admit the substantial truth of the narratives. These narratives tell the story of a supernatural life, and end with the death and the resurrection of Jesus. To profess to believe the story in the main, and to eliminate the supernatural from it, is impossible. But then on the other hand we must notice also how very far the Gospels are from presenting our Lord to us only or chiefly in the light of a worker of wonders. A

comparison with the Apocryphal Gospels on this point is most significant, as shewing what turn human fancy took when it shaped the story for itself. In these our Lord is a mere worker of prodigies. The Christ of our Gospels, on the contrary, is One who claims indeed to be the Lord of man, and of man's world ;—One whom the winds and the seas and the stormy passions of men obey. But He is this, because He is the Son of Man ; the representative of the race for which He is come to give His life a ransom ;—full of sympathy with man's condition ; the source of hope and comfort and of present relief to all human sorrow. This He shews Himself to be, by exercising a palpable dominion over that part of man's troubles and dangers which can be seen and felt in this present state, and of which therefore the removal can be seen and felt. He heals the sick ; He restores the lunatic to sanity ; He relieves those who are oppressed by the devil ; He calms the stormy sea ; He feeds the hungry thousands ; He raises the dead ;—not that men may wonder and make Him an earthly King, but that

He may reveal Himself and His Heavenly Father to them, and may bring them, forgiven, loved, trustful, and holy, to His Father's throne. He shews men by open deed that the order of this world is subject to His Father's will, and that that will is mercy and love even to the unthankful and the evil. His control over nature is not exercised arbitrarily, but to reveal that higher side of human life, in which God, who is a Spirit, deals with the spirit of man, in order that He may bring it to its holy and happy perfection in Himself. This purpose of our Lord's miracles is everywhere conspicuous, and gives unity of significance to them all.

And then who shall express the wonder of the Person, or the beauty of the Character of our Lord, as they are manifested in the same history? I do not at present speak of anything which the Fourth Gospel adds to the teaching of the Three, with which alone we are dealing at present. Who is the Person whom the Three, taken together, present to our trust and love, as alive again from the dead, to die no more? As living in heaven, yet having pro-

mised to be with His Church and people on earth even to the end of the world¹? His chosen name for Himself is usually "the Son of Man;" the Representative and Head of mankind. Yet his chosen Name for the God who has sent Him into the world is "MY Father which is in heaven²." He is attested as the Son of God at His baptism by John³. He confesses Himself to be the Son of God⁴, and on this confession is condemned to die by the High Priest and Sanhedrim. His resurrection reveals Him to be the Son of God. Risen, He claims to have all power in heaven and earth, and promises to be with His Church and people thenceforth, even to the end of the world⁵. Divine therefore He is, and so the object of reverence and trust without fear of idolatry. Yet human also; and, as man, full of all sympathy with man, that He may be the object of full confidence to man. In every line we read proofs of an unflinching sympathy with all human want and

¹ Matt. xxviii. 18—20. ² See e. g. Matt. xxvi. 39. ³ Matt. iii. 17.

⁴ Mark xiv. 61.

⁵ Matt. xxviii. 18.

sorrow and infirmity. But in Him the divinest compassion for the sinner is blended always with the purest and holiest hatred of sin.

And then as to the Character of this most wonderful Person, thus in contact at once and equally with God and with man. What shall we say of the indignant scorn of hypocrisy; the noble love of truth; the self-forgetfulness; the self-sacrifice?—Who does not feel as he reads that we have before us here the true ideal of humanity; the presence of feminine purity and tenderness, in harmonious combination with manly fearlessness and zeal for truth and right?—There is no difference in these respects between one Gospel and another, each gives us the same Person and the same Character. The three portraits are taken no doubt from different points of view; each gives us some feature or aspect less distinctly seen in the other two. But He whom each represents truly, from its own point of view, is really one and the same in them all. Can He who was this have been any other than the Son of God made man? The Image of Him in whose likeness

man was made? And if the Son of God was manifested as man, could He have been other than these Gospels tell us that Jesus was?

If the Gospels contained only ordinary history, no one would ever have thought of denying to them the character of trustworthy evidence. It is very seldom indeed that we can read history in documents lying so near the time, so apparently ingenuous, so fresh and vivid. It is only because the history which they contain is a miraculous history, the life which they relate is a supernatural life, that any one has ever questioned the contemporaneousness or the veracity of the Evangelists.

It is no doubt right that their evidence should be sifted as closely as possible. And yet I believe that any one who will consider that supernatural Life and its Work, as related by these three witnesses, in connection with those indisputable facts of the Christian Society and the Christian life which we reviewed in the last Lecture, will come to the conclusion that the story which the Gospels

tell us is necessary to account for the subsequent facts. The Person and character and work of Christ on earth supply an adequate cause, and no more than a sufficient cause, for their undeniable results. Believe our Lord to have been what the Gospels represent Him, and all we know of the origin and early developement of the Church, all we know of the Christian life as lived in that Church, from the earliest point to which other and indisputable evidence will carry us back, becomes intelligible, consistent, and even *natural*, in a very real sense of the word. That Life, so wonderful in word and deed, followed by that Death and Resurrection and Ascension, accounts for the origin of the Church and of the Christian life; and we do not see how anything less wonderful could account for them.

Hardly any reasonable sceptic can resist the conviction that, whether truly or mistakenly, the first generation of Christians, the people who had known Jesus on earth, and stood beside His cross, believed Him to have risen from the dead, and to

have been what the Gospels tell us that He was. This seems as certain as any fact in history. Nor is it easy to see how this impression could have been created but by *some* very wonderful, *some* supernatural reality.

If this impression was true, all which followed is naturally and consistently explained. If it was delusive, then we have to account, not merely for the existence of such a belief in the minds of the generation which had known Christ after the flesh, but also for the formation and growth of the Society which subdued the Empire, and has done much to transform the world. It would be scarcely too much to say that the Life of our Lord seems difficult to believe only when we regard it *by itself*, apart from the history which preceded it on the one hand, and that to which it has given origin on the other.

The relation of our Lord's Life to preceding history will be noticed in the next Lecture. For the present I dwell only on its connection with the subsequent history of the world; which seems to

me to furnish the true point of view for our estimate of all direct evidence as to its nature.

So prepared, we come, finally, to examine the evidence of the Fourth Gospel, which historical criticism has chosen as its peculiar battle-field in our own day. It will obviously be impossible, within my allotted limits, to give anything more than the conclusions which I believe that the controversy has established, with the barest outline of the reasons which justify them.

In the first place, it is admitted that at the end of the second century the Fourth Gospel was almost universally acknowledged as the work of St John the Apostle; and that among those who refer to it several years earlier as his work were some who in early youth had themselves known disciples of St John. It seems to be proved further that in the scanty remains of the Christian writers of the second and third quarters of the second century there are allusions to the Gospel quite as frequent as we could reasonably expect to find, in the case of a Gospel furnishing little matter to the Apolo-

gist, and which no one supposes to have been written much before the end of the first century¹. We may add that there is not a particle of direct evidence in favour of any other author than St John, nor any trace of any wide-spread doubt of his authorship. Those who knew the Gospel at all seem to have known it as his². So much ought to be admitted on all hands, as to the direct external evidence of the authorship of the Gospel. It is undoubtedly very strong, and ought to be accepted as conclusive, unless a careful examination of the book itself should shew very clear and cogent reason to the contrary.

Our next step then should be to examine the Gospel itself, in order to judge whether the internal evidence agrees with the external, or leads to an opposite conclusion. Of course it would be impossible to attempt such an examination in detail as part of a single Lecture. Happily the inquiry has been carried out with great care and patience,

¹ See separate note at the end of the volume.

² The exception of the Alogi is scarcely worth notice.

and often with admirable fairness, both in Germany and in England.

English readers, who wish to examine the question of the Apostolic authorship for themselves, will find the best that can be said on the side of its opponents, whether on external or internal grounds, stated with great ability, and in a deeply religious temper, by Mr Tayler¹. And any one who will read Mr Sanday's very able and thoughtful examination of the Gospel itself², together with Bleek's judicial summing up of the whole question³, will have before him all the main points of the evidence on the other side. I think the conclusion will be that Mr Sanday has not stated the result of the investigation too strongly when he says,

“By the facts in this as in all cases we must

¹ *An attempt to ascertain the character of the Fourth Gospel*, by J. J. Tayler, B.A. London, 1867.

² *The Authorship and historical character of the Fourth Gospel*, by W. Sanday M.A., Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford. London, 1874.

³ *Introduction to the New Testament*. Translated by Rev. W. Urwick M. A., Edinburgh, 1869.

judge....In this case they seem to give a clear verdict. The Gospel is the work of the Apostle, the son of Zebedee; it is the record of an eye-witness of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ; and its historical character is such as under the circumstances might be expected—it needs no adventitious commendation to make it higher¹.”

Bleek concludes his calm investigation of the whole evidence, internal and external, with the expression of an opinion equally decided.

“Our investigation has confirmed me in the stedfast conviction, which is unavoidably urged upon us ever and anon from different considerations, that this fourth Gospel is really the work of St John, the trusted and beloved disciple of the Lord².”

The judgment of the veteran Ewald has been often quoted. It is characteristically confident, but coming from him has great weight.

“That John is really the author...cannot be

¹ p. 304. The summary, at least, of the internal evidence given in ch. xix. of Mr Sanday's work should be carefully studied.

² Vol. I. p. 250, end of § 89.

doubted or denied ;...on the contrary, every argument, from every quarter to which we can look, every trace and record, combine together to render any serious doubt upon the question absolutely impossible¹."

I am not disposed to underrate the importance of the question upon which judges so undeniably competent have come to this conclusion. But it must be remembered that the work of an unnamed or unknown author may be perfectly good evidence. Who distrusts the *Anabasis*, because Xenophon does not claim the authorship, and apparently refers to it in the *Hellenica* as the work of some one else? Every reader feels the hand of an eye-witness and actor in every line of the narrative, and believes it to be true history, whoever wrote it. Even so, if a reasonable doubt remained (which I think that it does not) whether St John wrote his Gospel, our conviction of the trustworthiness of the book might remain un-

¹ I quote from the preface to Dr Westcott's *Thoughts on the Study of the Gospels* ; but Ewald has expressed the opinion repeatedly.

changed. I think no one could fairly read and re-read the Gospel without the fullest persuasion that its picture of our Lord's character and life and teaching,—so simply drawn, yet so full of living force,—was faithfully painted from the life. As we read the story of the cure of the blind man, in the ninth chapter ; of the raising of Lazarus, in the eleventh ; of the early meetings of his future disciples with our Lord, in the first ; of the conversation with the woman of Samaria, in the fourth ; of the washing of the disciples' feet, and the departure of Judas from the supper-table, in the thirteenth ; of the whole scene in the hall of the High Priest, and the trial before Pilate, in the eighteenth, and nineteenth ; of the death upon the cross and the burial, in the latter part of the same chapter ; of Mary Magdalene and the two disciples at the tomb in the twentieth ; and of the fishing by the sea of Galilee in the twenty-first¹ ;—it is impossible to resist the impression that we are reading

¹ I say this believing ch. xxi. to be a later addition *by the Apostle himself*, to the Gospel which had originally ended with ch. xx.

the narrative of *one who was present, or in immediate contact with those who were present* at each event; one who had himself been a disciple of John the Baptist before he followed our Lord;—who had loved our Lord as a human friend, before he knew Him as the Word made flesh;—who had sorrowed and despaired by His grave, and had shared in the surprise and joy of the morning of the resurrection; had himself been made glad when on the same day at evening, Jesus stood in the midst of the disciples, and shewed them his hands and his side; and had been among the Seven who recognized the divine Master as He stood in the early dawn by the lake of Gennesaret, shewing Himself to be the Lord.

But it is alleged that this Gospel is hopelessly at variance with the other three, so that we must give up either it or them. If the one portrait of our Lord is true the other must needs be false. Let us see what there is of truth in this statement, and what it is worth as an objection.

It is true no doubt that, on a hasty view, the

difference appears perplexing. The three confine themselves to our Lord's ministry in Galilee, the length of which they leave quite undetermined. They give no account of any visit to Jerusalem before the Passover at which our Lord suffered. On the other hand, the first eleven chapters of St John are chiefly¹ occupied with a ministry of our Lord unnoticed by them, of which the scene lies in Judæa and Jerusalem, partly before, partly during the intervals of his Galilean ministry. The teaching of our Lord as recorded in the 'synoptic' Gospels is simple, usually even familiar, in language and illustration, authoritative, directly practical in its aim. In St John, on the other hand, though the teaching is equally simple in language, it touches profounder truth concerning Himself and His heavenly Father; and this not only when He is alone with His chosen disciples, but when He is in conflict with His enemies. These are differences which have struck every thoughtful reader at some time.

¹ Not exclusively, see e. g. ch. vi.

A more minute comparison seems to add to these differences in the subject-matter of the narrative between the three Gospels and the fourth, many apparent discrepancies in detail, which seem to baffle any attempt to harmonize. The very utmost, and indeed I think more than the utmost, has been made of these supposed contradictions, and the diversities noticed just now, by critics who attack the truthfulness, or the apostolic origin, or both, of either, or of all our Gospels. But no wise and fair-minded believer will either deny the existence of differences, and even of some few apparent contradictions in detail; or will attempt to force the different narratives into apparent agreement by the invention of arbitrary hypotheses.

A more patient examination will greatly modify and correct our first impressions. We soon learn that neither narrative excludes the other. We observe that the 'synoptic' narrative does not profess to cover the whole of our Lord's earthly ministry¹, and that St John avowedly leaves large

¹ See Mat. iv. 12. Mark i. 14. Luké iv. 23.

gaps¹, in which it is perfectly easy to intercalate the Galilean ministry, which he clearly recognizes², though he does not usually relate it. We find, on the other hand, that the three Gospels *imply* a ministry of our Lord in Jerusalem of which they give no account³. There are fragments in them also, in one or two instances at least, bearing the same impress with the discourses in St John; passages containing deep disclosures, like his, of the relations between the Heavenly Father and his Son, expressed in language which, if we came upon it unawares, would seem to us to be St John's⁴. If very few, these passages are still enough to shew that our Lord's teaching had another element, different from that which the three Gospels usually present to us, and agreeing in general character with St John's much fuller representation. I think too that what the three do record of our Lord's

¹ For instance some months must evidently have passed between the unnamed Feast in ch. v. 1, and the Passover in ch. vi. 4.

² See ch. iv. 45, vi., vii. 1.

³ Mat. xxiii. 37; Luke xiii. 34.

⁴ See Mat. xi. 25 ff., xxviii. 18; Luke x. 21, 22.

discourse with his disciples at the last supper, though differing in detail from what St John gives us as spoken on the same evening, has yet very remarkably the same general tone and spirit. This may well dispose us to believe that if the three had recorded more of our Lord's words to his apostles when alone with them, or if St John had given us more of his addresses to the simple crowd of peasants and fishermen in Galilee, the accounts would have differed much less than they do. Certainly the difference, when all is fairly considered, is not such as to affect seriously the credibility of either account. And the few alleged contradictions are usually not at all greater than we expect to find between the testimony of any two perfectly truthful and independent witnesses¹.

Independent I certainly believe the accounts to be. Probably St John may have seen one or more of the earlier Gospels, possibly all of them.

¹ The one instance of real and serious difficulty is the well-known one of the day of Nisan on which the Last Supper was eaten. A few remarks on this will be found in a separate note.

Undoubtedly he must have known well the oral Gospel, which furnished the common basis of the three ; and which he himself must have helped to mould into that earliest shape in which we may suppose it to have been recited in the Church at Jerusalem, before the persecution which arose about Stephen. Some knowledge of their contents seems necessary to account for St John's careful avoidance, until the events of the last Passover, of what they have already recorded. But nothing can be more alien from probability, or from the indications presented by the Gospel itself, than any notion of its author writing, like some modern historian, in his study, with the previously written Gospels spread before him. If ever writing did, his Gospel bears the marks of a fresh and un-studied utterance of that which lives in the writer's own memory, and has become interwoven with every thread of his own being. He pursues his own path calmly, pensively, sometimes sadly ;— for is he not tracing the story of his Lord's rejection ; and of the sin and ruin of his own people ?

Yet the retrospect is not wholly painful. The pain is mingled with delight. He is telling that which, far away and long ago, in his plastic youth, filled his own heart with joy and sorrow too deep for words, took possession of his soul, and determined the bent of his whole life. He is telling that which he has seen, and heard, and his hands have handled concerning the Word of Life¹, that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested to himself; and with himself to those loved comrades, who have long since gone to their rest, and have left him now for a while alone among strange faces, other minds. It matters little to him, thus employed, what others have written. None knew as he knows; none can feel that which he feels. The Spirit teaches him all things, and brings all things to his remembrance. He is conscious of a guidance which cannot mislead. He has the mind of Christ².

One thing I believe is entirely clear to every thoughtful reader of the Gospels. Though the por-

¹ 1 Joh. i. 1—3. ² Compare 1 Cor. ii. 16, with 1 Joh. ii. 27.

trait of our Lord as painted by St John is taken from a different point of view from that occupied by the writers of the earlier Gospels, the great Subject of the portrait is evidently the same. St John's picture is fuller and more living; features scarcely visible in the earlier painted likenesses are brought into clear light in his; but all represent the same divine yet human Personality. The note struck by each is different, but they combine to form one perfect harmony. St John's account presupposes theirs, and completes it.

It is not difficult to see why it was natural and fit that the simpler record of the three should come first, and be followed by the deeper and fuller treatment of the same subject, which we find in St John. The Church, even at Jerusalem, in its earliest days was composed predominantly of disciples from Galilee¹. To them no part of our Lord's life could be so full of interest as his ministry in Galilee, to which they owed their own selves. There alone, apparently, had any clearly marked

¹ Acts ii. 7.

company of constant followers been gathered round Him, to be the germ of the future Church. The story, therefore, of our Lord's life, as told in early days at Jerusalem, dwelt naturally on the incidents of the Galilean part of our Lord's ministry; to which His Church traced back its own origin. It was told in the simplest way, with scarcely any exercise of reflection upon the deeds or words selected for repetition. These were chosen by a perception, rather instinctive than conscious, of their relative importance. It began naturally with the events which linked it on to the preaching of the Baptist, which had so profoundly stirred the hearts of the whole people, and had been the necessary preparation for our Lord's. It led up to, and ended with the great events of the last week in Jerusalem¹; the sufferings, the death, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; which were the absolutely essential foundation of the Church's faith. The great facts of our redemption were to be recorded, before their meaning and their bearing

¹ The 'Leidensgeschichte' of German theologians.

on the Christian life could be traced or estimated.

Our earlier Gospels appear to belong to the close of this period of the Church's infancy. They were probably written just as a new generation was beginning to require the perpetuation of the testimony of that which was passing away, as to the facts on which the Creed and life of the Church were based. Whatever is added in them—and much is added in each—to the matter which had formed the oral Gospel, is stamped with the same simply objective and unreflexive character. Meanwhile the Church was spreading widely. It was being brought into contact with Hellenic culture, and was being gradually led into the contemplation of its spiritual treasures, chiefly under the guidance of St Paul. The Christian life, in its principles of thought and action, and its relation to the person and life of Christ, was more and more distinctly contemplated; and so the foundations of Christian theology were gradually laid.

Then, probably about the end of the third

quarter of the first century, the last surviving Apostle takes up his abode in the midst of the Churches planted by St Paul in Asia Minor. He enters into the labours of his great predecessor both in action and in thought. In his person are united the intimate knowledge of our Lord's whole earthly life and teaching, and those natural and spiritual gifts which qualify him to become preeminently the theologian of the Christian Church. He is placed in contact with the nascent forms of error, which have already troubled the closing years of St Paul's ministry¹, and will be developed a generation later into the Gnosticism of the second century. The one effectual antidote to those errors must be the fuller revelation of the Person and the work of Him in whom all the deepest longings of the mind and heart of man are satisfied. The work has been begun by St Paul. St John is guided to follow up and complete the task. We have the ripe fruit of the

¹ See 1 Tim. iv., and Col. i., ii., with Dr Lightfoot's notes and dissertations.

last Apostle's life-long training, outward and inward, in the fourth Gospel. It is God's last and crowning gift to us from the outpouring of his Spirit to lead his Apostles into the whole truth. Conflict of substance there is none between this last and those earlier and less perfect gifts. Diversity of form there is, and growth in knowledge. But the Person known is the same in all. The growth is in the capacity of the mind which has contemplated the truth. That mind is, in the last Gospel, the mind of mature age; in the earlier Gospels, of the comparatively unreflecting child.

Here then the present portion of our inquiry must terminate. We have reviewed first the absolutely undisputed Epistles of St Paul; then that larger collection which was received in the Church without doubt as his within a century of his death. We have looked next to the Book of Acts, as a contemporary record of the origin and early history of the Christian Church; proved credible by its own internal evidence; and tested further by the mutual correspondence between it and those Epistles of St

Paul. We have then examined the three earlier Gospels, as narratives which we have reason to regard as coming to us out of the generation next after that in which the Lord Jesus lived and died. We have passed on then to the fourth Gospel, which comes to us strongly attested from without as the work of St John the Apostle, and bearing within itself the strongest possible marks of truthfulness, and of genuine and thorough knowledge of what it records. And in all these documents we find everywhere the image presented to us of One Person, as having been from the first the object to the whole Christian Society of a trust and love absolutely unbounded. The Church not only traced to Him its origin, but confessed Him, ever living in heaven, but present still by His Spirit on earth, to be the source and the sustainer of its individual and collective life.

The character of this Person is one to which the world has known no parallel. The conscience of man accepts in it the true ideal of humanity ;— an ideal far beyond all human imagination ; yet

when presented, at once recognized as such by all men, in proportion to the truth and depth of their moral perception.

That this Person so lived and so died as our Gospels tell us, claiming to be the Son of God, made man that we might live the true life of man, through and by union with Him, seems to us a fact as clearly proved as any in the history of the world. That the claim was made BY HIMSELF we hold for absolutely certain. So made, was it a true claim or a false one? This is the real question at issue. No evasion is possible. The claim was either a true one, or a falsehood. The facts being what they are, self-deception was impossible. Either the claim was true, or He who made it knew it to be false.

And what must then be the inference? which branch of the alternative shall we accept as the more reasonable?—Surely the former. Surely we have ample reason to believe, as His Church has believed in all ages, that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. He came on earth,

He died, He rose again, He lives in heaven, that He may make sinful men sons of God, renewed in His own likeness, strong and holy by virtue of a life communicated to them from Him. If so, any question as to miracles in detail is superseded by the result of a far deeper and more comprehensive inquiry. The Son and Word of God, the Maker and Light of the world, made man, is the one transcendent miracle in which all others are absorbed. Yet either this transcendent mystery is a blessed and life-giving reality, or else that wonderful Character and Person are the fiction of Jews in the first century, completed by the work of oriental theosophists in the second. They are, in some way, the product merely of the mind of man, working upon itself; in just the way and just the age least capable of a conception so pure, so comprehensive, so sublime.

There are difficulties, of course, we do not deny it, in the revelation of the Son of God dying for sinners and rising again. Strange if there were no mystery in life eternal, when our present life, nay

being itself, is so fraught with mystery, so baffles comprehension. But we can see that this one transcendent mystery meets every human want. It meets our want of a fuller knowledge of God, of a closer contact with God, than we can gain for ourselves. It meets our want of Atonement, of Mediation between God and man. It meets our want of a sanctifying power which shall purify the springs of human life. It meets our want of a divine sympathy, in a world full of temptation and sorrow. It meets our want of hope for the future of humanity, of a spring of beneficent action in the cause of human progress, of an assurance that such action shall not all end in waste and disappointment. Above all, it meets our want of something, let me rather say of some Person, in the unseen world, which shall enlighten its darkness, and bridge over the awful chasm which death, when all is said that human thought can say for itself, must always seem to human feeling.

May we not more reasonably believe that He who made these wants has given them all their

satisfaction in Christ Jesus; than that man's own craving, in an age most feeble and outworn, most narrow in its sympathies, most unspiritual in its habits of thought, should have invented that satisfaction for itself?

I believe, brethren, that the answer to that question ought not to be doubtful. It is given us in the words of our Gospels: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life¹." "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief²."

¹ Joh. vi. 68.

² Mark ix. 24.

LECTURE IV.

*THE EVIDENCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT
TO A DIVINE PREPARATION FOR
CHRIST'S COMING.*

LECTURE IV.

HEBREWS, I. 1, 2.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

OUR argument is in its nature *cumulative*. It depends upon the concurrence in one conclusion of many distinct lines of evidence. Any one of these, taken singly, might fall short of demonstration, and yet the joint result of all might furnish ample ground of a reasonable conviction.

I have to trace in the present lecture another of these convergent lines of proof.

I have spoken hitherto as if the alleged origin of the Christian religion and Church were alto-

gether unconnected with any foregoing history. I have attempted to infer the substantial truth of the only extant history of the origin of both, from the way in which it coincides with and explains a very large and multifarious mass of subsequent facts, which can scarcely be called into dispute. I wish to-day to call your attention to the indications, many of them almost equally indisputable, of a divine preparation for the alleged origin of the Christian Religion and Church.

Our Lord claimed to have come, and was believed by his disciples to have come, in fulfilment of promises given in ages past. It was believed that He was come to satisfy wants of which the consciousness had been awakened and stimulated, during a long course of ages, in one remarkable people. That people still remains among us. We think that we see traces, in its present character and condition, of a discipline given long ago, which, judged by its present and visible results, must have been very wonderful:—mysterious, if we may not yet say miraculous.

There are some faces on which is written so plainly that any discerning eye may read it, the record of a whole life-time's aspirations and resolves, disappointments and sufferings, triumphs and sins. Even so a nation sometimes bears in its present character and condition, the traces of a history enacted in very distant ages. The marks thus left may sometimes be as distinctly legible as the furrows which the storms of centuries have worn upon the front of some rugged mountain.

Israel is by far the most conspicuous instance known to us of a people evidently made what it is now by a discipline undergone long since. Scattered everywhere, apparently without a country, it yet retains the consciousness of a national life and unity, which have long survived all its visible bonds of union. It has lost long ago the temple, and the priesthood, and the sacrifices, which seemed to be the very foundation of its national religious life; yet that life is still vigorous. The people does but cling more firmly to the confession of

the one God whom they believe to have given all these things to their fathers, and to have withdrawn them from themselves for their unworthiness. They stand absolutely alone in the earth ; mixed with all other civilized nations, yet separate from all. They have been driven often, by cruel oppression, from all the openings of political and intellectual eminence in the countries of their sojourn. And so they have been almost compelled to become in appearance altogether earthly, the slaves of the pursuit of material wealth. And yet they have but clung with a more desperate tenacity to the expectation of a future glory and greatness ; which, if weighed in the balance of that mere worldly sagacity which men impute to them as their special characteristic, must, one would think, have seemed to them of all men most unsubstantial. The greatness in the past, of which the consciousness maintains the national self-respect, is that of having once been the moral and religious leaders and teachers of all people. And it is big with the promise still of a yet higher and better

destiny in the future, when their expectation shall at length be fulfilled by the coming of their long predicted King. That expectation may indeed have lost its vigour in those Jews who have been most exposed to the denationalizing influences of wealth and of philosophic liberalism. But I believe that there can be no doubt that it remains as a living force in the great mass of Israelites. Still the hope of the people is that One, of whom their ancient prophets spoke, shall at length appear; shall gather them again around Himself in their ancient country; and give them back their Temple with a glory greater than Solomon's, and their law with a purity and fulness of observance unknown since the days of Moses. What must the past history have been which could form that character, which could create and sustain those expectations?

The history of Israel during the last eighteen centuries has been lived in the daylight, and is interwoven with the general history of the world. And we may safely say that, though it has modified,

it certainly could not have created the national character such as we see it now. Those centuries of oppression could not of themselves engender that sense of a high vocation and destiny, grounded on the consciousness of a special relation to the One Living and True God. They may have burnt it deeper into the heart of the nation which already possessed it. They could not have produced it where it did not exist. And we know in fact that it did exist eighteen hundred years ago, just as remarkably as it does now. In this respect there has been no change. That hatred or scorn of the human race, which they already endured and reciprocated in the days of Hadrian and of Augustus, had this for its explanation, as they and their enemies in that age agree in telling us. The cause must have preceded its effect. The consciousness of a divine vocation, then, must have been the product of a history yet earlier than the age in which Christ came.

The world has other instances, no doubt, of nations which have lived proudly or regretfully

on the recollections of a distant past. Still it would be easy to point out remarkable differences between the nature of *their* past and that of Israel. And again, there have been other nations which for ages have seemed instinct with the sense of some high destiny in the present and the future,—some great work to do in subduing and ruling the world,—which has made each citizen contribute his own share in the great work of his nation, almost as if his personal existence had been merged in that of his country. But the singular thing to be explained in the case of Israel is not either of these two remarkable facts separately, but the two in combination with each other ; a combination, so far as I know, absolutely without parallel.

But there is another equally remarkable fact which the ancient history of Israel ought to explain ; namely, the state of moral and religious knowledge in that people, as compared with the rest of the world, in the ages just before the birth of Christianity.

This also we know well, on undeniable evi-

dence. The Old Testament, just such in all important points as we have it now, was the Bible of the Jews for some generations, at least, before the Christian era. The people, with their Scriptures already translated into Greek, the common language then of Western Asia, as well as of Southern and Eastern Europe, were scattered everywhere, and were attracting proselytes in great numbers to the worship of the synagogue. Men and women, weary and sick of an effete philosophy, and of a religion which all thoughtful men disbelieved, however they might practice its outward observances, were drawn to the Jews, simply because their faith met and satisfied in some measure the longing for a better knowledge of God.

We know well what were the belief and the rule of conduct possessed by Israel, for we have their Scriptures in our hands. It will scarcely be denied that the confession of the personality, the unity, the righteousness of God, was the national belief of Israel. Elsewhere these great truths were but dimly seen by a few of the wisest and best of men.

To the mass of mankind they were obscured by an enormous cloud of gross and often very immoral superstition. In Israel they were the common heritage, as far as belief was concerned, of every man, woman, and child. Whence came it that, as Paley has said¹, they were children in all things else, men only in this one point, of their knowledge of God? How can we explain the fact that the whole of this one otherwise insignificant people stood, in this one respect alone, upon a level which no kindred people of the Semitic race, none of the Indo-European race, approached?

Their own history, as told by themselves, explains it by a very sufficient cause. It tells us that all was the result of a special discipline, to which the God of heaven and earth had subjected that one people through many ages, for this very purpose, that it might in due time become the teacher of the world. We must not yet assume that this explanation is the true one. But we may say that whatever the true history may be, if it is to

¹ See the wise and pithy chapter of his *Evidences*, Part III. ch. iii.

explain a fact so remarkable, it must be itself unlike the common history of other peoples.

But there is yet another phenomenon which the history of Israel must explain. The religion of the Jews had this further peculiarity, that it confessed its own incompleteness, and was always looking forward to something better, which was to follow it in due season. It had in possession much more truth than was yet held by mankind in general. It was perhaps at all times, certainly in its later stages of growth, fully conscious of its own superiority. Yet always, and most manifestly in the last centuries before Christ came, it was dwelling on the prospect of the coming of a deliverer, and an out-pouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh, in connexion with his coming. Moses himself was believed to have foretold the mission of successive prophets to complete what he had begun. Through the whole period of the monarchy, and that which followed its downfall, the succession of prophets was believed to have been almost unbroken. Each had added some-

thing to the common stock of religious knowledge. But each had still more distinctly pointed forward to the coming of the King, and the day when the earth should be full of the knowledge of the Lord, and all the people should be fully taught of God.

This conception of a *progressive revelation* of God to man, through human instruments, men like their brethren, each of whom hands on the torch to another, who bears it still brightening, till the day breaks and all is light, seems to me something quite singular in the history of the religions of the earth.

Other nations in their religion most often have lived looking backward regretfully to some past time, when knowledge was fuller, and faith was stronger, and God was more honoured. Even Christian thought and feeling has often too much of this vain wish to recall a past which has gone irrevocably. The faithful Israelite, almost alone, lived thankful for what had been already given him, but ever more and more earnestly cherishing

the thought of something more which would be given in the latter days. Nothing but a very remarkable history can have created in a whole people so strange an expectation.

I do not wish to press these general considerations too far. They will not of course enable us to reconstruct the history of the people, if lost, or to demonstrate the truth of the only account which remains. They are only intended to meet the tacit assumption which underlies a great deal of the modern objections to the history of Israel; the assumption, namely, that any history which is unlike that of other peoples in ordinary times must needs be fabulous; or at least can have no claim upon our attention unless supported by external evidence such both in amount and in kind as can scarcely be attainable in any history of very ancient times.

I have no right, nor do I wish, to deprecate the most searching criticism of the Old Testament. I only ask that it may be heard before it is struck. I ask that the inquiry may be carried on fairly,

according to the laws which should regulate all examination of writings so ancient, coming to us from a people so singular. I ask that, before it is criticized in detail, men shall read and read again the volume as a whole ; and shall allow due effect to the general impression made by the whole. With great multiplicity and variety of parts, it has yet undeniably a certain unity of moral and religious tone, which must be caught before any single part can be rightly judged. We claim that this necessary rule of all intelligent criticism shall not be broken in any investigation of this most remarkable, all things considered, of all extant volumes. We are quite willing to abide by the results of inquiry so conducted.

I assume only what is undeniable, when I say that the Old Testament comes down to us as a whole made up, quite two thousand years ago, from the surviving literature of a people which had already grown old.

The Pentateuch, which forms the basis of the collection, was certainly read, very nearly such as

we read it now, in the age of the Macedonian conquest¹. The same thing might be said of the greater part of the prophetic books. The Jews themselves seem to have believed that even the latest of the prophets had lived and died some four hundred years before our era.

The prophetic gift was felt to have long since ceased². The nation could only subsist upon its accumulated stores; the living power of production was believed to have been lost. This evidence may surely be accepted as sufficient to prove that the most characteristic portions of the Old Testament were all in existence long before any light from the West can have gleamed on Israel. And none can doubt that the literature of which the collection contains (we will suppose) the choicest portion, was the slow growth of long ages before that in which the volume took its present form. Whatever else it may be, it is the record un-

¹ The Septuagint version of the Pentateuch appears to have been made under the early Ptolemies.

² Malachi was probably a contemporary, or nearly so, of Nehemiah. See Mr Wright's article in *Dict. of the Bible*, vol. II. p. 212.

deniably of the inner life of the nation during a long history.

And what a record! How unlike any other! I will raise no question now of poetical or oratorical beauty. It is evident that any self-conscious exercise of the artist's skill to produce beauty of this sort, is quite alien from the whole volume. Whether sublime, or beautiful, or pathetic, it is so unconsciously, unintentionally. It has a far higher aim. Its whole purpose and spirit breathe of God, and of man's relations with God. This surely must be felt to be its distinctive character. The history purports to be a history of the way in which God has governed the world, which He has formed from nothing, and in which He has placed man, and formed man into families and nations. The one thought which is always present is that God's will is being done everywhere; that it is a righteous will; and that in the end it will make righteousness and peace prevail in the world. God, and man as formed for the knowledge and love of God; the conflict between man's lawless

will and God's righteous will ; the final victory of God's will over evil ;—these are, I repeat, the one great subject of all law, of all history, of all poetry, of all teaching, of all prophecy, in this great national literature. Does not this fact place it alone in all extant literature ?

Elsewhere we may find indeed something which aims to be theology ; something which is human history, or human philosophy, or the skilful painting of human action and emotion. But there what aims to declare God, and what aims to paint man, are kept almost always apart. Here, and here alone, as far as I know, in any extensive literature, God and man are ever present to each other, and in the closest contact, and the light which comes from the throne of God irradiates and fills the world of human life. Here, and here alone, the divine and the human element of life are found together and in harmonious combination. The combination of the large and tender human sympathy with the over-mastering realization of God, is not met with elsewhere. The people of which this is the litera-

ture must be one which has been placed under some very special divine training.

Observe especially that the spirit of the Old Testament touches the life of the individual soul toward God quite as closely as it touches the springs of national and family life. We often find in it poetry, national odes of triumph, and passionate appeals for help in national dangers¹. It is indeed intensely national in all its remembrances and aspirations. But we find in it far oftener the agony of an individual soul in conflict with trouble, or heavily burdened with sin²; or its joy when pouring out its thanksgiving for peace with God restored, after having been lost through sin³, or its contemplation of the glory of the Righteous King of kings, in whose light alone it sees light, in whose heavenly sanctuary it finds its true home and rest⁴.

This quality it is which has made the Book of Psalms the Prayer-book and the Hymn-book

¹ See *e.g.* Psalms xliv., xlv., lxviii. ² Psalms xxv., li.

³ Psalm xxxii. ⁴ Psalms viii., xvi., xix., lxxiii., ciii.

of the universal Church. The prayers and hymns which it contains are indeed the utterance of men who lived far away, and from two to three thousand years ago; orientals, living in a state politically, socially, intellectually, almost as unlike those of Western Europe at any time, as unlike our own present state in England, as any can be. In this Book nevertheless, men have found words which expressed the desire, and the sorrow, and the thanksgiving of their own hearts, even better, far better, than any which they could frame for themselves, or which others in their own days could frame for them. And this, just because the authors (speaking generally) of this one ancient book have first penetrated to the very heart of the mystery of the life of God in the soul of man—the communion between the God of the spirits of all flesh, and the spirit which He has made for Himself; and they have then expressed its longings, and its failures, and its triumphs, with the peculiar simplicity and reality, which belongs to those who are treading a path scarcely trodden yet, in the

freshness of the early dawn of an experience which is altogether new and unspoilt by any artificial sentimentalism.

I should be well content to rest the main question of the special divine education of Israel on this one Book of Psalms alone. It is a record so real, so simple, of the converse of innumerable souls with God; so strange, as coming from men who lived under a system of most rigid form and ritual in religion, and in a world almost given up to the dominion of organized material force; that nothing but a very peculiar divine teaching can account for its existence. Men could not thus have conversed with God if He had not first spoken very remarkably to them.

Even that which seems, at first sight, a defect in this rich treasury of the expression of human wants and hopes—I mean the want of much explicit reference in it to life after death, or the resurrection of the dead—is really rather to be regarded as a token of the completeness with which the divine training had done its work. If little seems to be

desired or hoped in the unseen future, there is on the other hand no fear, no doubt, with regard to what it may bring. The sense of a present God, on whom the soul may rest in perfect confidence for the future, as for the present, supplies all the need of his servants. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me¹." Or again, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever²."

The same peculiar quality it is which gives beauty and significance to a great deal of the prophetic writings quite independently of their predictive or historic value. Even when we set these other elements aside, we leave in many of them a large residue of matter which we may call devotional, like that of the Psalms; for which nothing but a special education, under divine guidance, can

¹ Psalm xxiii. 4.

² Ps. lxxiii. 25 *ff.*

possibly account; and of which no language can state too strongly the importance.

In the same way, I think, we should give full weight to the results of an examination of the Mosaic Law, taken as a whole, without assuming anything more as to its date and origin than merely that it is very ancient, and of native growth. These are points as to which no doubt can be fairly raised. It has evidently not been copied, as a whole, from any system existing elsewhere. It is evidently not the attempt of a speculative mind to legislate for an imaginary commonwealth; but a code which has regulated, or been intended to regulate, the conduct of men living in a definite country; partly embodying their ancient customary law; partly correcting it; partly altogether new; but always distinctly practical in its aim. This being so, it is impossible not to be greatly impressed by the general spirit of humanity, of freedom, of good sense and fairness, which it breathes. The wisdom of the whole, as a system of rules intended to keep the children of Israel a

separate people, devoted to the service of one God, in well ordered simplicity of life, as a race of peasant proprietors, is very remarkable. Thus, as a whole, the Mosaic law certainly is not unworthy to have been the work of one of the very greatest of human legislators, under divine guidance. I do not mean that we can thus *prove* the 'Divine Legation' of Moses. But there is, to say the very least, nothing in the law itself, fairly regarded, which makes such a claim difficult to admit, if otherwise well attested.

Thus prepared, I think we should approach the examination of that history of Israel, and of God's government of man's world with special reference to Israel, which the Old Testament, taken as a whole, professes to be.

No believer, if he is wise, will attempt to give, no fair historic enquirer will think himself entitled to expect, the same degree or kind of proof of truth which is reasonably required, and can be given, with regard to the life of our Lord on earth, as told in the New Testament.

The questions at issue in the two cases are entirely different in kind. In the one case everything turns upon the divine yet human Personality of our Lord. Was Jesus of Nazareth indeed the Son of God? Was the Word indeed made flesh? And the great question of fact, on which our belief in Jesus as the Son of God must depend, is that of His resurrection from the dead. We are reasonably asked to establish this fact by direct evidence, which shall come as close as possible to the time of the event itself; and we believe that we have such evidence in abundance. But the question which we are now considering is wider. It does not admit of being brought to any single issue equally distinct and determinate; nor will the evidence which should decide our answer be of the same quality with that which decides the other. With regard to the Old Testament, it is affirmed on the one side, and denied on the other, that one people, Israel, was placed under a moral and religious discipline, altogether peculiar and exceptional, for a season, in preparation for the coming of the Son

of God on earth as the Saviour. No one single miracle is in this case of absolutely vital importance. If every *physical* miracle, so to speak, were struck out of the record, the great spiritual truths of the Old Testament history might remain almost unaffected. God may have spoken to Moses, and by Moses to Israel, even though we should be unable to *prove*, by direct evidence, that the Red Sea was dried up, or the manna fell in the wilderness. The real question is, whether Israel was far in advance in the knowledge of God and of duty, as compared with other generally more enlightened peoples; and whether that surely undeniable fact can be accounted for except by an entirely exceptional education divinely given to Israel? This question may be decided for practical purposes, while we put aside any question as to the weight of evidence for any particular miracle, as out of place, until we have first come to a conclusion on the general question. To us, it is not the miracles which authenticate the revelation; but the revelation which makes the miracles credible. The

revelation shines by its own light, and is its own best evidence.

But it will be right to consider, as the last stage of our present enquiry, how far the records which remain to us will warrant us in inferring the *general* truth of that history of Israel which Israel itself believed, certainly, in the last ages before Christ came, and has delivered to us. If the proof so afforded is not absolutely complete, it may yet be real and valuable as far as it goes. And, if so, some inference may justly be drawn from the preparatory training, in confirmation of the result which we have obtained already from other evidence, as to the dispensation for which it prepared the way.

Our survey of the complex evidence of the truth of the Old Testament history must necessarily be retrogressive. We must take our stand on some later time, as to which we have ample evidence, and from thence attempt to survey and estimate the earlier time, of which that later one was, in some sense, the product.

No one can reasonably doubt the *general* truth of the history of the Hebrew monarchy in its divided state, or deny that we have considerable remains of writings contemporary at least with the later kings of the house of David. The second Book of Kings, whenever put into its present shape, was clearly drawn up in part from contemporary documents, in part from the independent traditions of the prophetic and priestly orders. The same thing may be said in part as to the second Book of Chronicles. No one denies the authenticity of a great deal of the earlier part of Isaiah, or of his contemporaries,—in Israel, Hosea and Amos, and Joel and Micah in Judah. From these sources, checked by comparison with the records so strangely disinterred in our own day on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates, we can gain almost as distinct and trustworthy a conception of the state of Israel under Jeroboam the Second, and of Judah under Hezekiah, as we have of Athens in the days of Pericles, or of Rome in the age of Scipio.

Any inquiry as to the truth of the earlier Jewish history should set out from this firm basis of reality. It should begin by realizing the state of the two kingdoms, about the middle of the eighth century B. C.; when both were verging to their decline, but the progress of decay in each, and especially in Judah, was arrested by the government of more than usually vigorous kings. How can we picture to ourselves the condition of Israel in that age? And does that condition correspond, or is it at variance with, the preceding history as we read it now? I can do little more of course than sketch the answer to these questions, leaving the outline to be filled up by personal study of the books themselves.

We mark first the scene in which the history is laid, and to which it corresponds with an accuracy shewing at least that it is of native growth.

The land of Israel was, in its greater part, a natural mountain-fortress, commanding the main line of communication between the great monarchies of Babylon or Nineveh eastward, and of

Egypt to the South and West. This simple fact is the clue to a great deal both of the later history of the two kingdoms, and of the utterances of the prophets of the period from which we take our departure. Israel might be insignificant in wealth, and numbers, and extent of soil; yet the rival empires were glad to buy its support whenever they were at all evenly balanced; because neither could advance across the Syrian desert against the other, leaving an enemy so strongly posted on the flank of his march. But whenever either of the two empires was disabled or indisposed for aggression, Israel was almost helpless in the hands of the other. And of course the division of Israel itself into two separate and often hostile kingdoms weakened its influence everywhere. Statesmen of the ordinary type, in either kingdom, took the side of the Assyrian or the Egyptian alliance; or sought to bring about a closer union, in one way or other, between the Northern and the Southern kingdoms in Israel itself. The nobles and the people sided with them, and the king was too often led by

mere caprice or weakness to lend his name to the prevailing faction.

But a voice was continually heard urging nobler principles of action, even in the king's court. It came sometimes from a simple herdsman or ripener of sycomore fruit¹; sometimes from a member of some priestly or noble family². But whoever might be the spokesman, the word spoken claimed to be 'the word of the Lord.' And it was spoken with the courage of one to whom God was everything, and man nothing. The prophet feared none, flattered and courted none. Sometimes he endured persecution from the great, sometimes was in danger from the fury of the people. He met with no earthly reward, except only, and this at rare intervals, the homage won by long proved fidelity and wisdom.

The prophet's mission was to recall kings and people to a truer view of the strength of Israel, and the way of meeting the dangers and perplexities of an evil time. He claimed to have been called by God Himself to remind his fellow-

¹ Amos i. 1, vii. 14.

² Jerem. i. 1. Ezek. i. 3.

countrymen of the covenant between God and Israel, by which He had bound Himself to be their God and taken them to be His people. He traced all troubles to their root in the unfaithfulness of the people to that covenant. The northern kingdom had been cradled in idolatry. Judah had gone astray scarcely less than Israel. The prophet, then, called men in either kingdom to come back to God, not merely with outward forms of worship, but with the reality of inward obedience. This would be their true bond of union with each other. This would be their real strength against all foreign enemies.

The prophet is often thought of mainly as a foreteller of things to come. In reality he was something else far more than he was this, though he was also this, when need required. He was a witness of the reality of God's righteous government over all the earth, and of the dependence of Israel's well-being upon its fidelity to God, and to God's great law of duty given to man.

The very existence of a succession of devoted

men having it as their one business to bear witness for God against all human selfishness and worldliness; to plead with them in God's name for truth and right; and, in short, to act the part of an embodied and impersonated conscience to the nation;—seems to me to be one of the most remarkable facts in the history of the world.

But observe further that the prophetic office, such as I have described it, necessarily supposes a long previous recognition by the people of a divinely given law. The prophet's aim was always to bring the people back to the fulfilment of duties to God and to each other which such a law had long since marked out. His countrymen might refuse to act as he bade them; but they seem very seldom to have denied the obligations of which he reminded them. These obligations were indeed first and chiefly those of the great principles of moral truth and justice. But they were also in part the special duties which resulted from a special covenant divinely made with Israel, and of which the terms were supposed to be embodied in a code

of law, having its own very peculiar enactments. Could the prophet have found a hearing if Moses had not been believed in from of old?

The evidence which I have assumed to be virtually contemporary shews us that, in the later days of the Jewish monarchy, the law and the history which were accepted by the people were the same, at least in their general character and substance, as we have them now in the Pentateuch. Both the history and the law are alluded to by Hosea and Amos and Isaiah, in a way which shews that they must have been familiarly known and believed. The birth of Jacob and Esau, Jacob's sojourn in Syria, the redemption from Egypt, the wandering in the wilderness, the solemn days of festival, the sacrifices ordained by law, the gift of a king in wrath, the promises of God to the house of David, the apostasy of Jeroboam, the introduction of the idolatry of Baal and of Moloch, are continually referred to, just as we refer to the common facts of our own national law and history. Just those parts of the law which seem least likely

to have been the silent growth of natural causes ;— its general spirit of justice and mercy to man ; of liberty, fraternity, and equality, at least among all the members of the commonwealth of Israel ;— are those which give the key-note to the prophetic teaching. The prophets are emphatically, in the best sense of the word, men of the people, as truly as they are men of God. Their sympathies are given to the poor, the downtrodden, the oppressed. The faults on which they are most severe are those of the king and the nobles and the priests ; while yet they have no false and unworthy excuses ready to palliate the vices of the poor.

All these points in their teaching are strong indications of the existence of a political ideal far too high and holy to have been created by circumstances past or present. All is explained, if we suppose the historic truth of the mission and legislation of Moses, and the subsequent guidance of the national history by God. And all seems inexplicable without some such originating and sustaining cause.

And when we look at the history, as we have it now, certainly it is most unlike any merely legendary history which ever obtained popular belief. It is one record not of the exploits but of the sins of the people which received and preserved it. No doubt it tells of many heroic achievements. But these come few and far between, are secondary and subordinate, and are never told in a way to give glory to the human hero, or to the nation. The work and the workman are regarded always as God's gift; a gift usually very unthankfully received.

I leave these considerations, not wishing to give them more than their just weight. I am sure that any theory like that which seemed a few years ago to find some acceptance, ascribing the invention of the whole Mosaic legislation and history to the creative faculty of Samuel, can never hold its ground. Such an origin is, we may safely say, *impossible*. Whatever the influence of one great man may be upon his nation, he cannot make it accept a purely fictitious history of itself, or per-

suade it (with no basis of fact) that it has long ago received, and always possessed, a code of national law. He must build at least upon an existing tradition. And all I contend for at present is, first, that the Biblical history of Israel, substantially as we have it now, was believed in the days of Hezekiah, and, secondly, that it is, *in the main*, a true history. In my last lecture I hope to shew ground for a much fuller belief.

Like every other history of a people which has greatly influenced the world, it has a leading idea peculiar to itself. To shew what that leading idea was, and in what way it entered into the history, will be the object of the remainder of the present lecture. I have spoken of the ministry of the prophets as one of the many considerations which unite to shew the truth of the history. I wish now to shew how that ministry gives unity and purpose to the whole story of the national life.

The ministry of the prophets began in very early times. It was believed that the great law-giver himself, the revealer of God to Israel and

organizer of the national life, had confessed the incompleteness of his own work, and had foretold that God would raise up prophets from time to time to carry forward what he had begun¹. Things had scarcely settled down into their appointed order, after the conquest of Palestine, when the fulfilment of the promise began. The judges were men and women, not holding any office defined by the Mosaic constitution, but called by God Himself, as the need of the times required, to be the leaders of his people in war, and their advisers and teachers in peace. The ministry of the judge passed gradually into that of the prophet, of which indeed it was a simpler and ruder form. The last of the judges is always named as the first of the goodly fellowship of the prophets.

From Samuel onward the series is unbroken. With him the childhood of the nation has ceased, and its conscious and maturer life as God's people is begun. Still, for some generations, the office exists in a very simple form. The seer or prophet

¹ See Deut. xviii. 15—19.

is one conscious of a divine commission, and intrusted with a divine message to Israel; usually some very simple message of reproof with regard to present sins, or of direction about present duties; enforced by the announcement of some almost instant judgment or deliverance.

Even in these its immature beginnings, the existence of the prophetic ministry is a most remarkable fact. There is, on the one hand, a settled order, believed to be divinely appointed, yet confessing its own insufficiency. And in the midst of this rigid framework of polity and ritual, provision is made for an element apparently most alien, entirely free and unfettered, the work of God's Spirit breathing where and as He will, to reanimate, to guide, to correct the working of the complex organism.

In a less mature shape than the prophetic office had existed before and under the yet undivided monarchy. But when the kingdom of Solomon had been divided; when its northern half had rooted itself in idolatry, and the southern half was sinking

into formalism, or copying the idolatry of its neighbours;—then the prophetic gift assumed a more ripe and perfect form. Elijah and Elisha¹ in the northern kingdom were but the successors of Shemaiah and Azariah; even as they were the precursors of the great prophets of the two kingdoms in their decline, of those of the captivity and the return from Babylon, whose writings yet remain with us.

The ministry of Isaiah and his older and younger contemporaries could scarcely have been so rich in matter, and so perfect in form, without a long previous history of the same gift in a simpler and less mature condition.

Let us endeavour to realize the conception of the prophetic character as impersonated in Isaiah, and his contemporaries and early successors.

The prophet was essentially the man whose eyes had seen the King, the Lord of Hosts². He was the man who, under some special teaching of

¹ No reasonable scepticism can refuse to admit the historic reality of the men, and the general outline of their story. Their very unlikeness to each other is a strong proof of this.

² See Isaiah vi. Jerem. i. 5, 6. Ezek. i. ii. iii.

God's own Spirit, had been brought into the very closest spiritual contact and communion with God; and had so been made to realize, with a depth and vividness unknown to other men, both the Divine Majesty, and his own unworthiness. Through that vision of the Almighty, whether given first in some one definite instant, or more slowly opened to his sight through the discipline of many years, all things in heaven and on earth have been made new to him. He sees all things as from the footstool of the throne of God. To him the world is God's world. God is present everywhere, sustaining all, controlling all, directing all, in order to establish in the end His own Kingdom of righteousness and peace. The changes in the kingdoms of this world which perplex and dismay worldly statesmen, are all seen by Him as the working out in various ways of one unchanging purpose, of justice always, and yet of mercy.

Thus the prophet stands above his fellows, and is commissioned and enabled to tell them, on their lower level, where the obstructions of earth conceal

the heavenly realities, the things which he himself can see because God has opened his eyes, and can see without dismay, and with eye undimmed, because he sees God in all.

Yet he is one not separated from his brethren ; far less is he one who prides himself on being lifted above them. There is nothing in him of that which the great philosophic poet of Rome regarded as the delight of knowledge ;—the looking down on the wanderings of others, from the serene temple of wisdom to which the wise man has made his own way by the force of his own genius. The feeling of all the Hebrew prophets is one of intense sympathy with suffering and sinful men, coupled with a burning love of truth and right. The title which one of the noblest of the noble band takes as his peculiar designation expresses the common feeling of them all. He is the “son of man¹,” man from whom nothing human is estranged ; the representative of those to whom he speaks. His admission to God’s presence ; his

¹ See Ezekiel ii. iii. and *passim*.

deep sense of God's mercy in accepting and enabling him a sinner; have so filled his soul with devoted love to God, that he has surrendered his whole being,—his will, his affections, his thoughts,—to be a reasonable and willing instrument, with and by which God shall work just where and as He will. He may be living in a court, accepted during some brief interval of sunshine, revered by kings and their counsellors, like Isaiah under Hezekiah. Or he may be in a dungeon, living day by day amongst enemies who daily seek his life, like Jeremiah; or like Hosea, wounded in all his purest and tenderest affections, by the task which he has to fulfil as God's minister and witness. But everywhere, and in all things, the prophet hears the Divine call, and asks no more. His self-surrender is entire, lifelong, unflinching. To be faithful to the end, though it be in poverty, in prison, in contempt, in desolation, in death itself, is his only ambition. Where has earth seen—save when the Son of Man Himself came, and sometimes among those who derive

their inner life from Him,—where, I ask, has earth seen so noble an ideal of human life even conceived? Whence can it be that in Israel it was not only conceived, but acted out in reality, not once alone, but often?

And then the teaching of these prophets, how manifestly does it shine by its own light, as from the Great Source of all light.

Where shall we find any thought of the Being and Character of God which can be compared with theirs for purity and sublimity? Not indeed that this begins with the prophets, having been quite unknown before. On the contrary, perhaps the very noblest of all utterances upon it is found in one memorable passage of Exodus¹, evidently of very early date, which has left its trace on prophets and historic books, and psalms, almost equally. But all the teaching of the prophets on this subject agrees with the teaching of that vision granted to Moses. I should be ashamed to spend

¹ Ch. xxxiv. 6, 7. Comp. Psalm lxxxvi. 15; ciii. 8. Jerem. xxxii. 18. Neh. ix. 17.

words in proof of this. Every thoughtful reader of the prophets must judge and feel for himself. Even those least easily impressed have acknowledged that it is so.

But I will notice one or two distinctive points in the prophetic teaching on this vast subject.

The first of these is the tenderness which is mingled in it everywhere with the just and holy severity of the righteousness of God, even when it deals with human sin.

There are two analogies under which especially God's relation to His people Israel is set forth in the prophetic scriptures; that of the parent to the child, and that of the husband to the wife¹. "I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my firstborn²." "I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms³." "Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion upon the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet

¹ I think it may be said with general truth that in the Old Testament both these conceptions apply to the people collectively, not to the individual as such. The rare exceptions (such as Mal. ii. 10) really establish the principle.

² Jerem. xxxi. 9.

³ Hos. xi. 3.

will I not forget thee¹." "My covenant they brake, though I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord²." "I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness : and thou shalt know the Lord³."

The whole prophetic teaching is, we might almost say, the amplification of these two leading conceptions. To shew to God's chosen people what He meant them to be when He brought them into these peculiar relationships to Himself ; to shew them how they have forgotten, and in act denied, all His bounties ; to plead with them as to their unfaithfulness to God, which has been like the wife's, who gives her affections to another than her husband ; to shew them their folly, as well as ingratitude, in forsaking the living fountain of waters, for their own broken cisterns, which can hold no water⁴ ; to awaken conscience, and deepen the sense of sin, by flashing the light of the eternal Holiness upon all their corrupt thoughts and doings that are not good ;—this is the beginning of the

¹ Isai. xlix. 15. ² Jer. xxxi. 32. Comp. iii. 20, 21.

³ Hos. ii. 20.

⁴ Jer. ii. 13.

prophet's work. And to this end he uses without sparing the great truths of moral retribution. They that have sown the wind must reap the whirlwind¹. But after, and even mingling with these notes of wrath, there is always an undertone of mercy. There is often an unspeakable tenderness in the way in which God, by His prophet, pleads with His people. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help²." "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away³." "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee⁴."

¹ Hos. viii. 7.

² Hos. xiii. 9.

³ Hos. vi. 4.

⁴ Hos. xi. 8, 9.

It seems to me that this tenderness, as of the deeply loving husband, as of the compassionate father, is something entirely peculiar to the Hebrew prophet, as existing in union and harmony with the holiest displeasure against sin.

One other characteristic of the prophetic teaching I must mention ; hoping earnestly that the subject may be followed up in private study, from which I hope far more than from any words of my own. It is the reference of that teaching to the hopes of the future.

I have already said that prediction was not the chief element in the prophet's office. He is primarily the spokesman for God, the witness for God ; only secondarily, and just so far as that first object requires, is he a foreteller of things to come. This must be premised. But a rich vein of prediction runs through the whole mine of the prophetic scriptures, and gives them a great deal of their significance.

This predictive matter is of various kinds. There are passages in which (if we suppose them

to have been really written or spoken when and as alleged) we find distinct announcements beforehand of events which no merely human foresight could have discerned. No one who believes in the absolute foreknowledge of God, and thinks it possible that God should speak to man, can think it *impossible* that such predictions should exist. The suppressed premiss which governs much of what has been said in Germany, and lately in England, is one which no religious mind can accept. But the question is not of the possibility, but of the actual fact of predictions having been given. And while the question of the reality of the revelation is still at issue, we cannot usually, at this distance of time, prove, beyond the possibility of doubt, that the prophecy was given before the event. We must therefore, for our present purpose, put aside many apparent predictions of this sort; not as unreal, or of little value if proved real; but as *not yet available for proof*.

There are other cases, again, in which it can scarcely be doubted that the prophecy was given

before the event ; for instance, that of the Babylonian captivity, and the return. But here again it might be alleged by an opponent, with some plausibility, that the prediction was simply the natural outgrowth of a firm faith at once in God's justice, which must needs chastise the sins of His people, and in God's fidelity to His covenant of mercy with them, which must needs triumph in the end. Predictions of this class must not be lightly put aside. Any fair examination of the correspondence between the 'prediction and the event will shew, I believe, some points of agreement, after all allowance made, which cannot be satisfactorily explained as either accidental coincidences, or mere inferences from the great axioms of the faith of Israel.

But there is one great theme of prophecy to which none of these explanations apply. I mean, the prediction of the coming King, and the Redemption which He is to accomplish. This runs like a thread of gold through the whole texture of the prophetic scriptures. It is possible, no

doubt, to find points in the history of the time which may have afforded a foothold for the hope, and sometimes an imperfect prefigurement of the Redeemer and the Redemption. The glory of the future kingdom is revealed to the prophet, perhaps, who lives under the just and pious king Hezekiah. The disappointment of earthly hopes and the experience of suffering, help to deepen and make welcome the conception of a suffering Redeemer. But there is nothing in the prophet's own time which could of itself give birth to the anticipation. The deep sense of disappointment in the best that the Kings of Judah could do to realize the Divine ideal of the kingly office, could never of itself have created the expectation of the King whose name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace¹;—yet who shall feed His flock like a Shepherd, and shall gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead them that are with young². Nor

¹ Isai. ix. 6, 7.

² Isai. xl. 10, 11.

surely could the mere experience of the prophet, even though it were Jeremiah, misunderstood, persecuted, despised by those whom he would fain have saved from rushing upon their own ruin, have created of itself that image of the suffering servant of God which runs so remarkably through the latter chapters of Isaiah.

When all is said which the most ingenious of sceptics can say, the picture of One, guiltless Himself, suffering for the sins of His people, without complaint; and by His own death, as one numbered with the transgressors, bearing the iniquity of all, and making His soul an offering for sin; through whose stripes His people are healed¹; remains a most wonderful anticipation, fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, and in Him alone. It remains an anticipation, of which, even by itself, it is most difficult to explain the origin. And this most strange anticipation is fulfilled, after some centuries have passed with no semblance of its realization. It is fulfilled, but not until the popular mind in Israel

¹ Isai. liii. throughout.

has formed a most opposite ideal of the coming Saviour. And lastly, it is fulfilled in the most wonderful of all histories, of all characters, of all persons.

If we admit that a Divine Teacher first created the expectation, and then in due time fulfilled it by the gift of His own Son, all is explained. But what other supposition can account, first, for the hope so strangely awakened, then for the wonderful Person and history which fulfilled that hope? And this too when the desire and expectation of Israel had come to concentrate itself almost exclusively upon the hope of the Conqueror, who should restore and enlarge the kingdom of David and of Solomon, and place the oppressors of Israel beneath its feet.

LECTURE V.

*THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTIONS OF
REVELATION AND INSPIRATION, AND
SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED
IN THEM.*

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I COR. XIII. 9, 10.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

I WISH to give this last Lecture to the consideration of some difficulties involved in the Christian conceptions of Revelation and Inspiration.

I apprehend that these really lie at the root of a great deal of the unbelief which exists among serious and thoughtful men. Behind any objections of detail to Christian truth, and to the shape in which our Creeds and Scriptures present it to us, there lies very often a general unwillingness to acknowledge that God has spoken any where or any how to one man what shall in any way command

or even warrant the belief of another. Men whose life is morally blameless, and their temper religious, say sometimes that they cannot see why they should regard the teaching of Prophets and Apostles as something *different in kind* from the teaching of Plato or Socrates. They are prepared to accept it, they say, as they do the teaching of Plato, just in so far as it commends itself to their judgment by its own intrinsic excellence. They are quite willing to admit that it is a better moral teaching than any which they can find in the ancient heathen world. They admit that, historically speaking, it has been the source from which whatever is truest and best in the world of modern human life has flowed. But they claim to be themselves the judges of all, testing every part of every teaching by a verifying faculty within themselves, and rejecting all, on whatsoever authority presented to them, which that faculty pronounces false or imperfect.

A Christian, on the other hand, by whichever of many paths he may have reached the conclusion, is convinced that certain men have been chosen

by God to receive the knowledge of divine truth by a special communication from Himself, not vouchsafed to all men. He believes that, having first been taught the truth for themselves, they were then, in some way, called and enabled to declare it to others. And he believes that the utterances of these men do, in some way, and in some parts at least, demand his acceptance, as divinely authorized expressions of truth which it is good for him to know, and wrong to neglect or set aside. He believes that this is true, pre-eminently and necessarily, of the teaching of his divine Master; true also, more or less completely, of what that Master's Apostles taught in his name. We will leave for later consideration any question which may have been raised between Christians as to the precise grounds and measure of a Christian's confidence in the teaching of the Apostles; but none who accept the teaching of the Master will deny that his promises to them of divine guidance give a very peculiar authority to the substance, at least, of what they agreed in delivering for truth.

They claimed to speak with their Lord's sanction; and a Christian cannot but admit the claim. This is the Christian's position, defined as simply and clearly as we can, and as little encumbered with theory as possible.

Just this it is which is primarily his opponent's object of attack. He is unable to entertain the conception that another, a fellow-man, has any right to speak to him *with authority* in God's name concerning God and man's relations with God. I think that I have stated fairly the issue which is thus raised. No one will deny its momentous import.

I wish then to define the conceptions which govern the question; and to recognize, and as far as possible to meet, the difficulties which they involve. If we cannot hope to remove them altogether, we may yet hope to shew that they form no sufficient reason for thinking Revelation in general impossible, or the Christian Revelation in particular untrue.

The conception which lies at the foundation

of our present question is clearly that of Revelation. That of what we call Inspiration depends upon and follows this. It concerns the communication by one man to another of that which has first been revealed to himself. We take first, then, the conception of Revelation; afterward that of Inspiration.

What do we mean by Revelation?—The word itself may help us a little, if only a little, in fixing the precise nature of the conception which we use it to express. It is the *unveiling* of something;—the withdrawal of a screen which hides some external object, whether it be thing or person, from our eye, so as to make that visible to us which previously was not so. In the use of the word which we are considering now, the object so discovered, revealed, or made visible to the inward eye of men generally, or of some favoured man, is God Himself, or some procedure of God, past, present, or future, in relation to man, or to the world which He has created and sustains. It is supposed that these objects of revelation are

beyond the attainment either of man universally, or of the particular man to whom the revelation is made; but are brought within his ken by some action of God Himself in man's behalf. This seems to me to be what is implied in the conception of religious Revelation, taken in its broadest and most general form.

Is there in this general conception anything which is either self-contradictory, or at variance with admitted truth?

Let us try to fix the point at which our opponent's difficulty begins. There is clearly a great deal of ground which ought to be in common between all (whether at present Christians or not) who believe in the existence of a personal God; in whose image we ourselves were made, and who really cares for man. With such men, and such only, we must reason in the present matter. Our controversy with others must be conducted on a different basis.

We believe in common then, I assume, that communion between God and the spirit of man

is not a dream or a figment, but a reality. We believe that God has made the soul of man for a loving fellowship with Himself; and that in this fellowship alone, or at least as its first and most absolutely necessary element, the true dignity and happiness of the soul of man is found.

A Christian believes further that the possibility of this communion has its root in the Word of God; who was in the beginning with God, and was God, and who, from the beginning, has been the Light and Life of all men. He believes that its actual exercise begins in a quickening of the soul into spiritual life by the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit of God, who comes forth from Him to man through this divine Word. I do not think that any person not yet a Christian, who thought justly, and felt the reality of the life itself, would find it peculiarly difficult to accept this additional element;—though of course the terms used would have far less distinct meaning for him than they have for a Christian. The life in which God and man meet must surely have its ground and its

beginning in God, and not in man; in the self-existent and absolute, not in the finite and dependent being.

This life then, such in its nature and its commencement, must depend for its continuance and developement upon the knowledge of God, as a necessary condition.

Communion presupposes some knowledge, and tends to growth in knowledge. On our present supposition, therefore, the knowledge of God will be a part, and a condition, of the true life and happiness of man. The knowledge which is vital will indeed be something very different from, as well as very much more than, the knowledge of any number of propositions concerning Him. It will be the knowledge of A PERSON; one who loves, and may be loved. Its shadow and earthly counterpart is seen in the child's knowledge of its parents, the friend's knowledge of his friend; not in the contemplation of the truths of a science. But it will imply and presuppose the knowledge and contemplation of truth concerning Him; and certainly

cannot exist without something of true knowledge, both as a foregoing condition, and as an inevitable concomitant.

These things being so, the Christian believes that God, having love to man, has made Himself known to man, in sundry portions, and in divers manners¹, as it has seemed fit to Himself. He includes in his conception of God's revelation of Himself to man, that gradual disclosure of moral and spiritual truth which is made to all men, through conscience; through observation of the world which God has made and sustained; through the discipline given by the experience of human life. He believes that the Father of spirits does especially use the relationships of family life—in a measure, too, those of national life, which is developed out of family life—as an instrument for teaching men everywhere something of those divine realities of which, as I have said, they are the shadow, and for the apprehension of which they

¹ πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως, Heb. i. 1.

are a divinely intended discipline and preparation. I think that any believer in a Personal God—that is, in a Being who is conscious, perceives, wills, acts, loves, has moral attributes, of which all that conscience approves as good and right in man is the imperfect image—ought to accept the Christian's belief on these points as entirely true, so far as he can attach meaning to its several terms.

Neither will the Christian, if he understands his own principles, part company with the religious theist, when the latter in his turn affirms that moral and spiritual truth,—touching, as it does, all the springs of human life,—is in its very nature intended to be (it cannot be truly alleged that it is in actual fact) the possession of every human being. Nor yet, when it is alleged that such truth must shine with its own light, and commend itself to the conscience of every man, will the Christian, if he is well instructed, refuse his assent; though he will think many limitations and qualifications necessary. He will believe that ultimately, in proportion as the soul grows ripe in spiritual wisdom

and goodness, all which it has learnt will so be seen to be consistent with itself, and to have a real, though not always a manifest, unity of plan; it will be felt so to meet the wants of human nature, and to explain the facts of human life, that the persuasion of its truth will approach the certainty of an intuition. But he well knows that this conviction must be of gradual growth, and can only come to those who have first accepted the truth on some other authority than that of their own intuition; and who have put themselves, perhaps by a life-long discipline, into the position from which alone the truth, in all its bearings, may be seen and estimated aright.

But it is just here that the difference between the Christian and the sound religious thinker who is not yet fully a Christian, will first (if I see rightly) make itself felt.

The Christian does and must believe, and one who is not yet a Christian usually does not believe, that, in order to know ultimately for ourselves, as with intuitive certainty, we must have,—over and

above that knowledge which is ideally possible for all men, however difficult of practical attainment to many,—some special disclosure made to us mediately or immediately by God Himself;—a disclosure of truth which did not and could not present itself to our own minds, in the way of inference from the facts of consciousness within, or of the world without. He believes that God has been and is dealing with men upon the ground of a redemption in Christ Jesus. And though this redemption satisfies wants lying deep in man's original constitution, and is founded on, and in conformity with, relations which a Christian believes to be eternal, both within the eternal Godhead, and between that Godhead and man,—yet he cannot but confess that the knowledge of the redemption which God has accomplished is beyond the attainment of man, except through a certain history, which requires external attestation, and must in the first instance be received on historical evidence. He acknowledges also that this history is in itself, when accepted and understood, a disclosure of truth

previously unknown, or most imperfectly known, to man; and of relations such as can only be made known to man through a divinely given interpretation of that history which is the basis of Christian faith and hope.

A Christian and a truly religious deist then do not necessarily differ on the question of revelation *absolutely*. In its general sense, of a disclosure of truth concerning God to man, they both confess it. But a Christian truly feels that his own position requires some special sense to be given to the word, over and above its general one. He believes that from the beginning of the world God has taken men into friendship with Himself, enabling them to live the true life of man; and that to some of those who have lived this life He has made communications, which added to the knowledge they had or could otherwise have had of Himself; and that these communications were intended to benefit, not themselves only, but others through and with them.

He believes, in particular, that the Lawgivers

and Prophets who were raised up in Israel, had special wisdom and grace given them; enabling them first to see, and then to teach to others, truth which others did not see, and which they themselves could not have seen without a special divine teaching. He believes that the light so given shone more fully as the end of the exceptional position of Israel approached; and that it gradually disclosed more completely God's purpose to send a Redeemer-King, of more than merely human birth, who should become the Saviour of the world. He believes that, in fulfilment of these promises, the Son of God became man, and died and rose again, revealing Himself, and his Father through the revelation of Himself, in word and deed, in suffering and in resurrection.

Believing Jesus to have been the Son of God made man, he cannot but believe that all truth concerning God, which man needs to know, or can know, was known fully by Him.

He believes also that certain chosen friends and companions of the Lord Jesus, before and

after His ascension, were chosen to receive through His Spirit a special teaching, as to the facts of the redemption, and the meaning of those facts, as a revelation of God to man.

His opponent objects to the notion of Revelation in this sense; and that on two grounds chiefly.

He urges first generally that Revelation, in the Christian's sense of the word, implies an inequality in the dealings of God with men. There is a knowledge equally important to all men, by the supposition made, which yet is given to one man, and not given to another;—or is given more fully to one man than to another;—without any thing in the moral character or condition of the one to make the distinction between the two an equitable one. The Christian regards the recipient of a revelation, in the sense in which he uses the word, as placed thereby in a condition more favourable to the true development of man's being, to say the least, than that of the man who can only learn truth in other ways. To suppose otherwise is to make revelation altogether futile. But this favour shewn

to one man over another, without the latter's fault, is thought to be at variance with the equity of Him with whom there is no respect of persons, as the Christian asserts nevertheless.

The difficulty is no doubt a very real one. The objector is quite right in saying that the very conception of Revelation implies an advantage given to those who have it over those who have it not. But if we are asked to infer from this that Revelation cannot be, we reply, first, by an appeal to other indisputable facts in the method of God's dealing with mankind. All men are not, as the objector seems to suppose, placed in the same position of advantage, physically, intellectually, socially, and (above all) morally. The children, for instance, of the depraved are not in the same position of moral advantage with those of the virtuous; nor men who live in a time of national decay with those who are born into the midst of a generation full of wholesome vigour, and disciplined by righteous institutions. In fact, the moral history of mankind is a record of inequality of moral surroundings,

of advantages wasted sometimes on the favoured, redressed sometimes by the energy of the unfortunate, but existing always and every where.

And how then does the moralist who believes in a Righteous Governor of the world reconcile himself to this experience?—Not by attempting to explain it away; but by believing that, in the eye of the all-seeing Judge, men are estimated not according to their actual condition, taken by itself, but by that condition in combination with the circumstances in which it has been attained. And even so the Christian believes that all men will be judged, not by what they knew, but by the use they made of what they knew. He has his Lord's warrant for so believing. "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom

men have committed much, of him they will ask the more¹."

But another objection is urged. The Christian notion of revelation, it is truly said, implies that God reveals truth to one man not for himself only, but that that one man may teach it to others. God is supposed to reveal Himself to many men through some one or more chosen instruments. Now all truth concerning God must from its very nature, it is urged, be known to all to whom it is known at all, by what may be called intuition; that is, by a knowledge which comes to each man within his own soul. So long, it is urged, as I believe truth of this sort only because another tells me that he knows it, I do not really know it. I attach no meaning, or a wrong, or a very imperfect meaning, to the symbols in which it is supposed to be expressed. It is only when I see it in its own light, as self-evident, that I really grasp or know it, in any worthy meaning of the word 'to know'. And

¹ St Luke xii. 47, 48.

in the moment in which I begin so to know it, all dependence on another's assertion of it is cast aside as outgrown and useless. The notion that I can ever learn any truth concerning God except by an inward effort of my own, or a disclosure of it to myself which comes to me directly and immediately from God, is entirely a mistake. I cannot sit at the feet of any human teacher, as a learner of divine truth; not though he were a John or a Paul; some would add, not even though he were Jesus Christ Himself.

There is much in this would-be reasoning which seems to me very loose assumption. Yet I think that it expresses fairly the spirit of a great deal of the existing unbelief in religious matters. I hope by and by to recognize, and put into its proper place, what there is of truth in the assumption which underlies the argument. But for the present, I think, the sufficient answer lies rather in a consideration of the concrete form of revelation which a Christian believes, than in any attempt to grapple with the conception in its abstract shape.

We believe that the Son of God did Himself become man, and live on earth a life which was at once human and divine. Our whole faith, in so far as it is distinctively Christian, rests fundamentally, as we have before shown, on the truth of a certain history. History can never be known intuitively. All knowledge of it, except by eye-witnesses of the whole, if such there be, must depend, in the first instance, on testimony. Those whom I believe to have witnessed and related the history, do, to me, reveal truth which I could not otherwise know, for they reveal a Person whom I could not otherwise know. Persons can only be made known to us in two ways; by actual intercourse or communion; and by their acts. It is in the second of these ways that our knowledge of the Saviour, and of God through Him, must usually begin. It will afterwards be made real, and living, and personal, by actual communion.

I may verify ultimately, by an experience of my own, much of the truth which I have learnt about Him. But it was as truly learnt from

others, in the first instance, as any other series of facts can be. And further, if I believe that the Word and Son of God became man, I cannot but believe that what He said of His Father in heaven was truth, which He indeed knew intuitively, but which I must believe because He has told it to me.

Let the objector shew me if he can that the history is not proved true. But I can see plainly that the general proposition on which he founds his argument is neither self-evident, nor proved with sufficient clearness to supersede the necessity of an examination of the evidence for the history.

But it is objected again, that it is strange that God should teach truth concerning Himself through human instruments. Yet to suppose God to reveal Himself to certain selected men, and through them to so many of the rest of mankind as receive their testimony, is but to suppose that God deals with us, in making spiritual truth known, on the very same general plan on which He does indisputably deal with us, in making almost all other truth known. How is it that any new portion of truth in physical,

or even mathematical or moral science, has been made known? By a process of what we call discovery; which is really only another word for revelation. God has formed the mind of the man of genius whom we call the discoverer, and has placed him in the circumstances which have made the discovery possible. God has led him to perceive the truth, to verify his perception of it, and then to proclaim it. Other men had the same outward facts, perhaps, before them, but had not seen the truth which underlay them. The man of genius, in the appointed hour, penetrates within the veil, and comes forth again to tell what he has seen within it. The world is astonished, doubts, disbelieves, for a while. A few other minds qualify themselves, by a laborious process of self-discipline, to stand where the discoverer stood, and to testify that they have seen again what it was given him to see before others. At last the truth obtains acceptance, and is added to the sum of recognized human knowledge.

True, in scientific discovery, when it has been

once made, it is usually possible for any man, who will comply with certain conditions, to test its truth by an experience of his own. Not perhaps always so. For even in science it may be given to one man to observe a crucial fact, or make an experiment, which no other person will ever be able to see or make again in precisely the same circumstances.

And even so it is in the disclosure of divine truth. There are some parts of it, and many parts of the history that reveals it, which cannot be made the objects of direct experience in ourselves. With regard to these we must continue to depend (as we seldom need to do in science) on the testimony of others, whom we believe to have been placed by God under special conditions, expressly in order that they might learn it for themselves, and witness of it to us.

But there is much, with regard to the Divine Persons, and the divine life in man, which, though revealed at first through some special human experience, and learnt from the testimony of the seer,

or prophet, or apostle, to whom it was revealed, may yet afterwards be verified by our own experience; if we will first accept the truth provisionally on the revealer's testimony, and then put ourselves under the conditions in which alone the experience is possible¹. The Samaritans said of old², "Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." And even so may we say, with regard to all which directly concerns the divine life in our own souls, 'I once believed, on the testimony of the Apostles, that these things were given. I believe it now, because I have found that they are given to myself, and may be enjoyed in reality.' Thus it is indeed that, in all human learning the pupil must believe that he may know. In science, or in natural history, he accepts the truth provisionally, on the authority of his teacher; and so, and only so, qualifies himself to see, to verify, to extend, to correct.

¹ This is the meaning of Augustine's *Credo, ut scias*.

² John iv. 42.

Another point requires notice. The Christian's supposition is that God has revealed truth to the one man, that through that one man He may lead others into the apprehension of it. It is surely involved in this conception, that revelation must be gradual, and in all but its last stage, if not even in that, be very imperfect. St Paul tells us so in the text. "We know in part."

We may or may not be able to see why God so reveals Himself. We have seen that there is a close analogy between this way of revealing spiritual truth, and the way in which almost all other truth has been made known. But what I want to notice now is, that this method of revelation implies necessarily a *double* limitation of the disclosure of divine truth. It must be limited, first, by the mind of the first recipient. He cannot know the whole of the truth as it is in itself. It can only be made visible to any man, in so far as the finite mind can grasp the infinite and eternal reality; which is most imperfectly. It may be further

limited by the special conditions of his own circumstances and character. And it must be limited, secondly, by the power of the recipient to utter what he himself has learnt. It is through human language, and this instrument wielded by one man, who has his own ways of thought and speech, that the truth is to be gathered by those who sit at the seer's or prophet's feet.

Remembering this fundamental conception, we shall no longer be startled or perplexed, if we find that the revelation made to men in the early and rude times of the world's history, was very simple in its form, very limited in its scope, very imperfect in its expression. If we find (as we do find) that in the Bible we have the record of a progressive revelation; and that this revelation is one made at first to rude men, through men of like passions with themselves, though placed under a special divine teaching; we shall not wonder if many things in its early stages seem to us now only very imperfect representations, or foreshadowings, of the fuller truth made known later. Nor shall

we wonder if even the later teaching of the prophets—

“Last in the train of night,
If rather they belonged not to the dawn,”—

seems but rudimentary, when compared with the teaching of the Son of Man Himself, and of those to whom He promised that his Spirit should lead them into all the truth which man need know, both concerning God and concerning man's own being. This, instead of a stumblingblock, as it has often been made, will only be what we should have expected; if we have once apprehended duly the conception of a disclosure to man as limited necessarily by the receptive and communicative power of the divinely chosen human instrument.

This brings us to the other part of the subject of the present Lecture;—the question namely, of what it has been agreed to call Inspiration.

I think the simplest account we can give of the conception which that word is meant to express is the following.

We assume that God, when revealing truth to men by one or more of themselves, does in some way and in some degree guide his chosen instruments in their attempts to communicate to others the truth which they have learnt.

Something of the kind seems implied in our notion of revelation. St Paul seems to refer to it, under the word prophesy, in our text. The prophet, as we have seen, is the man whom God makes his own spokesman. He has learnt truth by a disclosure to himself. He is enabled to utter that truth to others. God in some way guides him in so doing, that his own work may not be wholly in vain. What the nature of the guidance may be ; whether it has any and what limits ; are questions open to inquiry, evidently subject to doubt ; and, on *a priori* ground, full of difficulty ; perhaps not to be solved definitively. But, with whatever limits, it may be fairly alleged that something of the kind is almost necessarily presupposed in such a revelation as the Christian acknowledges.

It seems to me that so far the universal belief

of the Christian Church in all ages has gone; and that it has refused to go beyond this very general and limited statement, on any *a priori* ground, or as a matter essential to Christian belief. But it may be well to examine the subject rather more closely; only let it be with all sobriety; tentatively, not dogmatically.

We will speak at present of the New Testament alone.

All Christians have agreed, in the first place, to believe that their Lord,—being the Truth itself; knowing, as the Son of God must know, all things in heaven and earth,—spake, as never man spake, truth with no admixture of error, with only such limitation as might be required by his perfect knowledge of what man could bear and profit by. They have believed that the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, the Word who was from the beginning the life and light of men, has declared¹, or set forth, or revealed, the Father

¹ ἐξηγήσατο. John i. 18.

to men, unerringly; but only so far forth as those whom He intended to teach could receive it. They have been warned against hasty inferences on this point, by His own declaration, that in his voluntary humiliation there was that which He knew not¹; and that all His communications of truth, even to the chosen Twelve, while He was with them, were very incomplete; much being left for the future teaching of His Spirit; both in unfolding the meaning of that which He had said, but they had failed to understand; and also in the communication of further truth which they were not able, while He was yet with them, to receive at all². None ever dared to question the truth of that which the Lord Jesus was believed to have said, or the completeness of his teaching, when taken in conjunction with that of His Apostles; so far forth as in our present state we need know, or it would be good for us to know, the truth of God. This all Christians believed, it may be said

¹ Mark xiii. 32.

² John xvi. 12, 13, 25.

with approximate truth, everywhere and at all times. It will be seen at once that this statement falls very short of those which theorists in later times have sometimes propounded, and which some good men have been far too ready to suppose essential to their faith.

Then as to the means of knowing what the Lord or His Apostles taught, which remain to the Church of after times. For a generation or two the Church depended, partly at least, on oral testimony. But this gradually ceased, or became untrustworthy. Long before the end of the second century the record contained in certain books was almost universally regarded as the only source¹ of authentic information. Very early in the second century, nay, in the Epistle of Clement, written probably before the end of the first, we have the clearest evidence of a consciousness in the greatest of then living teachers that they were themselves

¹ The two or three sayings of our Lord not recorded in our Gospels, for which the authority of early tradition has been pleaded, seem very like developments of, or refinements upon, something contained in our Gospels.

only learners from the far greater teachers of a former day. All refer to Apostolic teaching as the rule of their own.

There were certain books, it is confessed, which were either little known, or regarded with doubt, in the second century, as to their claim to be Apostolic. But there were others which had obtained acceptance everywhere, as representing faithfully what the Apostles taught. These were studied, quoted, explained, as having authority for Christians who wished to know the truth. There was a general acceptance of the teaching of these books, only to be explained by their being regarded as the fruits of that full measure of the Spirit's power and guidance, which had been given for this special purpose to the Apostles and their chosen associates. Any one who will turn for a moment from one of the Apostolic Epistles to any writing of the sub-apostolic age, will be able to estimate the force and the ground of this feeling for himself.

Still, no theory was formed on the subject. A true instinct taught Christians to believe that those

who were brought into immediate contact with our Lord's personal ministry, and were chosen by Him to carry on his work, by planting and guiding his Church after his Ascension, stood in a position for knowing the truth, to which no man in a later generation could have any pretension.

St Paul's case was justly felt to be altogether exceptional. He had not been an eye-witness or minister of the Word on earth; but he had seen Him in glory, and had been specially called by Him to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. He had been acknowledged as their own equal by the chiefest of the original Twelve. The whole Gentile Church was the seal of his apostleship. This was enough.

We may observe further that men felt very early the presence of a human element, along with the divine, in the men, and in their writings. The difference of style, and of the special aspect given to truth, were recognized. Even the titles given to the Gospels witness this: one Gospel, for instance, was the Gospel according to Matthew;—the one

truth as viewed on the special side which St Matthew was led to contemplate. But no attempt was made to trace the manner or define the limits of the guidance which all, for practical purposes, were agreed to recognize.

We accept their belief entirely. To us, as to them, the writings recognized by them as apostolic come with authority, as depositories of the one truth which our Lord taught, and commissioned his Apostles to teach.

It would have been well if the Church of later ages had been content with the humbler wisdom of the earliest generations. Men have been far too ready in modern times to frame a theory of the way in which the Holy Spirit guided the apostolic writers in their work. These theories have done infinite harm to the cause which they were meant to serve. We dare not reason *a priori* on such a subject. Our only safe and reverent course is to study the Scriptures themselves of the New Testament, which come to us with authority so distinctly recognized by the Church of all ages since the first;

and to learn, from a patient and honest study of themselves, what they may tell us, be it more or less, as to the way in which they were composed, and the consciousness which their authors may have had of a divine guidance, its nature, and its limits.

The result of such an examination will make some important points sufficiently clear.

We take first the Gospels; since the record of our Lord's own earthly life and teaching is the basis of all Christian faith. What the preface to the third Gospel expressly tells us about that one Gospel, agrees with what we should infer from any fair examination of the three separately and together. Any guidance given did not supersede the labour of careful inquiry¹. St Luke does not claim to be himself an eye-witness; but to have carefully collected, combined, and arranged the testimony of others, who were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word. He is attempting only what others are attempting, to whom he does not claim

¹ See Luke i. 1-4.

for himself to be superior¹. The authors of the first and second Gospels may possibly have been among those to whom he refers; but we have certainly no proof that it was so; and no reason whatever to suppose that he refers to them exclusively. He does claim to have inquired for himself, and formed an independent judgment, not to be the mere copyist of what others have written.

When we compare his Gospel with the other two, we find how completely the view of their origin, which St Luke's account of his own intended work suggests, appears to be borne out by the facts. The accounts are, as we have seen, independent of each other, though containing much matter derived from some common source, either written or oral. The accounts bear every mark of simple honesty in themselves. The story which they tell us is the same in its main points. The character of Him who is the centre of all, is one and the same in each. But there is great variation in detail, both as to the facts and discourses selected, and as to

¹ ἔθεξε κάμολι, i. 3.

the minor circumstances of what is told. There are even apparent inconsistencies, and sometimes discrepancies which, with our present knowledge, we cannot reconcile; shewing that, as the guidance given did not supersede inquiry, or annihilate the human individuality of the writer, so neither did it exempt him from all possibility of error in points of detail comparatively unimportant. Had it done so we should have lacked the invaluable proof given by these very discrepancies of the independence and the truthfulness of our narrators. There is no sufficient foundation in these simple facts for any theory of inspiration; but there is the firmest foundation for confidence in the truth of the history; in the representation of the character and teaching of the Saviour; and in the revelation of His Person.

The case is not very different when we pass on to the fourth Gospel. I must not tread again ground already trodden in a former Lecture. I will notice only the one or two passages in which the writer himself tells us something as to his own

view of his own purpose and position. The narration is everywhere that of an eye-witness;—vivid, picturesque in circumstances, full of feeling, as of one who had lived through the story which he tells, though of feeling restrained usually from expression. He distinctly claims to be an eye-witness¹. He tells us that he has given but a selection from the words and works of Jesus in presence of His disciples; and he tells us what has been the guiding principle of the selection. “These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name².” There can be no doubt that the writer meant us to understand that he was one of those to whom he tells us that the promise was given, “When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all the truth³.” He believed, doubtless, that the promise was one which could not fail of its fulfilment to himself, in recording the Lord’s life, or in unfolding the truth concerning

¹ John xix. 35.

² John xx. 30, 31.

³ John xvi. 13, *πάσαν τὴν ἀληθειάν.*

His Person as the Word made flesh. But nothing is said as to the manner in which that guidance was given; nor can any one fail to recognize the human element, the character and feeling of the writer, as colouring the record and giving it a distinctive quality of its own.

I pass to the acknowledged apostolic Epistles. I say 'acknowledged,' not as myself doubting the right of the rest to a place in the Canon of the New Testament; but because I wish to touch no ground of which the solidity can be fairly questioned. The general fact is clear, that all the writers speak with undoubting confidence of the truth of what they say. Whether they speak of God, or of our Lord's life on earth, or of the bearing of those truths on human life, they always speak as with authority. They are not merely reasoning out conclusions for themselves, as to which they are conscious that they may possibly be in error. They have a commission to speak in their Lord's name, and are sure that He is fulfilling, in a wider sense, His own promise to guide them when

brought before kings and rulers for His sake¹. But they lay no claim to omniscience. They are evidently men of like passions with ourselves. We trace *progress* (in St Paul at least) in the apprehension and the power of unfolding truth. We find them reasoning now and then, after the manner of their time and country, in a way which *to us* (it may be through our own short-sightedness) is apt to seem inconclusive. St Paul tells us that he himself knew but in part, and prophesied in part. He knew that his fullest apprehensions of truth were still imperfect. There are some subjects² on which he tells us expressly that he gives his own judgment, as one who has received mercy of his Lord to be faithful; but not as intending to bind the conscience of those to whom he writes, as by a divine command. Even this limitation, so forcibly expressed, only gives greater force to our conviction of the reality of the guidance, and of its completeness as to all which concerned the

¹ Matt. x. 19, 20. Mark xiii. 11. Luke xii. 11, 12; xxi. 15.

² See 1 Cor. vii. 25.

revelation of needful truth, and of universal Christian duty¹.

These results leave us certainly without any theoretic definitions of the nature or the limits of that guidance of a writer by the Holy Spirit which we call inspiration. They are completely at variance with any theory of what would be fitly called verbal dictation, rather than inspiration. They shew that the guidance varied in its manner and degree, according to the subject-matter on which the writer was employed;—that it left him to exercise his natural faculties and use with diligence all his opportunities of knowledge; and to be (in all which concerned the form of setting out the truth) influenced largely by his own habits of thought and feeling. They shew that the guidance was always such as to secure that the truth concerning God, with its moral and spiritual consequences, should be taught as completely as the divine purpose required. But they shew also that the guidance

¹ A few remarks on the meaning of 1 Cor. vii. 25 will be found in a note at the end of the volume.

did not always, if ever, give an *absolute* completeness to the disclosure of the truth, or a perfect infallibility in all his utterances to him who was its subject.

Stephen spoke in the full experience of the fulfilment of the promises: "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist¹." "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you²." Yet Stephen on more than one matter of no spiritual import, contradicts the indubitable meaning of the Old Testament history of the event to which he refers³. Let us rather confess this frankly than resort to artificial interpretations, in order to evade the admission.

Our inductive conclusions differ widely, no doubt, from those of the theorist. They do not satisfy the exigencies of a dogmatism, which would fain substitute the absolute infallibility of Scripture in

¹ Luke xxi. 15.

² Matt. x. 20.

³ Compare Acts vii. 16, with Gen. xxiii. 19, 20; xxxiii. 19; l. 13; Josh. xxiv. 32.

its every letter, for that of Councils and Popes, or the supposed consensus of a yet undivided Christendom. But they do meet, I believe, the real wants of the soul which craves for the knowledge, not so much of propositions, as of the Divine Persons whom to know is life eternal.

Such a soul is delivered from all fear lest the writings so accredited should deceive or mislead him as to anything which it is of spiritual concern to him to know. Assured of this, we may well leave it to theologians to adjust, if they can, in the ripeness of time, the conception of inspiration which shall satisfy reason, and accord with all the facts of revelation, and of the Scriptures which are its depository.

Prepared by the study of the New Testament, we come, as the last part of our inquiry, to the Scriptures of the Old. It is only thus that a Christian can rightly and wisely approach the question of their inspiration. He must not wonder if he finds that his conclusions with regard to the Old Testament depend entirely upon a conviction

previously formed with regard to the Divine authority of Christ's own teaching, and that of His Apostles as guided by Him. I have shewn in a former Lecture, as I believe, weighty reasons drawn from an examination of the Old Testament itself, and of unquestioned facts learnt elsewhere, for believing that Israel was in fact placed under a special system of divine discipline, of which the Old Testament Scriptures are at once the record and the outgrowth. The substantial truth of the history, and the reality of a divine Revelation to Israel, can I think be shewn independently of any attestation of either in the New Testament.—This I must simply *assume*, with my present purpose in view.

Many will think, and I am content they should think, that they need no more than this to make them reverent students of the Old Testament. I am sure that any real study will end in giving the strongest possible confirmation to the persuasion in which it was begun.

But for *external* testimony to the divine authority

of the *Scriptures of the Old Testament*, we must look, I think, simply to the attestation of that authority furnished by the New. This is conspicuous and unquestionable. The Jews in our Lord's time, we know, regarded their *Scriptures* with the deepest reverence as God's word. Their Canon of the Old Testament was the same as ours. The text in which they read their *Scriptures* was substantially the same then as now¹. When our Lord quoted Scripture He referred to the same collection of writings which we ourselves have in our hands. Now it is impossible to deny that all which our Lord says on the subject, directly or indirectly, ratifies and confirms, instead of correcting or modifying, the Jewish belief as to the divine authority of these *Scriptures*. On innumerable points He *does* correct the teaching of the Scribes ;

¹ On the ancient Jewish Canon I must be content simply to refer to Dr Westcott's invaluable little book, 'The Bible in the Church.' Jerome's Latin version and the Greek version of the LXX. shew the *substantial* agreement of the ancient with the present text. Considerable as the variations of the Septuagint are, they do not affect any matters of real importance.

and shock, sometimes apparently of set purpose, the prejudices of his countrymen. But on this point, all that He says, and all that He implies, tends in one direction only. He assumes everywhere, He implies everywhere, He affirms when occasion arises, that these Scriptures are His Father's gift to them, designed to bear testimony to Himself. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me¹." "All things *must* be fulfilled which are written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me²." His Apostles in this, as in all else, followed their Master's teaching. They quote, they allude to, they appeal to those Scriptures, as indeed the word of the same God who had sent His Son into the world and given His Spirit to themselves.—"Whatsoever things were written aforetime," St Paul says³, "were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have

¹ John v. 39.

² Luke xxiv. 44.

³ Rom. xv. 4.

hope." "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works¹."

Surely we have in this fact all the external testimony we can want. No question arises as to the authorship of this or that Book. The ratification is given to the collection *as a whole*. This is ratified and assured to us by the sanction of the Son of God, not with any reference to the human authorship of this or that part, but as a complex whole, which teaches truly concerning God, and God's preparation of the world for His Son's coming. "They are they which testify of me," is the stamp which authenticates the whole collection to us, as the depository of God's own revelation of Himself, to Israel, and to the world, before Christ came.

We are left free to examine any question as to the authorship, integrity, and date, of particular

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

books and parts of books ; and as to the correctness of the details of the physical history of the world, and of the dealings of nations with each other. Our Lord uses the whole as the depository of truth concerning God, and man's relations with God. We have no right to extend His sanction equally to such matters of detail, which in no way affect the value of the whole collection, as a revelation of God to man, and of man's spiritual being to himself. This is what the whole purports to be, and what our Lord declares that it truly claims to be.

The whole too, we must observe, evidently tells the story of a *progressive* revelation of God. It is the history of His revelation of Himself, first to the childhood, then to the youth, then to the early manhood of the world. Even where the Old Testament is in itself, and for its own purposes, complete, it still confesses itself to be, in another aspect, incomplete. It contains the promise, not the fulfilment of the promise, of a perfect knowledge of God.

We will not hesitate, then, to confess that the revelation in its early stages was but rudimentary; fit for, as it was addressed to, the childhood of our race. Nor will we deny that, where it purports to relate the natural or civil history of the world, it *may* have been liable to error, and must needs bear marks of the imperfect knowledge of those to whom and through whom it was given. Let criticism, and natural science, and comparative history, do their best to give definite meaning to our acknowledgment that the Old Testament need not be in every part free from error;—that it was given for one purpose of supreme importance;—to make God known to man;—and that, when we will insist upon using it for another, namely to teach natural or civil history, we may possibly be misled; as a man might be who should take a map given him to be a guide on his own journey, as *necessarily* a perfect and complete map of the unknown country.

Let us above all be honest, be fearless, in our investigation of all difficulties arising from sup-

posed conflict with science, or with history as learnt elsewhere. If we cannot fairly reconcile the alleged contradiction, we simply learn that God has not willed that His own Word should be without some such traces of the human hand which held the pen, and has sometimes failed to copy the divine archetype unerringly. We will not settle for ourselves what Scripture ought to be; but will reverently inquire what it is in fact, and abide by the result.

So much I think may be truly said *on external proof* about the divine authority of the Old Testament. But let me add in conclusion, that there is another, and a continually growing proof of the same truth; which every patient and religious student of the Old Testament may have within himself, if he will.

From the first, we read these Scriptures with the reverence exacted by our Lord's acknowledgment of their value. But those who read and re-read, living the life of God, and seeking contact with God in prayer, come gradually to know the

Old Testament for themselves, as a book which bears the mark of a divine origin *within itself*. Read as saints and martyrs and simple men and women have read it; seeking to acquaint themselves with God, and be at peace, and grow in holiness; it becomes radiant with divine light. Men learn to feel truly that it is the mirror which at once reflects God to them, and sends the light from His presence into their own hearts. All that is low and selfish and sensual within them it so rebukes;—all that is good and pure within them it so stimulates;—all that yearns after God it so draws forth in desire toward Him, and so satisfies with His presence and love;—it so deepens the sense of sin, and the longing for holiness, and the faith which overcomes temptation;—it so explores every depth of the soul of man, and reveals him to himself;—it so sets forth the truth and purity and loving kindness of the Eternal Father;—that one who has meditated on it day and night, and drunk deep of its living waters, no longer needs any external proof that it is indeed a river of

the water of life, coming forth from the throne of God.

Such an one has indeed entered within the curtains of God's own presence, and is in safety there. He listens calmly to the storms of controversy, and the freezing blasts of critical inquiry. They may rage without; but they cannot touch him;—he is in safety there from the strife of tongues. "Thy word," he can say with full conviction, "is tried to the uttermost, and thy servant loveth it¹." He needs no theories of Inspiration. The difficulties which perplexed him once have vanished in the light of the infinite and eternal truth, which shines around him, enlightening all things. He feels it to be a lantern to his feet, and a light to his path². This is enough for him. A time may come when he shall know fully. He feels that even his present imperfect knowledge gives him a firm resting place, an unfailing refuge. He can find none elsewhere.

¹ Psalm cxix. 140.

² Psalm cxix. 105.

NOTES.

NOTE I. pp. 34, 57. *On the use of the word 'Church.'*

I quote the following from Field's valuable old Treatise 'Of the Church.'

The Church is the multitude and number of those whom Almighty God severeth from the rest of the world by the worke of his Grace, and calleth to the participation of eternall happinesse, by the knowledge of such supernaturall verities as concerning their everlasting good hee hath revealed in Christ his sonne, and such other pretious and happy meanes, as hee hath appointed to further and set forward the worke of their salvation. So that it is the worke of Grace, and the heavenly calling, that give being to the Church, and make it a different societie from all other companies of men in the world, that have no other light of knowledge, nor motion of desire, but that which is naturall; whence, for distinction from them, it is named *Ecclesia*, a multitude called out. (Booke I. chap. 6. p. 11. Ed. 1628.)

They that are partakers of the heavenly calling, and sanctified by the profession of divine truth, and the use of the meanes of salvation, are of very divers sorts. For there are some that professe the truth delivered by Christ the Sonne of God, but not *wholly*, and *entirely*, as Heretiques; some that professe the whole saving truth, but not in unity, as Schismatickes; some that professe the whole saving truth in *unity*, but not in *sincerity* and singleness of a good and sanctified minde, as Hypocrites and wicked men, not outwardly divided from the people of GOD, and some that professe the whole saving truth in *unity*, and sincerity of a good and sanctified heart.

All these are partakers of the heavenly calling, and sanctified by the profession of the truth, and consequently are all in some degree and sort of *that society of men, whom GOD calleth out unto himselfe, and separateth from Infidels, which is rightly named the Church.* (Chap. 7. p. 11, 12.)

The above extract will shew that I have not gone beyond the limits of allowed Anglican theology in the wide meaning which I have given to the word Church. I believe that Field's statement expresses exactly the intention of the description rather than definition given in the first sentence of Art. XIX.

NOTE II. p. 43.

Much valuable thought on the practical development of the law of Christ in its application to political and social questions will be found in the second part of *Ecco Homo*. I refer to this remarkable book the more gladly because the great defects and errors which disfigure its first part seem to have lost it the place which it deserved in the estimation of Christians. On its first appearance it was perhaps unduly praised in some quarters; as it was certainly denounced without discrimination in others. The second part especially should be read and meditated by all who wish to estimate the value of Christianity as a spring of social and political amelioration.

NOTE III. p. 44.

I have not attempted to deal with the dark and difficult question of the possibility of repentance after death. The truth of what I have said in the text, however painful it may be, is undeniable. That innumerable human beings waste their lives and die without visible ground of Christian hope is certain. Scripture simply recognizes the fact; it does not create it; or tell us much more about it than we can see for ourselves. It declares to us in the amplest possible terms

the atonement made for all; the certainty of pardon to all who repent, of grace to strengthen all who seek from God the renewal of their moral being. It proclaims a gospel to the lost and degraded, so full and free that our faithless timidity almost prevents us from uttering it, lest it give encouragement to carelessness. But it nowhere asserts or plainly implies that repentance or renewal to holiness are possible after death to those who have thrown away the opportunities given of seeking them in this life. Clearly the practical result of the whole teaching of Scripture, direct and indirect, upon this subject, is *the extreme importance of the use of opportunity in this life*. It adds to, rather than diminishes, the force of that inference from the actual facts of human life, which Bishop Butler has drawn out with such terrible force and earnestness in his *Analogy*, Part I. chap. 5.

The silence of Scripture as to future opportunities given to those who have failed to use this life, may not be conclusive speculatively, but is practically most significant. It should clearly determine the action of all who believe; both towards themselves and towards others.

NOTE IV. p. 55.

I would refer especially to the profound discussion of this question in Professor Westcott's *Gospel of the Resurrection*, which I have read since the above was first written.

NOTE V. p. 56.

On the meaning of 'Laws of Nature.'

I quote the following from Lord Bacon's Confession of Faith, which will be found in Vol. IV. of his works, London, 1740, pp. 453—457.

That God created spirits, ...he created heaven and earth, and all their armies and generations, and gave unto them constant and everlasting laws, which we call nature; *which is nothing but the laws of the creation*; which laws nevertheless have had three changes or

times, and are to have a fourth or last.....so as the laws of nature, which now remain and govern inviolably till the end of the world, began to be in force when God first rested from his works, and ceased to create ; but received a revocation in part by the curse ; since which time they change not.

That notwithstanding God has rested and ceased from creating since the first sabbath, yet nevertheless, he doth accomplish and fulfil his divine will in all things, great and small, singular and general, as fully and exactly by providence as he could by miracle and new creation, though his working be not immediate and direct, but by compass ; not violating nature, which is his own law upon the creature.

That at the first, the soul of man was not produced by heaven or earth, but was breathed immediately from God : so that the ways and proceedings of God with spirits *are not included in nature ; that is, in the laws of heaven and earth ; but are reserved to the law of his secret will and grace : wherein God worketh still, and resteth not from the work of redemption, as he resteth from the work of creation ; but continueth working till the end of the world :* what time that work also shall be accomplished, and an eternal Sabbath shall ensue. *Likewise, that whensoever God doth transcend the law of nature by miracles (which may ever seem as new creations), he never cometh to that point or pass, but in regard of the work of redemption, which is the greater, and whereto all God's signs and miracles do refer.*

NOTE VI. p. 87.

Letter of Pliny to Trajan. (Epp. x. 97.)

Pliny became governor of Bithynia (a province which then included apparently almost the whole of the southern shore of the Black Sea) in A.D. 103, and remained there less than two years. The subjoined letter to the Emperor Trajan was written probably in A.D. 104.¹

It is usual with me, Sir, to refer all matters on which I have doubt to yourself. For who is better able to guide my hesitation, or inform my ignorance ?

¹ This seems a more likely date than A.D. 103, as given in p. 87, note 1.

I have never taken part in judicial inquiries about Christians; consequently I do not know what are, according to usual practice, the subject or the limits of the inquiry or the punishment. And I have been not a little perplexed by the question whether any distinction is to be made by age, or those of the tenderest years are to be treated exactly as older people? Whether indulgence is to be shewn to repentance, or he who has been a Christian at all is to gain nothing by having ceased to be so? Whether it is the name itself, even though it be free from moral wickedness, or the moral wickedness that may be attached to the name, that is punished?

In the meantime, in the case of those who were accused before me as Christians, I have acted as follows. I asked the accused themselves whether they were Christians. If they confessed it, I asked them a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment. If they persisted, I ordered them to execution. For I did not doubt that, whatever was the character of the thing confessed, obstinacy and inflexible persistency ought at any rate to be punished. There were others similarly crazed, whom, because they were Roman citizens, I marked down to be sent to Rome.

After a time, since the charge (as usual) extended itself more widely the more the question was dealt with, many different forms of it came before me. A paper of accusation was posted up, without the accuser's name, containing the names of many, who deny that they are or ever were Christians. As they offered prayers to the Gods in words dictated by me, and offered their devotions, in frankincense and wine, to your likeness, which for this purpose I had ordered to be brought with the images of the gods; and as moreover they reviled Christ;—no one of which things, it is said, can those be compelled to do who are really Christians;—I therefore thought it right to discharge them. Others, named by an informer, said they were Christians; and presently denied it; said they had been so indeed, but had ceased to be, some of them three years ago, some many years, a few even more than twenty years ago. All of them too worshipped your likeness and the images of the Gods; these also reviled Christ. But they affirmed that this had been the whole of their guilt or error, whichever it is to be called; that they had been accustomed to meet on a regular day before dawn, and in response to each other to repeat a hymn (*carmen*) to Christ, as to

their God, and to bind themselves by an oath of allegiance (*sacramento*), not to any crime, but never to commit thefts, or robberies, or adulteries, not to break their word, not to deny money entrusted to them when called on to account for it. They said that, when this was over, their custom had been to break up, and to assemble again for a meal, but one open to all, and innocent ; and that even this they had ceased to do since my edict was issued, in accordance with your instructions, forbidding fraternities.

The more necessary therefore did I think it to make inquiry, and that by tortures, of two female slaves who were called deaconesses (*ministrae*), what was the truth of the matter. I discovered nothing else but a perverse and excessive superstition.

Therefore, deferring the trial, I have taken refuge in consulting yourself. The matter seemed to me worthy of mature deliberation, especially on account of the number of those who are in jeopardy. For many of all ages, of all ranks, of both sexes too, are and will be brought into danger. Nor is it the cities only, but the villages, and the open country, that the contagion of this superstition has pervaded. And yet it seems possible that it may be stayed and cured. At any rate it is certain that the temples which were almost abandoned have begun to be frequented, and the accustomed sacred rites, long intermitted, have been renewed ; and that victims for sacrifice find a ready sale, whereas hitherto they found very few buyers. From which one may easily surmise what a multitude of people may be brought to a better mind, if room for repentance be given.

The Emperor Trajan replied as follows.

My dear Secundus, You have followed the proper course in examining the cases of those who had been accused before you as Christians. Nothing can be laid down as a universal rule, having one invariable shape. They must not be sought for ; if they are accused, and the charge made good against them, they must be punished ; yet with this limitation, that any one who denies that he is a Christian and makes it manifest that this is so by act, that is by offering prayer to our Gods, however suspected he may be with regard to the past, must obtain pardon on

the ground of his repentance. But papers of accusation posted up without the name of the informer ought not to be admitted in the case of any criminal charge; for the practice is a bad precedent, and unsuitable to our time.

The letter and its answer sufficiently explain themselves. Nothing can be more striking than the spirit of good sense, fairness and humanity, shewn generally by both the eminent men between whom the correspondence passes. Evidently the wish of both is to deal as indulgently as they can even with Christians. It is against their will that the traditions of Roman law and government compel them to persecute. But they do not hesitate for an instant to inflict death upon people innocent of everything but an 'excessive superstition.' Such was the resistance against which Christianity had to make its way.

Yet the letter shews that, within about seventy years of the Ascension, and almost within the lifetime of St John, the Christian society had rooted itself so firmly as to empty the temples and compel the unwilling notice of a Roman governor, in a province remote from Judæa, far out of the line of communication between Judæa and Italy; and that its character and usages as seen from without correspond entirely with the view given of them from within by the Book of Acts and the Apostolic Epistles, one of which (1 Pet.) is addressed partly to Christians of Bithynia and Pontus. The well-known passage of Tacitus (*Ann.* xv. 44) was probably written ten years later than Pliny's letter, but relates events of the year A.D. 65, about two years before the death of Nero. It is as follows:

But no relief given by human means, no bounties of the prince, no ceremonies intended to appease the Gods, got rid of the infamy, or prevented men from believing that Rome had been set on fire by orders from Nero. Therefore to put an end to the evil report, he substituted for himself as accused, and punished with most exquisite cruelty, the people whom the commonalty hated for their

crimes and called Christians. The author of that name, Christus, had been put to death during Tiberius's reign by Pontius Pilate; and though checked for the moment, the fatal superstition broke forth again, not only throughout Judæa, the source of the mischief, but throughout the capital also, whither all things atrocious and shameful flow together from all quarters and are accumulated.

Those then were seized first who confessed (the crime); afterwards, on their information a great number were convicted, not so much on the charge of setting fire to the city, as for their hatred of mankind. Mockery too was added to their sufferings; that namely of dying covered with the skins of wild beasts, and torn by dogs; or else either crucified or kept to be set on fire, and after dark to be burnt for lights by night. Nero had offered his gardens for the show, and exhibited the games of the circus, mixing with the common people, or standing on his chariot in the dress of a charioteer. Guilty as they were, and deserving the extremest punishment, compassion was stirred towards the victims, as if they were being destroyed, not for the public advantage, but to gratify the cruelty of one man.

It is clear from Tacitus's expression in ch. 38, *forte an dolo principis incertum*, that he did not himself believe the Christians guilty of causing the fire, however badly he thought of them in other ways.

There is a passing notice of the persecution in the life of Nero by Tacitus's contemporary Suetonius; who mentions, apparently as one of Nero's better deeds, that 'the Christians were punished, a race of men of strange and noxious superstition.' (Suet. *Nero*, ch. 16.)

NOTE VII. p. 102.

The importance of the questions of the (approximate) date of the Book of Acts, and of its authorship by a companion of St Paul, make some further remarks desirable.

Some able German writers (including even Bleek, who nevertheless believes St Luke to be the author of the book as we now have it) maintain the strange theory that the pas-

sages in which the writer uses the first person plural in speaking of St Paul and his companions are not St Luke's own, but extracts from journals or letters written by some other companion of St Paul, which the author of the book has simply copied into his own work *without the necessary grammatical alteration*. Any careful reader can judge for himself of the violent improbability that an educated and intelligent man, capable of compiling the whole work and of writing the Greek of the prefaces to the Gospel and the Acts, should be guilty of such extreme carelessness. The supposed parallels from barbarous mediæval chroniclers entirely fail. The mere statement of the theory seems enough to prove it untenable.

The only excuse for its invention is that the Book of Acts omits, or relates only cursorily, many events of St Paul's ministry, and sometimes is difficult to reconcile in minute particulars with statements or allusions in St Paul's Epistles. Allowing the utmost possible weight to the difficulty, the proposed solution may safely be pronounced an impossible one. The true solution will be found to lie partly in a more careful examination of the alleged discrepancies, which are often much exaggerated, if not altogether imaginary; and partly in a truer conception of the meaning of the book as a whole. Its object certainly is not to give a complete history of the Apostolic Church, but to mark the leading points of its outward extension and inward development, as the promised result of the work of the Holy Spirit¹. Beside this general purpose of the whole, the writer has evidently been influenced in the latter part of his narrative by some special personal interest in St Paul, as well as by his sense of the importance of St Paul's peculiar share in the extension and development of the Church. But no one who enters into the real design of the book will wonder at its incompleteness if regarded as a biography of St Paul. Nor is it

¹ See Acts i. 5, 8.

likely that St Paul, ever engrossed with "the care of all the Churches," and forgetting himself in his work, would indulge the mere curiosity of a biographer by narratives of his own adventures and sufferings in days long past.

Bleek himself however, it must be noticed, concedes all which is really important to the historical value of the Gospel and of the Acts. He ascribes both to St Luke, the friend and physician of St Paul, at least in his Roman imprisonment. If so, they are still contemporary history. The difference between the dates resulting from his view and that which I believe the true one, lies within the compass of some ten years more or less.

Some English writers to whom I owe much question the truth of the inference drawn in p. 100 from Acts xxviii. 30, 31 as to the date of the book. They think that "the success of St Paul's preaching in Rome is a fitter termination of the history than any other incident which could have been chosen¹." Even if this were conceded, we might reply first that what is recorded of the preaching at Rome is scarcely *success*². He preached ἀκωλίτως, but the *acceptance* of the Gospel was still matter of prediction³, rather than of history. It might be answered secondly, as I have already urged in p. 100, that the same pen which recorded the *two* years of outwardly uneventful imprisonment would surely have mentioned its prolongation to a *third* year, or its termination by trial and acquittal or condemnation, or by death in prison, if any one of these events had occurred before the publication of the narrative.

NOTE VIII. p. 131.

The question of the quotations of, or allusions to St John's Gospel in the writers of the second and third quarters of the second century (during the *last* quarter of which there can be no doubt that it was universally accepted) has been carefully and candidly examined (to mention no other

¹ Dr Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 3, note 2. ² See *vii.* 24—27. ³ *v.* 28.

names) by Meyer (in the introduction to his Commentary on St John, § 2, 1—7 of the 5th edition), and by Professor Westcott (On the Canon, Part I. ch. ii.); though of course the latter has only considered it as part of the wider question of the history of the Canon generally.⁴ Any reader who wishes to study the question for himself should avail himself of their guidance to the original passages. The conclusion to which Meyer comes is (p. 19) that "The continuity of the testimony in its favour, and the range of that testimony, widening as it does with that of Church literature, is as complete as ever is or can be required by way of *external* proof of a New Testament writing." Bleek's examination of the evidence will be found in his Introduction to the New Test. vol. I. pp. 236—251 of the English translation. The statement in p. 130 of my third Lecture does not, I feel persuaded, at all go beyond the evidence.

NOTE IX. p. 140.

The difficulty referred to in the text is the following :

In each of the first three Gospels there is a perfectly distinct statement that our Lord ate the last Passover with his disciples on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread ; i.e. evidently on the day kept as such by the Jews. St Matthew says τῇ πρώτῃ τῶν ἀζύμων ; St Mark adds, ὅτε τὸ πῖσχα ἔθνον ; St Luke, ἐν ᾗ ἔδει θύεσθαι τὸ πῖσχα ; shewing conclusively that the day meant is the 14th day of Abib or Nisan ; in the afternoon of which (Exod. xii. 6) the law required the paschal lamb to be slain ;—and on the evening of which, according to our reckoning, being the first hours of the 15th according to that of the Jews, the paschal supper was to be eaten. Nothing can be clearer than these statements. Their existence in each one of the three Gospels seems to shew that a similar statement had formed part of the original oral narrative.

On the other hand, there are statements in St John which lead naturally to the conclusion that the Last Supper was

eaten *on the previous evening*, and that the day of the Crucifixion was the 14th of Nisan; our Lord dying before the sunset of the 14th, and being entombed before the commencement of the 15th. The passages which seem to lead to this conclusion are mainly these:

(1) Joh. xiii. 29 seems to shew that "the feast" was still future.

(2) Joh. xviii. 28. On the morning of the Crucifixion the Jews "went not into the judgment hall lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover;" suggesting the same inference.

(3) Joh. xix. 14. The day of the crucifixion is expressly said to be "*the preparation of the Passover*," which seems naturally to mean the 14th of Nisan.

Clearly if we had no other account than St John's we should do right to take all these passages in their most obvious meaning. One or two other passages have been alleged, but seem much less strong than these.

But when we observe that this interpretation brings the three Gospels into direct contradiction with St John upon a very simple matter of fact, as to which it is scarcely conceivable that any confusion could exist within the lifetime of the first generation of Jewish Christians, it does seem worth while to reconsider the passages in St John; remembering that he wrote, as we believe, with a full knowledge, if not of the text of our present Gospels, yet of that oral Gospel which in this instance they represent.

When we write (as St John did) to those who already know much about the history we have to tell, we often use language inaccurately, because we know that it will be read in the light of that previous knowledge, and for this reason will not mislead.

Will the passages in St John fairly bear any meaning consistent with the date of our Lord's paschal supper which we obtain from the three earlier Gospels?

I think that (1) may without much difficulty be understood of the preparations for the remaining seven days of the Feast; in which even then it would seem that the "days of unleavened bread," with their multiplied and repeated sacrifices, had become the prominent feature, rather than the original paschal supper.

(2) It has been shewn that there are real difficulties in the supposition that any ceremonial defilement incurred could have debarred a Jew from the *paschal supper* on that evening, after sunset. It seems not impossible to suppose the eating meant to be that of the feasts of the festal sacrifices of that day, the 15th.

(3), though seeming to suggest the day on which *the Passover was prepared*, may *possibly* mean (the preparation being = Friday; see Joh. xix. 42, and the similar passages in the other Gospels) the Friday which fell during the Passover festival, and which, being the day of preparation for a peculiarly important sabbath, would be observed with peculiar care.

These explanations, though not free from difficulty, seem fairly admissible, and enable us to read St John's narrative as consistent on this point with that of the three.

If they are not accepted, we can only admit frankly the conflict between the statements of date in the three Gospels and in St John. The current of recent opinion, even in England, is in favour of St John's statement, and against any attempt at reconciliation which our present knowledge can enable us to suggest. If it be necessary to choose, we must follow St John. But I am, on the whole, inclined to accept the above solution.

NOTE X. p. 249.

On some passages in 1 Cor. vii. in connexion with the question of Inspiration.

It has been supposed that when St Paul says, in 1 Cor.

vii. 10, οὐκ ἐγὼ, ἀλλὰ ὁ Κύριος, he refers directly and exclusively to words known by him to have been spoken by our Lord when on earth, such as those recorded in Matt. v. 31, 32, xix. 1—9 and the parallel passages in Mark x. 1—12, Luke xvi. 18. Again, when he says (v. 12) λέγω ἐγὼ, οὐχ ὁ Κύριος, and (v. 25) ἐπιταγήν Κυρίου οὐκ ἔχω, he has been supposed to mean simply that he knew of no similarly explicit saying of our Lord upon the point in question. And as there is certainly a marked contrast in the Apostle's language between what he says on the two questions, it has been sometimes inferred from this exposition that, in the absence of any express declaration of our Lord, St Paul remained in doubt, or was less confident in his judgment as to matters of Christian truth and duty than in matters on which our Lord had spoken expressly. From this inference again another has been drawn, namely that St Paul *was aware that the guidance given to himself in matters of truth and duty was not always complete.*

Many of those who understand St Paul's words as above earnestly disclaim the inferences drawn from them. But our first object must be to ascertain the real meaning of the Apostle's language. If the interpretation is a mistaken one, the inferences will fall with it.

It is important to notice carefully the general drift of the whole chapter. The Corinthians, or a portion of them, have asked St Paul's opinion and direction both upon the general question of the comparative advantages of the married and the unmarried state, in a religious view; and also upon many of those practical difficulties in the relations between the sexes, which were inevitable when Christianity made its way where an almost unrestrained liberty of divorce existed by law, and by prevailing usage. On some points his answer is perfectly clear. Whatever the abstract advantage of one state over the other may be, there are many for whom the question is foreclosed. There are those for whom

marriage is a necessary safeguard. And the married are no longer free to choose. They must fulfil the obligations which they have undertaken. The tie once formed is by the law of Christ indissoluble. If indeed the *unbelieving* party in a 'mixed marriage' will exercise the liberty of repudiation allowed by human law, the conscience of the Christian husband or wife is no longer bound. The liberty given by the act of the other may be lawfully and even thankfully used. But the believer must not procure freedom by his own act. Let him remember that the true freedom is *that of the spirit*. The service to Christ makes us really free, whatever the apparent bondage of our outward circumstances. Where God's grace has found us, there it can enable us *to abide with God* (*v. 1—24*).

Having thus dealt with the case in which alone there was *an absolute right and wrong*, namely the case in which marriage had been already contracted, the Apostle proceeds (*v. 25—38*) to give his advice with reference to cases where the tie did not exist. In the circumstances of the then present time (*διὰ τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην, v. 26*) he considers the unmarried state freer from worldly care, and more favourable to energetic and single-minded Christian service. But he explicitly declares that the whole question is *not one of absolute duty* (*οὐχ ἡμαρτες v. 28, οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει v. 36*); *but only of Christian wisdom and prudence* (*καλῶς ποιεῖ, κρείσσον ποιεῖ, v. 38*), to be determined one way or the other according to the circumstances of each particular case (*πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον v. 35*). A second marriage is perfectly lawful, where *death* has dissolved the former (*v. 39*), though the Apostle would think it generally inexpedient (*v. 40*), and would require that, if formed, it should be *with a Christian*.

It will be seen at once that there is nothing of doubt or hesitation here; no consciousness whatever of imperfect guidance as to his Lord's will. The Apostle lays down with a bold and firm hand the lines of Christian duty, and the principles

which should guide a Christian in his judgment on questions of Christian expediency. His decision is perfectly clear, as to the boundary line between the provinces of absolute duty and of expediency. Any inference which has been drawn from his language as to the limitation of inspiration with reference to questions of Christian duty is quite at variance with the general meaning of the whole passage.

The expressions which have given colour to the misunderstanding are all capable, as it seems to me, of a perfectly different meaning, entirely consistent with the authoritative tone of the Apostle's teaching here and elsewhere. The *οὐκ ἐγὼ, ἀλλὰ ὁ Κύριος* of *v. 10* is but the application to his apostolic teaching of that which he has said elsewhere (Gal. ii. 20) of his whole life as a Christian, *ζῶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγὼ, ζῆ δὲ ἔν μοι Χριστός*, or of his whole apostolic activity (1 Cor. xv. 10), *οὐκ ἐγὼ, ἀλλὰ ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ σὺν ἐμοί*. The words *need not* refer to any saying of our Lord when on earth; though they *may* refer in part to those which had in fact been uttered, and which may probably have been known to St Paul. Still less do the words *ἐπιταγὴν Κυρίου οὐκ ἔχω*, in *v. 25*, express a *doubt*, founded on the absence of any such remembered words of our Lord. The word *ἐπιταγή*, according to its use elsewhere (see e. g. *v. 6*), does not even suggest naturally (as *ἐντολή* might have done) such a reference to a specific command. They seem to me to express naturally the Apostle's confidence that our Lord's will is to leave His people *entirely free* to exercise their discretion in the matter in question, as one in which there is *no* absolute right and wrong for His Apostle to declare.

If I am right, the exposition is a mistaken one, and the inferences drawn from the passage are as entirely unsupported by it, as they are inconsistent with the Apostle's habitual language elsewhere.

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