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W. H. Johnson

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SUPERNATURAL REVELATION:

An Essay

CONCERNING THE BASIS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

BY

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PREFACE.

IT is not unfrequently said that no one is convinced by an apologetic treatise, that infidels will remain infidels in spite of all arguments, and that therefore such works as the one now given to the public are useless. Christian living and experience, it is said, not argumentation, is what must be depended on as a means of convincing men of the truth and value of Christianity.

But it is obvious to reply that Christian apologetics, in its general scope, includes the statement of what is involved in Christian experience. If one cannot give a reason concerning the hope that is in him, it is not unnatural for the doubter to conclude that there is no good reason for the hope. Even though the doubter may not be converted by the Christian's reasons, he should at least not be confirmed by the Christian's silence.

It should be considered, however, that there are large numbers of persons who, in their attitude towards Christianity, cannot be reckoned as decidedly on the one side or on the other. Whether through ignorance or through conflict of inclinations, they are in a state of mind which craves a clear, simple, and candid exposition of the truth as it appears to those who are more positive in their convictions. No one mode of presenting Christian truth is fitted to meet all the manifold phases of skepticism. New statements, adapted to the new

and ever-changing forms of the old doubts and questionings, must always be called for; and every such statement does its part in the contest between truth and error.

In the following treatise I have endeavored to discuss, in a plain and intelligible manner, some of the leading questions towards which religious thought is at present most apt to turn, aiming not merely to parry the attacks of outright enemies of Christianity, but also here and there to rectify what seem to me to be infelicitous or erroneous statements on the part of professed Christians. In so doing I am far from presuming to be infallible, and desire the arguments and expositions to rest on their merit, as tested by the ultimate judgment of enlightened Christians.

In referring to the opinions of others, whether by way of approbation or of criticism, I have sought to be fair and appreciative, and to aim at such a treatment of views divergent from my own as to promote an eventual accord rather than to intensify the disagreement. It is not necessary to justify the choice I have made of books to be noticed or commented on. I will only say, respecting one work which is frequently referred to (my friend Professor Ladd's *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*), that, although I have felt constrained in some instances to dissent more or less positively from his conclusions, I desire for that very reason to express my warm admiration, not only of the scholarly thoroughness, ability, and candor, but also of the reverent and Christian spirit, which characterize the work. Our points of agreement are far more numerous and important than those of difference.

The quotations from the Bible are generally worded according to the Revised Version.

These lectures were delivered at Princeton in February and March, 1889. For the sake of accuracy it should be stated

that on account of the prescribed limitations of time, hardly a half of the contents of this volume could be given in the six lectures of the L. P. Stone course.

As one contribution to the many testimonies in favor of Christian truth, it is hoped that this volume may not prove to be unserviceable.

C. M. MEAD.

SEPTEMBER, 1889.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

FOR the second edition of this work I have seen no occasion to make any material change. With the exception of a few unimportant corrections it is a reprint of the first.

C. M. M.

MAY, 1893.

CONTENTS.



CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN OF THE THEISTIC BELIEF.

PAGE

Character of existing skepticism. Tendency to anti-supernaturalism and atheism. The theistic problem. I. Origin of theistic belief in the individual. The belief comes from tradition. II. Knowledge in general a social matter, as regards (1) historical and scientific truths; (2) the objects of direct perception; (3) the training of the faculties; (4) the advance in scientific acquisitions; (5) the apprehension of intuitive truths; (6) the adoption of theistic notions. III. Yet individual cognition must precede the transmission of knowledge. 1. Testimony of other men cannot be accepted till first the existence of other men is assumed. 2. The material world must be cognized by the individual before there can be a general knowledge of its existence. 3. All that is truly known must be assumed to have been originally an object of direct perception. 4. Intuitive truths cannot be accepted merely on testimony. 5. Theism, if valid, must depend on something more than testimony. IV. Sure knowledge results from a combination of individual cognitions. Individual cognition is the prior thing, but does not become free from the suspicion of illusion till confirmed by others 1-19

CHAPTER II.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE THEISTIC BELIEF.

What is the ultimate ground of theism? It has a double foundation. 1. Theism springs from native impulses of the mind. What leads to the persistent defense of theism presumably operative in producing it. Hence, 1. The hypotheses which derive theism from dreams, fear, etc., groundless. They overlook the fact requiring explanation, namely, the persistent tendency to believe in a God. So the Ritschl theory that theism sprung from a sense of weakness and want. 2. Theism not a direct intuition. 3. The presumption is in favor of theism as over against atheism. 4. The argument for theism as seen in the light of the legitimate consequences of adopting atheism. On the atheistic hypothesis the universe is aimless and meaningless. Free will and moral character impossible. Truth and error equally authoritative. So Herbert Spencer's doctrine. Knowledge being held to be only relative, all so-called knowledge becomes merely a series of impressions. The fact of

error and ignorance suggests the existence of an Intelligence which is without error or ignorance. The origin of intelligence. Relation of morality to atheistic conceptions. Atheism cannot explain the moral sense either as regards its origin, its present working, or its ultimate end. Logical issue of atheism is utter indifference to the general welfare. Futility of the notion of moral order on atheistic basis. All life a farce unless there is a God. And the farce must be infinitely repeated. The general result is that the mind of man demands that the universe shall have an end, and a good end. The teleological and the moral arguments not the source of a belief in God, but rest on the belief. The belief springs from a tendency to assume a personal moral Power who directs the affairs of the universe. Agnostic objections futile. II. Revelation as confirmatory of theistic impulses. Revelation useless without a theistic tendency. Belief in a God involves a desire for a revelation. Revelation, when it is received, a surer ground of knowledge than the theistic arguments. Example of the ordinary Christian. Theism cannot thrive without faith in a revelation. The objection from the multiplicity of alleged revelations 20-64

CHAPTER III.

THE QUESTION OF A PRIMEVAL REVELATION.

The question not how the first theistic notion arose. Dr. A. M. Fairbairn's argument against the hypothesis of a primeval revelation. Relation of language to revelation. Essential uniqueness of the condition of primeval man. Evolutionism does not remove the uniqueness. The problem as it presents itself to the theist. How is the aboriginal conscience to be conceived? Present analogies favor the theory of a supernatural revelation. Dr. Fairbairn's notion of an "atheism of consciousness." Does God desire to be known? Alleged impossibility of a primeval revelation. Pfeleiderer's argument. View of Theodore Parker and F. W. Newman. Misconceptions of what a revelation is expected to do. Pfeleiderer again. Alleged gradualness of development of theistic ideas 65-86

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.—GENERAL FEATURES.—
MIRACLES DEFINED.

The argument for Christianity may relate to contents or to form. Three points in the latter case: I. Revelation limited to a particular time. J. S. Mill's objection. Reply. Notion of an absolute religion. Revelation no more universal and individual than the communication of knowledge in general. Relation of sin to revelation. II. Necessity of putting peculiar confidence in individuals, especially in Jesus Christ. Objection to this. Reply. Men naturally crave leaders. III. Revelation involves the assumption of a supernatural agency. Miracles defined. 1. Overstatements. Miracles not violations or transgressions of natural laws. Hume's doctrine considered. "Supernatural Religion." Professed the-

ists' objections to miracles. C. H. Weisse's. Rothe's reply. Ancient and present conception of natural forces. 2. Under-statements. Miracles explained as accelerations of natural processes; or as analogous to mesmeric effects; or as wrought with the co-operation of natural forces (Professor Ladd); or as the result of occult natural causes. 3. The distinction between absolute and relative miracles. Different forms of it. The distinction untenable. Special providences. Answers to prayer . 87-123

CHAPTER V.

THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF MIRACLES.

Miracles commonly regarded as attestations of the organs of revelation. Reactionary view. Tendency to question the use of miracles. 1. Is faith in miracles a matter of indifference? Various shades of view here included. The objection to the common view stated. Reply: 1. The agnostic view conflicts with faith in Christianity as a special revelation. Pfleiderer's conception of Jesus' inspiration considered. Abuse of the term "revelation." 2. The skeptical view leads to confusion and self-contradiction as regards the uniqueness and authority of Jesus Christ. No explanation of the uniqueness on naturalistic grounds. Jesus' claim of authority not explained by his unique excellence. Ritschl's view. Herrmann's view considered. The Ritschl doctrine of miracles. 3. Skeptical Christians, in attempting to ignore the miraculous, virtually admit the greater miracles while they deny the lesser. In admitting the fact of a special revelation, or of the sinlessness of Christ, they admit the miraculous in the spiritual world. 4. The agnostic attitude towards miracles leads to caprice in the treatment of the New Testament records. Matthew Arnold's attempt to show that Jesus claimed no miraculous power. Denial of the supernatural leads to unfounded conjectures concerning the miraculous stories. Mr. Arnold's theory of the origin of the stories of miracles. What the Jews expected in the Messiah. Mr. Arnold on the resurrection stories. 5. Doubting the miracles leads to an untenable distinction between the present and the original Christians in their relation to the evidences of Christianity. How far there is a real difference. The difference not material. 6. The agnostic attitude towards miracles leads to the assumption that Christianity rests on a fraud. General admission that the original founding of the Church depended on a belief in Christ's resurrection 124-172

CHAPTER VI.

THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF MIRACLES (*Continued*).

II. Does faith in Christianity depend on antecedent faith in the alleged miracles of Christ? Difficulty of overcoming the presumption against miracles. Something needed besides the miracles themselves. Dr. W. M. Taylor's contention against Trench. His argument presupposes that the fact of miracles is proved before any faith in the miracle-worker exists. Miracles, as distinct from feats of jugglery, cannot be proved without

confidence in the professed miracle-worker. Trench on Deut. xiii. 1-5. Dr. Taylor's reply. III. The evidential value of miracles cannot be detached from the personal character and teachings of the miracle-worker. But the miracles are nevertheless evidential. Examination of the view that the miracles of Christ were mere effluxes of his nature, and not as such evidential. On this view miracles are not needed as manifestations of Christ's character, and become not only not evidential, but embarrassing. Miracles of the apostles. Why are Christ's miracles credited? Their use in proving Christ's uniqueness and sinlessness. The disciples' confidence in Jesus' faultlessness and divinity not fixed till after the resurrection. According to the New Testament the miracles did serve an evidential purpose. Professor Bruce's contention against Mozley. Conclusion: Miracles have an indispensable evidential worth, but not independent of the evidence derived from the personal character and doctrine of the miracle-worker. Advantages of this view. Relation of this view to the importance of the experimental evidence. Christian morality: its distinctive features. The power of Christianity depends on the assumption of its supernaturalness 173-195

CHAPTER VII.

PROOF OF THE CHRISTIAN MIRACLES.

1. Proof of Christ's resurrection. 1. The apostles believed that Christ rose from the dead on the third day after the crucifixion. 2. The Christian Church spread rapidly immediately after the crucifixion. 3. These phenomena satisfactorily explained only by the assumption that the resurrection was a fact. Opposing theories: (1) That Jesus did not die, but only swooned, on the cross. (2) That the story of the resurrection was a fiction. (3) That the disciples mistakenly thought the resurrection to be real. The latter the most plausible, but purely conjectural. Attempt to establish it by Paul's testimony. Reply: Paul affirms the fact of a bodily appearance of the crucified. The allegation that Paul's sight of Christ was a vision. What is a vision? A vision may have an objective cause. View of Schenkel, Keim, etc., considered. Paul's testimony as confirmed by that of the Gospels. The alleged discrepancies. Apostolic testimony besides Paul's. II. Proof of the miracles wrought by Christ. The miraculous penetrates all the Gospel history, and cannot be removed. Christ's extraordinary claims. Specimen of the efforts to explain away the miracles. The miracles of healing. Why they are more readily believed than others. Untenableness of the notion that Christ healed by a sort of magnetic power naturally growing out of his superior spirituality. III. May the New Testament miracles be critically examined? The character of the alleged miracle as a criterion of its reality. Particular miracles that are offensive to some. Need of caution in applying any criterion. IV. General conclusion. The supernatural an integral part and proof of the Christian religion. Distinction between Jew and Gentile with regard to the evidence of Jesus' Messiahship. 196-228

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO JUDAISM.

PAGE

Was Christianity the fulfilment of all religious prophecies and hopes, or only of the Jewish? Burnouf's theory of the Aryan origin of Christianity. Jesus himself was a Jew, and asserted his religion to be the completion of the Mosaic revelation. Paul affirms the same. The conclusion unavoidable. Connected questions: 1. How far was Christ prophesied of by Moses and the prophets? Distinction between direct and indirect prophecies. Marsh and Stuart on the typical theory. Their view criticised. 2. How far does Old Testament prophecy authenticate the divinity of the Mosaic and Christian revelations? The argument as compared with that from miracles. Apparent weakness of the argument. Reasons why minute exactness in prophecy should not be expected. (a) The main work of the prophet was preaching, not prediction. Criterion for the interpretation of predictions. (b) Minute particularity in prediction would cause doubts of the genuineness of the prophecy. (c) Minuteness of prediction would interfere with the free and natural course of things. (d) Prophetic language needed to be intelligible to the immediate hearers. It was colored by the circumstances of the prophet's time. The strength of the argument from prophecy is in the combination of them, and their convergence towards Christ. 3. How far does the New Testament authenticate the miracles recorded in the Old? No radical distinction between the miracles of the two Testaments. But the possibility of the admission of apocryphal stories may be admitted. In general the references to Old Testament miracles in the New implies that Christ and the others who refer to them regarded them as genuine. 4. How far does the New Testament authenticate the Old Testament history? In general Christ and the apostles treat this history as genuine. The narratives in Gen. i.-iii. considered. Efforts to treat them as poetic or allegoric. Authentication of authorship. Jewish traditions in the New Testament	229-278
---	---------

CHAPTER IX.

THE RECORD OF REVELATION. — INSPIRATION.

The distinction between revelation and the record of it. 1. Revelation prior and superior to the record. 2. Revelation more important than the inspiration of the Biblical writers. 3. The fact of revelation not proved by prior assumption of Biblical inspiration. Yet (4) there is substantial ground for holding to the doctrine of the special inspiration of the Bible. Preliminary remarks: (a) Not the Scriptures, but the Scriptural writers, can be called inspired. (b) The Biblical writers were conscious and responsible in the act of writing. (c) The product of the inspiration was human as well as divine. (d) The inspiration of the writers not superior to that of the recipients of the revelation. (e) The recipients of the revelation not more inspired when writing than when speaking. Was the inspiration specifically different from that of believers in general? Ob-

jections against the doctrine of such difference answered. Arguments for the doctrine. i. Antecedent probability that the authors of books which were to serve so important a purpose would be specially aided. ii. The general opinion of Christendom that the Scriptures were peculiarly inspired. iii. Testimony of the Bible itself. Christ's authority ultimate. The force of 2 Tim. iii. 16. Other representations kindred to this. Rothe's attempt to distinguish between Christ's testimony and that of the apostles. Some objections considered 279-317

CHAPTER X.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

The search after Christian assurance. Biblical testimony as a ground of certitude. The two methods of arguing Biblical infallibility, the subjective and the objective. General considerations: 1. Christianity not the offspring either of man's natural consciousness or of the Bible. 2. Neither human opinion nor the Bible has authority over the Christian Church. 3. A normal Christian experience cannot conflict with a correct understanding of the Bible. 4. As between the Bible and Christian opinion, the Bible is the regulative authority. 5. The Christian's religious insight has an important function, — that of interpreting the Scriptures; (*a*) distinguishing between the more and the less important; (*b*) harmonizing the different parts of the Bible. 6. The general assumption of the infallibility of the Bible does not solve all questions of controversy. 7. No theory of Biblical infallibility can be maintained which is contradicted by the Scriptures themselves. 8. The Bible is perfect in the sense that it is perfectly adapted to accomplish its end when used by one who is in sympathy with that end 318-354

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONDITIONS AND LIMITS OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM.

Biblical criticism is needful and useful. But it has its limitations. 1. Freedom from prepossessions as a qualification for critical research is neither attainable nor desirable. 2. One's critical judgment of the Scriptures must be modified by one's antecedent judgment respecting Christ and Christianity. 3. Neither critical research nor Christian insight will ever effect a reconstruction of the Biblical Canon. 4. Biblical criticism can never persuade the Christian Church that pious fraud has played an important part in determining the substance or form of the Scriptural Canon. The Tübingen theory. The Kuenen-Wellhausen theory. Reasons why such views cannot be accepted 355-385

APPENDIX.

	PAGE
EXCURSUS I. Dr. Maudsley on the Validity of Consciousness . . .	339-396
EXCURSUS II. The Cosmic Philosophy	397-411
EXCURSUS III. Personality and the Absolute	412-422
EXCURSUS IV. Leland and Watson on the Primeval Revelation . .	423-425
EXCURSUS V. The Certainties of the Agnostic	426-428
EXCURSUS VI. Beyschlag on the Miracle of the Loaves	429-433
EXCURSUS VII. Ritschl on Miracles	434-435
EXCURSUS VIII. The Book of Jonah	436-451
<hr/>	
TOPICAL INDEX	453
INDEX OF AUTHORS REFERRED TO	461
BIBLICAL INDEX	465

SUPERNATURAL REVELATION.

CHAPTER I.

ORIGIN OF THE THEISTIC BELIEF.

THE skepticism of the present day, though in general less coarse and violent than that of the last century, is not less radical and dogmatic. It exhibits, as at all times, various phases, now diverging only a little from the current Christian view, now departing still farther and abandoning what is commonly held to be vital, and now going over into complete negation or agnosticism. But in general it may be said that the tendency of doubt at the present time is not so much to make attacks on the details of the doctrines of revealed religion as it is to attack the general notion of revelation itself. Anti-supernaturalism, stimulated and strengthened by the discussions and speculations connected with Darwinianism, is a potent element in the thinking of large circles of men. There is indeed no lack of assault upon the details of the Christian belief; but the underlying tone—that which gives color and force to the assaults—is a disbelief or doubt concerning the reality or possibility of a supernatural revelation. The critical questions concerning the age, authorship, and composition of the biblical books are of immense importance; but they themselves take their shape largely from antecedent assumptions respecting the fact and character of a divine revelation.¹

¹ This is illustrated by the anonymous work, *Supernatural Religion*, which begins by professing to prove the impossibility of a supernatural revelation, and then elaborately argues against the genuineness and credibility of the New Testament records of such a revelation. If the first general proposition is established, the second follows as a matter of course, and hardly needs so much

The problem is not quite the same as it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the principal attack on the doctrine of revelation came from English deism. It is now outright atheism, or pantheism, or semi-panteism, which wages the battle against the current Christian conception of revealed religion. Christianity can indeed regard these ever-varying attacks with composure. Its complete overthrow has been so often heralded, and the issue has so uniformly failed to come up to the loud-sounding phrase of the manifesto, that no one need be alarmed. Yet the renewed attack must be met with renewed defense, else the stronghold will be regarded, at least by the doubtful and the indifferent, as surrendered.

The essentially atheistic cast of modern skepticism creates a special need of reconsidering and restating the reasons for the belief in the existence of a personal God. This belief is presupposed in every assumption of the fact of a supernatural revelation, and is therefore the first to be asserted and fortified.

The question, Why do men believe in a God? may be resolved into two distinct questions: How do men generally first come to have the notion that there is a God? and, Why do they persist in cherishing the notion? This distinction is often overlooked, though it is a very obvious one. The *origin* of a belief is quite distinct from the ultimate *reason*, or reasonableness, of it. If we consider the first of these questions, we are at once led to the observation that, —

1. Men in general get the notion of a God from tradition. The belief is a communicated belief.¹ When parents have any

discussion. If we are *sure* that a miracle cannot take place, or cannot be proved, it is useless to examine minutely the alleged evidences of its occurrence; but if we do examine them, the result of the examination is of course a foregone conclusion.

¹ "The belief that there is one God, infinite in power, wisdom, and goodness, has certainly not been wrought out by each one of us for himself, but has been passed on from man to man, from parent to child." — R. Flint, *Theism*, 5th ed., p. 23. "To the child's mind the parent's word ought to be, as it is, evidence far stronger than the conclusions of his unpractised reason." — E. R. Conder, *Basis of Faith*, 2d ed., p. 102. Cf. J. L. Diman, *The Theistic Argument*, p. 74.

religious belief, they do not wait for the children to develop their own religion. The theistic notions held by the adults are communicated to the children as soon as they are able to grasp them. No man can probably recall having a distinct conception of God, antedating all instruction on the subject. Even if, in case of neglected religious education, the child should raise queries looking towards theism, yet he does not reach an assured confidence in the fact of a God, except as his vague conjectures are confirmed by others. In point of fact it is not found that in communities where practical or theoretical atheism prevails, the children attain to any essentially higher belief than their elders. Whether the current belief is monotheism, polytheism, fetichism, or atheism, the rule is, that what the adults are, such also the children become.

As a matter of historic fact this statement can hardly be questioned for a moment. However true it may be that men are naturally *inclined* to theism, — that they have innate tendencies to believe in a God, — the question, how each individual first received the definite notion, and the assured conviction, of the existence of a divine being, is not answered by any demonstration of such tendencies. The more true it is that men are naturally theistic in their tendencies, the more pains will they take to inculcate theistic doctrines in young children; they will try to preoccupy their minds with the notion of a God as soon as they become capable of taking the notion in. In most cases this traditional belief is in fact the only belief that men have; the *origin* of their belief and the *ground* of it are identical. They believe because, and only because, they have been told. They never undertake either to question or to substantiate the belief in which they have been trained.¹

¹ Professor Calderwood (*Philosophy of the Infinite*, p. 47) says: "The great majority of men are believing in God without any reference to the arguments which have been used to establish his existence. This is one of the very obvious facts which harmonize only with the admission of the necessity of the conviction." The conclusion is hardly to be inferred so necessarily from the premise as is here implied. It is a common belief among young German children that new-born babes are brought by storks; but it would be hasty to infer that there is any necessity in this conviction. They think so because they have been told so.

Now, this is no exceptional relation of things. Religious belief is not peculiar in being a matter of tradition. For —

II. Human knowledge in general is transmitted knowledge.

The faculty to understand must of course be presupposed. But the actual cognitions, the knowledges, which men obtain, are, as a whole, dependent on the testimony of others.

1. As regards the larger part of men's knowledge, the proposition will command ready assent. The most of what every one knows respecting history, natural science, and indeed respecting the world in general, he obtains from books or oral instruction, and not from direct perception. What we thus learn we take on trust. We assume that others have learned the facts, and that we are warranted in believing them.

2. But, more than this, even what is commonly regarded as an object of direct perception becomes in the full sense an object of *knowledge* only through the consentient testimony of men.¹ Let it be assumed that the external world is directly cognized through the senses. Still there arises the question, How does one *know* that he perceives *correctly*? He *seems* to see the outward object directly; but how is he sure that it is not merely a seeming? Deception is possible, as all admit; for in some cases it is actual. Optical illusions are numerous. In diseased states of the nervous system a person seems to see what no one else can see. In dreams unrealities have all the seeming of realities. Is it not possible that all our apparent perceptions are equally illusory? How do we decide that our seeming perceptions are normal? Our only means of determining this is an appeal to the general consensus of men. If men found themselves in constant disagreement as to the fact or the characteristics of the material things around them, how would it be possible to arrive at any certainty whatever as regards the experience of the senses? No matter how vivid or how permanent might be the impressions of some; if others equally numerous, equally sane, failed uniformly under like circumstances to experience the same impressions, there would be not merely an insoluble conflict of opinions, but there would

¹ "Our natural beliefs do not belong to the individual, but to the race." — J. J. Murphy, *Scientific Bases of Faith*, p. 101.

necessarily be doubt on both sides respecting the trustworthiness of the sensations. Illusions of the senses being possible and often actual, how is one to be assured that in any given case his sensations are not illusions? The only possible source of assurance is the confirmation which his experience receives from the testimony of his fellow-men. We trust our senses because they agree with the senses of men in general. We are of course naturally inclined to trust our senses. But if a man found himself in perpetual and universal disagreement with the rest of the world respecting the objects of his sense-perceptions, what would be the result? If he were in general of sound mind, he would himself abandon all confidence in the correctness of his experiences, and accept the testimony of others rather than his own apparently direct and immediate cognitions. In the case of those whose senses are abnormal or defective, this trust in the testimony of others is always exercised. The blind and the deaf credit the testimony of others respecting vision and sound, even though they cannot understand it. The color-blind believe that others see real distinctions of color which yet they themselves cannot detect. The victim of *delirium tremens* is glad to be assured that his visions have been delusions, however real they seemed when the delirium was raging.

Thus, even as regards the general question of objective reality, the individual experience depends for its certainty on the confirmatory experience of mankind in general. But more than this: —

3. The infantile faculties of perception are themselves *trained* by others. The fact is not merely that children first perceive, and afterwards learn that others perceive the same things, but also that others first teach them *how* to perceive. The child's first sensations are vague and confused. He needs to be taught to distinguish and to compare. There is no intelligent perception till there is discrimination. Knowledge in the higher sense depends on the power of abstraction and classification; and this requires language, and language is a matter of communication. There is no example of a child's growing up into an intelligent observation of the world without his powers being trained by

his elders. Without such education, as certain sporadic cases indicate, a child would hardly equal in intelligence the brute creation.¹ But further:—

4. This law of dependence on one's fellow-men is not limited to one's incipient years. Even what seems to be knowledge independently acquired by an adult is not real knowledge, except as it is connected with other knowledge for which he has been more or less dependent on the education he has received from his fellow-men. Thus, for example, a man may discover a new species of flower. He may be the only one who has ever seen it. But why does he call the newly discovered object a *flower*? How does he know that it is a flower? Simply because he has been educated to classify and associate the objects of perception, and to distinguish certain groups from certain other groups according to characteristic features. The very word by which he designates his discovery is one that has no meaning except as the meaning has been given to it by the common consent of those with whom he has lived. What he reports about the new flower is made intelligible to others and to himself only as it involves a comparison of the new with that which is already a familiar and common knowledge of his fellows. The case is similar when what one has learned simply from testimony is afterwards supplemented by direct observation. Thus, one reads or hears about Rome. He becomes familiar with its history and its physical features. But his knowledge is wholly a communication from others. He knows nothing about Rome except as he trusts the veracity of those who have told him what the city has been and still is. Afterwards he goes to Rome himself. He sees the things which he has heretofore only known about through testimony. But has he now become independent of testimony? By no means. He gets a

¹ "In life the chief element by far is personal intercourse. This is the true educator of man. Philosophers and preachers are alike powerless in comparison to the daily teaching of personal communion between man and man, and still more between child and man. . . . Habits of thought and tendencies of affection which have grown through our earliest experience, and been inherited from countless ages before, assert themselves in spite of all adopted opinions." — R. Travers Smith, *Man's Knowledge of Man and God*, p. 234.

clearer and more vivid impression of the place through direct perception ; but as to the history and meaning of what he sees he is as dependent as ever. Nay, he cannot even say that he now knows that there is a city of Rome independently of external testimony. He sees a city ; but how does he know that it is Rome except as he trusts the assurance of others ? He sees the Coliseum and St. Peter's. But what does that prove ? He does not know that this pile is the Coliseum, and that that one is St. Peter's, except as he implicitly trusts the testimony previously received concerning these buildings. There can be no recognition of the city as being Rome except as the truthfulness of this testimony is assumed.

5. Even in the perception of the truths of mathematics and logic there is no absolute exception to this law of dependence on the testimony of others. The truths are called self-evident ; but this does not mean that they come to each individual spontaneously. Even the simplest mathematical propositions are first introduced into the mind by communication. When one is mature enough to study mathematical treatises, one comes to see the intrinsic truthfulness of the propositions ; the testimony of others is in a sense replaced by a direct perception of their necessary truth. But even now there is no absolute independence. When one has attained this direct assurance of the truths in question, he finds that other minds agree with his own. This agreement is a confirmation of his intuitions. Suppose he should find that what seems axiomatic to him is called absurd by everybody else, what would he have to conclude ? Just because everybody thinks as he does and has the same inward certainty that he has, he becomes doubly sure of his convictions. What *seems* to be a law of *his* mind he finds to be a law of all minds, and therefore he trusts the soundness of his own mind.

6. Still less is there an exception to this law of dependence on other minds in the matter of theistic conceptions. If our grasp even of the principles of mathematics and logic becomes clear and firm only as it is aided and ratified by other minds, still more must this be the case as regards our religious notions. For here there is no formula which so sharply defines the

conception that the mind has at once the sense of taking it all in. The definition of God is not a simple thing, like the definition of a circle. The conceptions of God vary greatly: some are meagre, some are erroneous. Consequently, the several conceptions being mutually inconsistent, theism cannot claim the place of an axiomatic truth which compels assent as soon as stated. Moreover, in mathematics and logic that which is called intuitive or self-evident is not an affirmation concerning the *existence* or qualities of an objective thing, but concerning certain *relations* of things, whether existent or imaginary. And the self-evidence extends only so far as to involve a rejection of that which is self-contradictory or absurd. Thus, when it is said that the sum of two and two cannot be five, that is virtually only saying that a thing cannot be greater than itself; that is, that it cannot be itself and not itself at once. When it is said that two straight lines cannot enclose a space, the statement is self-evident only in so far as this proposition is involved in the *definition* of straight lines. If two lines were found to enclose a space, we should simply say that they are for that reason not straight. But an alleged intuition of God as a positively existent being, possessed of superhuman attributes, has little analogy with all this. If the alleged intuition is a fact, it is more nearly analogous to the direct perception which we have of the material world. But if it is a fact, it must be a universal fact, at least in all normal minds; and if so, it is inexplicable that it should ever have been questioned. Even if we could accept the assertion of those¹ who declare that men become aware of God as soon as consciousness begins, we could not believe that each individual adult traces his actual belief in God to any such infantile intuition. If only a single person had such an immediate consciousness springing up in him before he even has the use of language to express it, and if, when he has acquired the power of communicating with others, he should find that he were the only one who had the notion of a God, what would be the fate of that poor infantile conception negated at once by the parents and friends, to trust whose

¹ For example, E. Mulford, *Republic of God*, p. 1; Professor Calderwood, *Philosophy of the Infinite*, p. 42.

word is as strong an instinct as any other within him? No; we know too little about the experiences of the new-born infant's mind to be able to affirm that, before it can speak, it yet knows about God; but we certainly do know that, before the child becomes able to communicate his knowledge, he receives the knowledge communicated from others. And we know that if he did not receive it, if he grew up and found his infantile intuitions repudiated by all his elders, he would probably soon conclude that what he thought before he knew enough to talk was not of much account over against the accumulated wisdom of those whom he instinctively trusts as knowing and telling the truth.

Theism is often treated as if all men were monotheists, and as if they all immediately after birth began to make use of the Anselmic or the Cartesian argument, or were struck with the wonderful teleology of the world into which they have been introduced, or began to infer, from the existence of a moral sense within them, the existence of a universal Moral Governor outside of them. Or at least they are supposed to have a profound feeling of dependence. But manifestly there can never be any evidence of all this. What the speechless child is thinking or feeling in the theological line no one can know, unless the child, after he has learned to talk, is able to make a report concerning his infantile theologizings. But these reports have never yet been made. On the contrary, what we do know about the matter is that from the very beginning of life the child's mind undergoes an educational process at the hands of others, and that from these others his religious conceptions are derived.

But if it should now be inferred that theism is accounted for simply by saying that it is a traditional belief, we should be guilty of a very hasty and shallow conclusion. Testimony is a chain, each link of which is connected with another; but what does the whole chain depend on? The *beginning* of a perception or belief cannot come from testimony. The first theist cannot have got his theism from his ancestors; nor does ancestral testimony constitute of itself any proof of the *correctness* of the doctrine handed down. We are led, therefore, to a line of

reflection somewhat antithetic to the foregoing, the substance of which may be expressed in the general proposition that —

III. Individual cognition must precede the transmission of knowledge. Though one's individual sensations need to be confirmed by those of others, yet the world consists of individuals; so that this general testimony can come to have existence only as the individuals each have their individual experience of sensation and perception. The primary and fundamental fact, then, must be the individual consciousness; and there can be no certainty resulting from the *sum* of the consciousnesses unless there is some sort of validity in the individual one. In particular, it is to be considered that —

1. Before the testimony of other men can be taken in, there must be an apprehension of the fact that there *are* other men. I cannot believe another man's statement until I first believe that that other man exists. How do I come to know or to believe that there are other persons than myself? This cannot come from testimony; for the acceptance of testimony presupposes such belief. There is, therefore, an original act of perception by which one person becomes aware of the existence of another. Manifestly, this is a fact of prime importance; in reference to the general question of cognition it is fundamental. Whatever may be the infant's first act of consciousness, whether a perception of the material world or not, it is certain that one of the first cognitions of the child is the cognition of other *persons*. Even though we concede that this cognition comes through the cognition of the material world, yet it is a distinct and vitally important thing. The whole subsequent development of the child depends on his being able to come to this consciousness of fellow-men, and therefore to receive instruction from them. And, be it observed, this cognition is a cognition of *mind* by the mind. The child by means of his eye and touch can directly perceive nothing but the form and color and motion of other men. By his ear he becomes aware of sounds, which somehow he comes to associate with these persons. But he also gets an impression of form, color, and sound in connection with other external objects which never appear to him in the character of persons. What is it in the movements and in the voice of other men that

awakens these peculiar experiences of recognizing them as kindred beings? How is it that there can come to be a *mental* communication between the child and the other human beings with whom he comes into contact? Particularly how is it that *words* — arbitrary sounds, having no intrinsic meaning — come to have a definite meaning, and constitute the means by which the mind of the child enters into communication with his fellow-beings? How can there be an interchange of thought and feeling by means of language? Whatever theory of knowledge men may adopt, here is a fact which challenges attention and demands recognition. And true as it is that our perceptive experience is, and needs to be, confirmed by that of other men, it is equally true that there must be an anterior assurance of the fact that there are other perceptive beings than ourselves.¹

More primitive and truly natural than speech are gestures and facial expressions as indices of mental states. The infant can cry and scowl before it comes to distinct consciousness; and its cries and grimaces are expressions of its emotions. But how does the child know that a mother's smile has any meaning? He cannot come to this knowledge through having discovered that his own pleasure is expressed by a smile, for he has never examined himself in a mirror. The recognition of a smile as the expression of maternal love and pleasure presupposes the recognition of personality in the mother. However indispensable the body may be thought to be as the *medium* of communication between minds, it cannot serve as such a medium except as the mind which animates it and uses it is recognized by the other mind which receives the communication. This is an ultimate fact. How early this recognition takes place, and of what sort it is at first, no one can tell. But before one can receive instruction from another, before one's infant impressions can be consciously confirmed by the representations of other persons, those others must be known to *be* persons. Unless, therefore, we are prepared to fall into the arms of hopeless Pyrrhonism, we must assume that it is the prerogative of the individual mind to know intuitively that there are other minds kindred with itself.

¹ See Excursus I. in the Appendix.

But this cognition of other persons is not a purely spiritual one, independent of a material medium. The child becomes aware of an external personality only through the perception of an external *body*. The perception of a material world must, therefore, be prior to the recognition of personal beings in it. Consequently, if the confirmatory testimony of our fellow-men can really come to us only on condition that we first know that there are such personal beings, it is still more obvious that —

2. There must be a direct and immediate cognition of the material world, anterior to the knowledge derived from testimony. However important that testimony may be as a confirmation of individual impressions, and however true it may be that the total absence of such confirmation might properly lead one to doubt the validity of his own impressions, still there must first be the impressions, and they must precede the confirmation of them. Moreover, trust in the affirmations of others implies that they also have somehow obtained an immediate knowledge of the external world; otherwise the source of our knowledge would be an endless chain of testimony, — each link depending on a preceding one, but the whole supported by nothing.

It is very clear, then, what reply to make to one who tells us how fallacious the testimony of our senses is. It is no doubt easy to prove that we are often deceived by them. It may even be shown that in some respects all men are deceived by the natural and untutored operation of the senses. It may be affirmed that all knowledge of distance comes from the correction of the original impressions made on the eyes. It may be shown that all men are deceived in imagining that color is something inhering in material objects, whereas science has proved that it is nothing but a subjective affection caused by peculiar undulations. All manner of individual delusions may be proved to have existed. And so the physical senses may be convicted of general incapacity to tell the truth, and of being under the necessity of dutifully receiving instruction from the learned. But to all this there is one short answer. Imperfect or erroneous cognition cannot be *corrected* unless there is somewhere *real knowledge*. If it is affirmed that all knowledge is only of the phenomenal or relative, — that we know only what *appears*

to be, and cannot get at the "thing in itself," — the question must be asked, How do we come to *know* that knowledge is thus imperfect or misleading? If the senses of touch and of sight in various ways supplement and correct one another; if certain phenomena, at first supposed to be objectively real, are afterwards proved by observation or by testimony to be subjective impressions merely; if physiologists and naturalists and chemists prove that the whole material world is in motion, even where it seems to be most profoundly at rest, — that heat and light, popularly supposed to be distinct entities, are nothing but subjective sensations caused by invisible motions of particles, — that, in short, things in general "are not what they seem," — what then? The obvious inference is, either that these scientists themselves are trying to delude us, or else that they really do *know* some things positively and immediately. If *all* supposed knowledge is only phenomenal and therefore deceptive, then there is an end to all possibility of correcting the deceptions.¹ If the scientist *knows* that heat is a mode of motion, it is because he is *sure* that in his investigations he has discovered *facts*, and discovered them by direct *perception*; in other words, he must be sure that he has obtained a direct and infallible cognition of the external world. Consequently, if the importance of testimony is insisted on, if it is urged that no one can implicitly trust his individual impressions, we may admit all that is proved; but in admitting it we must assume that there is such a thing as a direct and trustworthy knowledge of the material world, otherwise neither we ourselves nor any one else would ever be able to correct our mistakes. No number of confirming witnesses can make anything sure, if the testimony of each one depends for its value simply on the testimony of some one else. The direct cognition which the individual has of the external world must, therefore, be the prime factor in the knowledge one acquires. One must trust his senses; if he cannot trust them as regards the perception of the material world,

¹ Cf. Professor Bowne, *Studies in Theism*, chap. i.; Prof. S. Harris, *Philosophical Basis of Theism*, § 5. "If agnosticism were proved true, at the same moment it would be proved false, for it would be proved that we know the truth of agnosticism."

then he must distrust them also when through them he sees and hears the witnesses who profess to rectify his cognitions.

3. Equally clear is it that what one learns solely by way of communication must be assumed to have been originally learned by some one — if true — through direct individual cognition. The most of our knowledge is derived from others; and it is indispensable as well as instinctive that we should put confidence in what others affirm. But when we thus trust them, we must assume that the knowledge was originally obtained otherwise than by testimony. False notions may be, and have been, propagated from one generation to another for ages. These notions sometimes become corrected through more careful observation of facts. But whether true or false, our notions cannot be tested by mere testimony. All real knowledge must be originally *direct* knowledge; and when communicated knowledge is afterwards confirmed by direct observation, this direct cognition, while it confirms, also in a sense supplants, the testimony which first communicated the knowledge.

4. Again, our more abstract and spiritual conceptions are subject to the same law. What are called innate intuitions are in point of fact, as a rule, first communicated. There are many who from lack of instruction never come to a conscious recognition of the fundamental principles of mathematics or of logic or of ethics; and those who have come to a clear recognition of them have generally first come to it through a communication from others. The truths called axiomatic or innate are presented in their formulated shape to the child. He then reflects on them. He may be too young or too feeble-minded to understand the statements at first, and he may accept them blindly; or he may understand the statements, and accept them, without seeing their intrinsic and necessary truth, — the apprehension of this intrinsic necessity may come to him afterwards. The explanations which come to him from books or teachers quicken and aid his apprehensions. A short study of a work on geometry will introduce one to an assured conviction of the absolute and incontrovertible truth of certain geometric principles, whereas without that instruction the principles might never have taken definite shape in the mind at all.

What is true of the most fundamental mathematical truths holds also of moral principles. Let them be ever so elementary and necessary, it does not follow that the infant mind unaided picks them up and recognizes them as infallible truths. The recognition of the necessity and intrinsic excellence of the truths must indeed come; it must come through the exercise of the faculties of moral perception, which are inborn. Yet historically the general principles come as communications, in the first instance. And in all cases this instruction has a large influence in shaping the form which the principles assume in the juvenile mind.

But the point now to be emphasized is that here too — and here more almost than anywhere else — there can be no dependence placed on mere testimony as the ultimate ground of belief. There may be, and is, much blind adoption even of what are commonly called intuitive principles. But no one who reflects can regard mere testimony in these matters as an ultimate ground of belief. The truths must be self-evidencing; they must be seen to have an intrinsic validity compelling men to accept them. Ultimately the testimony is replaced by a direct perception; and this direct perception of the truth is assumed to be the original ground on which it came to be recognized, and to be that alone which gives the testimony itself its worth.

5. In like manner, testimony concerning a Divine Being cannot be taken as an ultimate and adequate proof of the fact that there is such a Being. The faith in God may be, and is, a communicated faith; but we cannot reasonably rest our faith on testimony alone. There must be some more original and conclusive evidence of the divine existence than is found in the mere prevalence of the belief. If theism is founded in fact, then somewhere — either now and always, or at certain special times — there must have been a direct knowledge, an evidence, concerning the Deity, which serves as the foundation of the testimony and gives it its value. Whether that knowledge comes from some direct intuition which every one may have, or comes only to a comparatively few, is a question on which men may differ. The point here emphasized is that the transmitted no-

tion must, if valid, have some other basis than the mere fact of the transmission. There must be or must have been something like an immediate cognition of God somewhere, or else the theistic belief must take its place alongside of other fancies which, after being for generations handed down and believed, have at length been exploded, because found to be without evidence or contrary to evidence.

What, then, is to be our conclusion? What has now been laid down may seem to nullify the force of what was said before about the importance or necessity of common consent as the conclusive evidence of the truth of things. Direct individual perception appears, after all, to be the true source and ground of all knowledge. What is the correct statement of the relation of individual to general experience, with regard to the question of the validity of men's beliefs and cognitions?

IV. The answer to the question is this: Sure knowledge is the product of the combination and comparison of individual cognitions. A *common* belief is made up of *individual* beliefs, and therefore the individual belief must be the prior thing. But the individual impression, so long as it is merely a single one, is more or less vague and uncertain. The impressions of one individual need to be explained, corrected, or confirmed by those of other individuals. The general experience is nothing but the sum of individual experiences. There is no generic man whose verdict can be got at, apart from the testimony of the several individuals who make up the community. All that is known must originally have been cognized by individuals by some direct process. But the experience of two individuals is of more value than that of one; and the experience of a thousand, if it is all in one direction, is of more value than that of two. The impression of one is more likely to be correct, if all others under the same circumstances have the same impression, than if they do not. For it is to be remembered that the impulse to trust the word of others is as original and innate as the impulse to trust the validity of one's own cognitions; but the cognitions of all those others must be, for each one, an *original* cognition, if it is to have any intrinsic value as a confirmation of the cognition of the one.

With regard, for example, to the reality of an outward world, every one *seems* to have a direct perception of it. But this impression *may* be a mistaken one. One may be deluded by a purely subjective affection of his own nerves. If, however, he finds that everybody else has a similar impression, he sees that his experience is not to be explained as a delusion. He is confirmed in the conviction that what *seemed* to be a direct cognition of something external was *really* such. But the force of this confirmation comes from the assumption that in each individual case there was a direct and independent perception. Each one perceives for himself; but each one is made confident of the *accuracy* and *reality* of his perception by learning that others have the same experience.

All knowledge is thus seen to be a composite thing. It is made up of two elements: (1) the direct, immediate perception or impression which the individual has; and (2) the ratification and education of that impression by the general community of individuals. Until this confirmation comes, the individual cognition remains a mere impression, a possible illusion. It *seems* to be a valid cognition; but it may be, and often proves to be, a mere impression, answering to no objective fact.

In this respect man is evidently to be sharply distinguished from the brute creation. The human faculties are from the first subjected to an *educational process*, to which there is no analogy among the brutes.¹ Whatever may be our theory of instinct, nothing can be more obvious than that there is a wide difference between the human and the bestial being, as regards the manner in which they severally attain knowledge. Just in proportion as the human knowledge is of a higher sort than that of which the brute is capable, in just that proportion is the human being dependent for the attainment of his knowledge

¹ There is, no doubt, an educational process involved in the mere accumulation of experience. It is a familiar truth to all observers, that the first cognitions of the infant seem to be almost wholly experiences of bodily sensations, accompanied by a very vague and inaccurate impression of the outward cause. Dr. McCosh (*Intuitions of the Mind*, part ii. book i. chap. i.) depicts this well, but does not give sufficient weight to the educating influence of others in developing and shaping the deliverances of the cognitive faculties.

on his elders who have accumulated a store of it before him. Human knowledge is, in an emphatic sense, a common possession. It is a possession in which no one is wholly independent of others. Not only the great mass of information which comes purely as a matter of testimony and is accepted purely on trust, but also the knowledge which comes from direct observation, depends for its full validity on the confirmatory evidence of one's fellow-men. Knowledge, especially knowledge of the higher sort, is not genuine knowledge till it can be expressed in *language*; and language is essentially the means whereby thought is communicated. Language is the property of a *community*. Whatever may be the true theory of the origin of it, and however important or even indispensable it may be to the individual in his private reflections, still we know of no language which is not a social thing. No one invents a language of his own; he receives it, ready made, from others. He never begins independent meditations in the use of language till he has a language; and he gets a language only as a communication from others. Though he may afterwards use language in elaborating his own ideas, though he may even contribute something to the modification or enrichment of language, still the mental culture which now enables him to pursue his independent studies was originally dependent on the language of others.

The social element is, therefore, a much more vital thing in man's nature than in the brute's. A brute can live and grow and attain the perfections of a brute almost entirely without any connection with other brutes. A human being, on the contrary, left in infancy without the help and stimulus of human companions, would, even if able to survive, yet never manifest distinctively human traits. Nothing of that which is highest and most characteristic in man comes to him apart from instruction. Reason is, in a true sense, a collective possession of the race,—not distinct and independent in each individual. (Germinally, it must exist in each one; it cannot be a collective thing without being first an individual thing. But it nowhere becomes its true self except as it is developed under the shaping influence of what other minds contribute. As faintly burning

coals lying separate only tend to die out, but when laid together kindle one another into a glowing flame; so the spark of human reason left in any one wholly without the kindling influence of companion minds would grow dull and feeble, while contact with others quickens and brightens it into a burning light.

All knowledge, accordingly, is essentially the property of a human community. Even the first acquisition of it by the individual depends on the education previously received from others. The great mass of knowledge possessed by the world is purely a matter of communication; and the assurance of the correctness of it comes from the confidence that is felt in the trustworthiness of testimony. This holds true of the conceptions which men cherish concerning God, as well as of everything else.

Nevertheless, there must be some means of verifying men's theistic notions; there must be an ultimate ground for the beliefs underlying the traditional communication of them, or else they are all superstitions blindly cherished and blindly accepted. We come, then, to the second general question, What is the ultimate foundation and justification of the common belief in a Supreme Being?

CHAPTER II.

GROUNDS OF THE THEISTIC BELIEF.

TO explain the original ground of theism, we should need to go back to the first man or men who were led to embrace it, and learn why they embraced it. But this it is impossible to do; our means of investigation are not adequate to the task. But though we cannot recur with certainty to the actual origin of theistic belief, we can do what is closely akin to it, — we can question the consciousness and experience of those who have lived and still live in historic times. We can learn not merely what the traditional notion is, but we can learn also *what it is that sustains the belief after it has been assailed*. It may be presumed that what now serves to keep it alive and influential, even in the face of doubts and open opposition, must have operated also to produce it originally.

Now, when we inquire what it is that feeds and perpetuates the belief in a Divine Being, we find the answer already suggested by the foregoing. The belief rests on a double foundation. There are, in the first place, primary and direct impulses, tendencies, or intuitions of the individual mind leading to the conception and belief. There is, in the second place, the assurance of the correctness of the belief which comes from corroborative testimony.

I. First, then, theism may be considered as a belief springing from the direct operation of the individual mind. In point of fact, what is commonly called natural theology does not describe the process by which the theist comes to his belief; it is rather the defense which is made against real or imaginary attacks on the belief which has been inherited or communicated. Education has so far superseded the action of the spontaneous impulses of the soul that it is impossible to determine how such impulses would work; indeed, it is certain that they

would never develop any clearly conscious belief without the help of others who have already a positive belief. It being impossible to ascertain the genesis of the original conception of God, and equally impossible for any one now to come to such a conception independently, all that natural theology can do is to justify theism against assault. In this self-defense the theist, though he does not present the historical process of his own or other minds, may yet be presumed to indicate substantially what the instinctive tendencies are which have led to so general an adoption of theistic beliefs. That which persistently defends these beliefs must most probably be the same as that which created them.

1. This test disposes at once of those hypotheses which derive the notion of a God from dreams,¹ or animism,² or personification,³ or self-deification,⁴ or fear,⁵ or deliberate deception. At the best, such hypotheses are merely hypotheses, resting on no basis of ascertained fact. The chief plausibility belonging to

¹ Sir John Lubbock, *Origin of Civilization*, 3d ed., p. 207; Darwin, *Descent of Man*, vol. i. p. 66; Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Sociology*, chap. xi. He makes the impressions of dreams, swoons, etc., lead to the belief in ghosts, and this to ancestor-worship (chap. xx.), and this again to idol-worship, fetich-worship, etc. These various explanations may more or less run into one another.

² E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, chaps. xi.-xvii.

³ Hume, *Natural History of Religion*, p. 317 (ed. Greene and Grose); John Fiske, *Idea of God*, p. 65.

⁴ Feuerbach, *Wesen des Christenthums*, § 2.

⁵ Lucretius, *De Natura Rerum*, vers. 1161-1240; Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, p. 774 (4th ed., 1852). An interesting instance of the dogmatic confidence with which some men can discourse about the origin of theism is found in M. J. Savage's *Religion of Evolution* (Boston, 1876), where the genesis of the notion of divine beings is stated to have been fear. Whatever moved, he says, was imagined to be alive; and since men were hurt and killed by wild beasts, inanimate things, such as water, lightning, the sun, moon, etc., came to be feared also. "Thus they turned all these things into gods. . . . This was the original polytheism, or, in its lowest manifestation, fetichism" (p. 53). Five years later the same author, in his *Belief in God* (Boston, 1881), propounds another view; he relishes Herbert Spencer's dream-theory, shows how naturally ancestor-worship grew up, and adds, "Out of this belief in ancestor-worship sprung, first, fetichism" (p. 19). In both cases the author discourses as if he had been present and seen the process.

these theories comes from the characteristics of the religion of certain degraded races. In fact, there lies at the foundation of all such theories the tacit or avowed assumption that theism is a grand illusion.

It is a sufficient refutation of them to say, not merely that they are destitute of proof, but that they utterly overlook the main fact that needs to be explained. That dreams or intentional efforts to deceive should ever succeed in producing so persistent a notion as that of the existence and agency of superhuman beings, implies a pre-existent *tendency* to entertain such a notion. That any one should associate the conception of deity with certain special objects or activities of Nature presupposes a theistic sense, — a tendency to believe in supernatural agents. Without such a sense, that is, without theism already at least germinally existent in the mind, it would be impossible to account for the arbitrary act of associating natural phenomena with supernatural agencies. These theories, therefore, are as shallow, psychologically considered, as they are destitute of basis, historically considered.

Aside from all this, however, it is a conclusive refutation of these hypotheses that, if there were any truth in them, theism would fall before the first assault from enlightened reflection and science. That this is not the case is a sufficient evidence that the theistic sense is a deeper thing than the theories in question recognize.

The same may be said of another hypothesis — a modification of Schleiermacher's theory of the feeling of absolute dependence — which has considerable vogue, especially in Germany. It is thus stated by one of its advocates:¹ "Religion

¹ Kaftan, *Wesen der christlichen Religion*, p. 96. Similarly, Bender (*Wesen der Religion*, p. 38): "Religion on its practical side is the exercise of the impulse of self-preservation in man, by means of which man seeks to maintain the essential ends of life, amidst the obstacles found in the world and at the limit of his power, by voluntarily rising up to the power that orders and controls the world." To the same effect is the definition given by Ritschl (*Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, p. 17, 2d ed., 1883): "All religion is an interpretation of the course of the world, to whatever extent it may be apprehended, in this sense: that the lofty spiritual Powers (or the spiritual Power) which hold sway in it or over it maintain or secure to the personal spirit its claims or its

takes its rise when and because man, with his claim to life [*Auspruch auf Leben*] and with his effort to satisfy it, comes to the limit of his power." This inability of himself to satisfy the cravings which the inborn love of life involves, leads man, we are told, to seek help from higher powers; or, in the case of more degraded races, the religious impulse takes mostly the form of an attempt to propitiate the evil spirits that are conceived to obstruct men in their search of the comforts and enjoyments of life. This experience of limitation, it is said, is that which leads men to religion, "in that it becomes the occasion of seeking *from the deity* help for the want which has been experienced."¹ This is conceived to be an explanation of the origin of theistic notions which answers to all the varied forms of religion. Prayer for help, sacrifices to propitiate, worship in all its forms, — these are regarded as evoked by the impulse to seek from superhuman sources the help which one needs in order to attain the good which he desires.

No doubt a large part of the religion especially of the less cultivated races does consist in a purely selfish appeal for help to the invisible world. No doubt, also, this is an element which is found in all religions. Prayer implies dependence; and prayer is a characteristic of all religions. But it does not therefore follow that the notion of a divine being first grew out of the sense of impotence and the desire for help.² Given the belief in

independence against the obstructions which come from Nature or the natural workings of human society." Teichmüller (*Religionsphilosophie*, p. 24), acutely observes concerning it: "Ritschl's definition of *all* religion, which, carefully guarded by many precautionary clauses and well equipped with intercalations and divisions, strides along like a camel loaded with a month's provisions, astonishes us by presenting to us religion as an *interpretation*, . . . as something purely *theoretical*. . . . Against this definition religion itself must be defended; for the religious man surely does not need to be so narrow as to think the course of the world conducted expressly for the 'securing of his claims' by the high spiritual Powers, when, say, his house is burned down, his cattle perish, his wife and children are stolen away, and he himself is attacked by the small-pox, or is scourged by a tyrant and sent to the quarries."

¹ Kaftan, *Wesen der christlichen Religion*, p. 96.

² "Through the mere sensation of hunger the new-born child by no means gains the conception of a means of nutrition; still less through the mere feeling of his incapacity and impotence, the notion of the helping hand which is

higher beings, it is easily conceivable that human selfishness might be inclined to make use of them for its own benefit. But to hold that human impotence and selfishness created the belief is quite another thing, and is a pure assumption. It cannot, of course, even be pretended that any positive proof of such an origin can be given. An inference only is made from the actual characteristics of the prevailing religions.

But the inference is without any inherent plausibility. That men should soon come to feel their impotence — should find that they have desires which they are unable of themselves to satisfy — is easy to see. But it does not follow that this sense of impotence would create the belief in invisible helpers. It might create the *desire* for help. But from this there is a long step to the actual belief that help is to be had, and that the help is to come from an invisible, superhuman source. At the most, we may conjecture that rude men might grasp at the hope that help could be secured from some unknown source, and might address petitions to it. But *unless we assume an antecedent notion of supernatural power as already existing in the mind*, there is absolutely no reason why we should suppose that such men should, through the mere experience of weakness and helplessness, come to the assured conviction that *there are* divine helpers to whom they can appeal. And this all the less inasmuch as prayer addressed to merely imaginary beings for help out of the physical and material limitations and sufferings of life could not have met with such answers as would have convinced the petitioners that the imaginary beings were real. On the contrary, the petitions must for the most part have failed of a direct and favorable response; and if the notion of the superhuman power was the mere product of the sense of need, the most natural result must have been the direst atheism. The sense of need must originally have had reference to the dangers arising from conflicts with enemies, the difficulty of making the earth contribute to human comfort and sustenance, to care for him. Just as little, manifestly, can the mere feeling of physical and moral helplessness, even when it has come to consciousness in the adult, of itself alone evoke the notion of a divine Helper." — Ulrici, *Gott und die Natur*, p. 610.

the impossibility of resisting the destructive and devastating forces of nature, the sufferings and grief that attend bodily sickness and death; and if the experience of weakness and painful limitation led men to desire superior help, and if nothing but this desire led them to make supplication to the hypothetical deities, then, as soon as they found that their supplications or propitiations failed to produce the effect desired, they must have abandoned the hypothesis. If *for other reasons* the notion of a God had taken strong possession of men's minds, then we can understand why, even in spite of little apparent success in securing direct answers to prayers for help, men should nevertheless persist in their supplications. But unless a theistic belief or at least a strong theistic impulse is presupposed, the mere sense of impotence could never of itself have produced the persistent theism which all religions have maintained.

It is further to be objected to all these hypotheses, that they make the lowest forms of religion the standard in determining what the essence of religion is. The avowed object is to find a definition which covers all the forms of religion. But the result is a virtual assumption that those are right who make religion to have originated in the conceits of the lowest races of humanity. It is assumed that these rude forms of religion are the truly natural, primitive, and purely spontaneous forms. This is an utterly unwarranted assumption. In religion, as in other things, that holds true which Principal Caird affirms:¹ "It is not that which is common to barbarism and civilization which is most truly human, but precisely that in which civilization differs from barbarism." It is from the genuine, purest form of religion, not from its lowest corruptions or crudest manifestations, that we must derive a definition of its essential nature. Aside from this, moreover, it is a pure assumption, when the most degraded races of men are regarded as the true types of primitive man, and not rather as instances of degeneration.²

We come back, then, to the ground that the *persistency* of

¹ *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 82.

² *Vide* the controversy between Sir John Lubbock, *Prehistoric Times*, and the Duke of Argyll, *Primæval Man*. Cf. also Pressensé, *Study of Origins*, pp. 467 *sqq.*

theism in the face of doubts and contradictions must furnish the most probable indication of the ultimate ground of it, in so far as it rests on the basis of natural and spontaneous tendencies of the human mind.

Now, when theism is assailed, no one ever thinks of defending it on the ground that primitive races, or still existent races, have found themselves hampered by natural forces, and unable by their own power to get all the comfort and pleasure they desire. None the more is theism defended on the ground that it originated in dreams or supposed visions of ghosts. Recourse to such an explanation would only confirm the objector in his opposition to theism. But the fact remains that, in spite of the opposition, the belief holds its own, and holds its own among the most intelligent of men. Of course many weak and inconclusive arguments may be resorted to. The impulse to defend what one has always held may lead one to the use of ineffective weapons. But in the course of time the contention of the opposing forces cannot but have eliminated the essentially weak and useless defenses. What has maintained itself and continues to be advanced as argument for the theistic belief must be presumed to have validity, and to be some index of what that tendency of the human mind is which has led men so generally to cling to the belief in a Divine Being. It is not necessary to assume that precisely the same mental process takes place in the defense of theism which originally gave rise to the belief. Nevertheless it is legitimate to assume that whatever there may have been in human nature which originally led to theism must reappear in the arguments by which theism is now defended. That which was at first only germinal, not yet analyzed and unfolded, has come by degrees to be scientifically grasped and stated. It matters little or nothing whether this original conception of God be called a feeling or a cognition, so long as it is regarded as constituting in some sense a notion that there is a Divine Being distinct from the human agent.

2. But, on the other hand, the problem of the origin of theism is not solved by asserting that the belief in a God is a direct intuition.

There are few nowadays who would assert this in its strictest form. The notion of a direct perception or intuition of God has for the most part disappeared, together with the general notion of innate ideas. But in a modified form it is still to be found. Schleiermacher's doctrine of the feeling of absolute dependence as being the foundation of all religion is an attempt to show that the religious sense is an ultimate fact in human consciousness. And when the matter is put in its most general form, the doctrine contains an indisputable truth. But it is a question how far the mere feeling of dependence, the consciousness of general impotence, as over against the forces of nature, can properly be called a *religious* feeling. Even when it takes the form of a sense of awe before the mystery of man's origin and destiny, the feeling can be called religious only in a very lax and dubious sense. Herbert Spencer may regard this sense of awe in the thought of the Great Unknown Force as an eminently religious feeling, — as being the substance of all religion. But in and of itself it is scarcely more religious than the terror of a hare in the presence of pursuing hounds; and it is a consistent carrying out of the Spencerian doctrine when evolutionists think they detect in dogs and other beasts the germs of a religious sense. Unless the sense of dependence takes the form of a sense of dependence on a Divine Being, it is not a distinctively religious feeling. It may, indeed, be regarded as *one* of the features of human nature which lead men towards theistic conceptions; but it is not the only one, and is not itself religion.

Consequently, when the analogy of sense-perception is applied to this case, and the feeling of dependence is said to involve a perception of God, just as the perception of the external world is involved in the *sensations* which are experienced in the physical organism,¹ we can only say that the analogy is not a real one. If it were real, then the conclusion would have to be that God is as directly perceived as the material world is perceived; and this is practically equivalent to the doctrine that man has an immediate intuition of God. For though sensation and perception may be distinguished, yet they are inseparable.

¹ So N. Smyth, *The Religious Feeling*, chap. iv.

arable and interdependent. The perception of an outward object is not the result of a process of reasoning. One does not say, "I have a sensation; that sensation must have a cause; and therefore the cause must be such and such a material object." The perception is, on the contrary, just as immediate as the sensation. They may differ in intensity; but neither of them precedes the other, or is an inference from the other. If the religious feeling of dependence is called a *sensation* analogous to physical sensations, then the perception involved in it must be immediate and distinct, the direct consciousness of God; and no argument can be needed to prove that there is such a consciousness. As soon as one undertakes to conduct such an argument, he has yielded the very position which he professes to maintain.

No doubt it would seem to be very desirable to be able to believe that the knowledge of God is as positive and direct as the knowledge of self.¹ A special temptation to resort to this view is created by the discredit into which the ordinary proofs of the Divine existence have fallen, especially since Kant's criticism of them. Since theists themselves thus confess that the arguments lack a strictly demonstrative character, atheists are fortified in their position; and the theist, unwilling to concede that his fundamental tenet rests on an uncertain basis, is often led to resort to the desperate shift that the belief needs no argument, being a direct intuition. But such an assumption is negated at once by the obvious objection that a proper intuition must needs be universal, necessary, and essentially uniform, — which cannot be affirmed of the theistic sense and its deliverances; and by the further consideration that those who assert that they themselves are conscious of such an intuition have received the theistic doctrine as a communication from others, and have been so trained up in it that in any case it has become a sort of second nature to hold it. Such persons cannot possibly discriminate between what has come as a traditional

¹ So, *e. g.*, Rothe, *Theologische Ethik*, § 6, who says that the religious man's "feeling of self is at the same time immediately a feeling of God; and he cannot raise the former to a clear and distinct thought of the Ego without at the same time having the thought of God."

belief and what comes from direct perception. The so-called intuition is nothing more than the current belief. No effort, however intense, will suffice to enucleate the intuition as a distinct thing, and make it satisfactory as an independent proof of the reality of the object of the faith.

The temptation to assert the reality of a direct intuition of God is all the greater inasmuch as this cognition is not only of peculiar importance, but also of a peculiar kind, without any exact analogies. The external world is perceived through the medium of the senses; God cannot be seen or felt. The knowledge of mathematical truths or of logical principles is a more purely intellectual cognition; but it is a cognition of the *relation* of things or persons, not a cognition of the *existence* of them. If, therefore, God is directly apprehended, there must be an altogether peculiar, a separate, sense for this cognition. The fact of such a sense can be proved only to those who are already conscious of having it. And inasmuch as most men are not conscious of any such sense, there is an insuperable presumption that those who assert that they have it are laboring under a delusion, — that they mistake a belief derived from education and strengthened by reason for an immediate intuition.

3. In the theistic controversy the *presumption* is in favor of theism. The mere fact that it has been the prevalent belief of mankind indicates that it is *probably* well-founded. Though we may not claim that every man intuitively knows that there is a God, it may be presumed, from the general existence of the belief, that there is good ground for it. Atheists, however, usually attempt to fortify their position by throwing the burden of proof on the theistic side. They seek to make it appear that the presumption is in favor of atheism, and that nothing but demonstrative proof can suffice to overthrow that presumption.

It must, however, in the first place, be remembered that in the last analysis all knowledge is no more than a firm belief, and that there cannot be a *demonstration* of anything as an objective existence. One can irresistibly demonstrate nothing but the necessity of the mind to think so or so concerning the relations of things whose existence is assumed: the demonstra-

tion, however, is nothing but the recognition of the fact that the mind cannot contradict itself, cannot affirm and deny one and the same thing. With regard to everything else so-called demonstrations are nothing but inductions which yield a greater or less degree of probability, and produce more or less firm belief.

But, in the second place, it should be remembered that though it may seem more incumbent on the theist to prove his *positive* doctrine than on the atheist to prove his *negative* one, yet in reality the atheist maintains a positive proposition as much as the theist does. He must hold the positive doctrine that the universe is self-existent. He must hold the positive doctrine that the origin and changes of the various forms of existence are to be attributed to a purposeless chance. Whether the atheistic or the theistic doctrine is to be called positive depends simply on the form of statement. In either case the problem is to give a philosophical explanation of acknowledged facts. The atheist is as much bound to explain them as the theist is.¹

4. The argument for theism is felt most forcibly when it is seen in the light of the legitimate and necessary implications of atheism. When the theistic argument is conducted directly, every defect in it, every inconclusive feature in it, is looked on by the atheist as an evidence of the weakness of the general doctrine. Whereas, if atheism is for the moment assumed to be the true theory of the universe, we meet with difficulties incomparably greater than those which can be alleged against theism. Let us pursue this line of thought.

One thing is certain: Either there is a personal, sovereign God, or there is not. Even if the proofs of his existence were ever so inconclusive, the result at the most would be only that we are left in doubt. But the doubt whether the one or the other theory is correct does not make any middle ground possible as to the fact. If one is not satisfied that the universe is governed

¹ *Vide* B. P. Bowne, *Studies in Theism*, p. 5. Also G. Matheson, *Can the Old Faith live with the New?* 1885, who forcibly shows that the atheist does not even avoid the supernaturalism which it is his object to expel from thought, but is forced, at certain points, to assume a violation of the laws which he declares to be inviolable (pp. 35 *sqq.*).

by a personal God, then, if thoroughly rational, he must adjust his conceptions to the opposite assumption, with all its necessary consequences. What are those consequences?

The atheist must hold that the universe, with all its processes and history, is, as a whole, aimless and meaningless. He must hold that the material world is uncreated and eternal, but undergoes an endless series of changes. If the cause of these changes is inquired after, it must be answered that the cause inheres in the universe itself. That is, it must be the *nature of things* to change just as they do change. A rigid necessity must appertain to everything; and that necessity is a force without thought, will, or feeling. For the world as a whole there can have been, on this theory, no purpose; for purpose implies a personal agent, and originally there was nothing but impersonal matter. In the process of evolution, it is true, matter in some cases takes on the form of organisms which think, feel, and will; and these organisms are called persons. But no personal agency was operative in producing these persons. It was simply the nature of things to evolve at a certain stage these thinking objects. Nature, itself utterly unconscious, produces beings that know more than nature does. But all the knowledge, all the purposes and choices of men, are only a part of the necessary course of things. Even though the course of things should be called fortuitous, still everything *must* have been just as it has been, since to say that anything else was possible is to say that there was some other power distinct from the forces of nature,—another power which *might* have produced a different result. But this is contrary to the atheistic postulate, which does not allow that any such merely *possible* force can exist. The hypothesis can indeed have no meaning, unless this other power is a *person*, possessing a *free will*. But free will, even in the persons produced by the impersonal force of nature, is impossible on the materialistic theory. Men may have purposes; but whatever they purpose is determined rigidly by the blind forces back of all. Mind, so-called, is nothing but matter acting in a certain way. Given certain combinations of particles, and the result *must* be certain thoughts, volitions, and actions, as truly as under certain conditions water must freeze.

That which compels men to form purposes has itself no purpose in this compulsory act. The blind, unintelligent, purposeless force which underlies everything is stronger than all conscious purpose, and transforms all apparent purpose ultimately into unmeaning purposelessness. For, the designs which individuals conceive and execute are only links in a great complex of causes and effects, which is itself without thought and design. The greater force must control the lesser. The universe, *as a whole*, has, on the hypothesis in question, *no meaning*, — no aim, no purpose. There is no reason why anything is as it is, except that it must be so. Free will and moral responsibility are impossible. The common notion that there is such a thing is an illusion. But everything being necessary, the illusion also is necessary. When one thinks he has discovered the fact of the illusion, this discovery is also something necessary; and when another thinks he has shown that free will is no illusion, this demonstration is equally necessary. There is nothing in the world that can be called good in the sense that a good intention determined the production of it. That which produces the so-called bad has no less, and no more, of good in it than that which produces the so-called good. Good and evil are, in fact, relative terms, — evil meaning only that which is disagreeable to certain temporary sensations of certain of the beings who have come into existence through no purpose, good or bad. Ill desert and good desert in a moral sense are of course impossible. That which must be is not to be blamed for being, and is entitled to no praise for being. When men blame or praise, as they do, they cannot, it is true, do otherwise; but their praise and blame cannot imply that anything could have been other than it is. If nothing could have been different, then it cannot be said that anything *ought* to have been different. Moral good and moral evil being only illusory notions, the urging of moral motives upon men, the attempt to excite in them emotions of remorse, or to spread before them moral ideals, is a sort of fraud. Yet there being nothing morally praiseworthy or blameworthy, it is as well to practise the fraud as not; do as we may, we cannot do otherwise. Enthusiasm over moral excellence and indignation over moral depravity are both absurd.

but both are unavoidable. All our emotions and thoughts are only phenomena necessarily produced by the mighty force which in itself has no thought, or emotion, or purpose, or moral character, — nothing good and nothing bad.¹

Furthermore, not only are all moral distinctions and judgments illusory; but also, on the basis of atheistic materialism, truth and untruth become also illusory and meaningless. Thought being nothing but a secretion of the brain, it is as absurd to call one thought true and another untrue, as it would be to call the secretion of saliva true or false. The theist's thoughts being just as unavoidable as the atheist's, the latter cannot, without absurdity, call his own thoughts true and the theist's false. "If thought and all combinations of thought are nothing but the result of a simple natural process, which, being as such under the given circumstances and conditions unavoidable, must result so and not otherwise, then *all* thoughts, *all* conceptions, judgments, and conclusions have *absolutely equal* right; to none of them can be ascribed any superiority to the others."² In short, pure materialism ends in pure absurdity.

Essentially the same result is reached if we adopt the speculations of Herbert Spencer. Whether the system should be called atheism or pantheism, materialism or idealism, may be disputed;³ but its doctrine of the relativity of knowledge is logically the doctrine of despair concerning the attainment of truth. When experience is made the sole criterion of knowledge, and experience is affirmed to have to do only with phenomena, and phenomena are declared to be nothing but modifications of consciousness, it is manifest that, according to this, all experiences are equally valid and equally invalid, and all so-called knowledge is nothing but a series of more or less permanent impressions.

But is not human knowledge imperfect and full of mistakes? Certainly. Yet this affirmation itself could not be made unless some things were *assuredly* known. Possible or even probable truth does not make the fact of error *certain*. But nothing is

¹ Cf. Dorner, *Christian Ethics*, § 9.

² Ulrici, *Gott und der Mensch*, vol. i. p. 4 (ed. 1). Cf. also Professor Fisher, *Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief*, p. 52.

³ See Excursus II. in the Appendix.

more certain than that errors are real. And it is just because the mind does know that human knowledge is mixed with error, while yet this prerogative of knowledge is seen to be that which marks mind as infinitely superior to the irrational objects of its cognition, — it is just for this reason that there springs up, as by instinct, in the soul the feeling that there must be a Person whose knowledge is free from error and imperfection. The more men come to know, through microscopic, telescopic, and chemical observation, of the marvellous beauty and complexity of the universe, the more is there suggested of the immensity of the realms yet unknown; and the more urgent is the impulse to believe that all things that *can* be known *are* known by an omniscient Being. And another side of the same impulse is the feeling that this faculty of knowledge, so glorious in spite of its imperfections, could not have been the chance product of a force which is itself without it.¹

¹ Mr. Royce, in his *Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, argues acutely against the doctrine of the total relativity of truth, and from the indisputable fact of error builds up an argument for the existence of an Infinite Thought. “Either there is no such thing as error, which statement is a flat contradiction, or else there is an infinite unity of conscious thought to which is present all possible truth” (p. 424). This Infinite Thought, however, is conceived to be destitute of Power; and so his God is the direct opposite of the Spencerian’s. The one is Intelligence without Power; the other is Power without Intelligence. And in both cases the existence of evil seems to be in part the fact which leads to the assumption adopted. Travelling by a different route, both come to a form of Idealism. But the Spencerian accepts Berkeley’s God with the knowledge left out, while Mr. Royce accepts him with the power left out. Both leave out final causes. Mr. Royce is particularly zealous for his theory, because it was the means of leading him out of blank skepticism. It is doubtful, however, whether it will be so successful with others. His argument (pp. 375 *sq.*) that there is an absolute distinction between truth and error, is irresistible. But when he afterwards (chap. xi.) argues from this, not merely that there is absolute truth, but that there *must* be an Infinite Thought that judges between truth and error, the argument will hardly compel conviction. It is not enough, he urges, to say that “an error is a thought such that, *if* a critical thought *did* come and compare it with its object, it *would be* seen to be false” (p. 426). “No barely possible judge . . . will do for us. He must be there, this judge, to constitute the error” (p. 427). Apart from the absolute knowledge no human judgment, he says, can be called an error, since “we cannot see how a single sincere judgment should possibly fail to agree with its

Now, it may be admitted that this is not a demonstrative argument. Truth would be truth, even if it were true that there

own chosen object" (p. 405). When two persons judge each other, each one thinks only about his *idea* of the other; "each thinks of his phantom of the other. Only a third person, who included them both, . . . only such an inclusive thought could compare the phantom with the real, and only in him, not in themselves, would John and Thomas have any ideas of each other at all, true or false" (p. 416). It is hard to see how so acute a mind can argue so absurdly. How, in the name of reason, can the Infinite Thought, either by inclusion or exclusion, *constitute* my thought either an error or a truth? If my thought is contrary to the fact, neither finite nor infinite knowledge (spelled with or without a capital K) can constitute it truthful; if it *is* a truthful thought, no Knowledge or Power can constitute it a falsehood. This Absolute Knowledge is called also Absolute Truth (p. 423). What does this mean unless that it knows absolutely what *is* true? But this implies that judgments *are* true or false in themselves. If not, this Knowledge must be supposed to be possessed of *power* (which it is not allowed to have) to make judgments false or true according to its own caprice. A similar misty pantheism is found in Mr. Royce's doctrine of evil. The fact of evil, physical and moral, he admits. But "partial evil is universal good" (p. 264). "The fundamental postulate of religion [is] that universal goodness is somehow at the heart of things" (p. 331). So far we might go with him. But (p. 335) we find this interpreted to mean that "the deepest assertion of idealism is, not that above all the evil powers in the world there is at work some good power mightier than they, but rather that through all the powers, good and evil, and in them all, dwells the higher spirit that does not so much create as constitute them what they are, and so include them all." "In God the evil will of all who sin is present, a real fact in the Divine Life, no illusion in so far as one sees that it exists in God and nowhere else, but for that very reason an element, and a necessary element, in the total goodness of the Universal Will. . . . The good act has its existence and life *in the transcending of experienced present evil*. . . . Goodness is the organism of struggling elements. . . . God's life is this infinite rest, *not apart from but in the endless strife*" (pp. 458 *sqq.*). So far as any meaning can be got out of this, it seems to be either that evil is a necessary means of good (which the author denies, p. 268), or else that evil is really no evil (which he also denies, p. 266).

Principal Caird (*Philosophy of Religion*, 1880) propounds a similar argument to the above, so far as the standard of truth is concerned. "The secret or implicit conviction on which all knowledge rests, and to which all individual opinions and beliefs are referred, is that absolute truth *is*; or, in other words, that though my thought may err, there is an absolute thought or intelligence which it is impossible to doubt" (p. 125). "No assertion, no single experience or act of consciousness, is possible, save as presupposing an ultimate intelligence which is the measure and the ground of all finite thought"

were no God. It would still be true that the earth revolves around the sun, even if there were no personal Power controlling and observing the celestial motions. All we insist on is that there is an almost insuperable impulse in the human soul which tends to make men believe that truth is not only a fact, but a *known* fact; that above all the ignorance and error which beset human knowledge there must be an omniscient Being whose knowledge constitutes a perfect standard of truth.

Similarly, if the question is concerning the origin of intelligence, it is not, strictly speaking, inconceivable that the blind working of atomic forces might in process of time develop a combination of atoms which has the faculty of knowledge. Yet since nothing can be in an effect which is not implicitly in the cause, it must be assumed that in this case the original atoms were germinally endowed with intelligence. What this germinal intelligence could have been; in what sense the ultimate particles of matter may be conceived to be all of a psychical nature (according to the notion of Leibnitz or of Schopenhauer), it might be hard to make clear to one's mind. It is at best a misty notion, and cannot explain the *unity* and persistence of an individual consciousness.¹ Still, if one chooses to hold such a view, there is no means of demonstrating that it is absolutely absurd. But the ordinary mind will not be able to repress the impulse to feel that the phenomena of human intelligence require for their production an intelligence at least equal to that of man himself.

(p. 129). Such assertions can hardly carry conviction except to a Hegelian mind. Dr. Caird argues thus (p. 131): "If we try to annul all existence, to think that nothing exists, the nothing is still a thinkable nothing, a nothing that is for thought, or that implies a thought or consciousness behind it. Thus all our conscious life as individuals rests on or implies a consciousness that is universal. We cannot think, save on the presupposition of a thought or consciousness which is the unity of thought and being, or on which all individual thought and existence rest." All which has no point unless on the idealistic assumption that thought creates the object of thought, though even then it does not appear how an individual's thought necessarily presupposes a universal consciousness which unites thought and being.

¹ *Vide* Lotze's discussion of this in his *Mikrokosmos*, vol. i. pp. 176-182 (Eng. transl., vol. i. pp. 158-163).

And what holds true respecting Intelligence holds also respecting Morality. Numberless as are the theories concerning morals, and various as are the manifestations of the moral sense in men, nothing is more certain than that in the developed man the moral sense is a fact. Men think not only of what *is*, but of what *ought to be*. Notions of right and wrong form a class by themselves, and the highest class of notions which spring up in the soul. Even the coarsest forms of hedonism fail to eliminate the unique peculiarity. If the highest good is made to consist simply in the procuring of pleasure for one's self or for others, still the conclusion is that one *ought* to labor to secure that pleasure, — that to do so is *right*, and not to do so is *wrong*. Even the extremest theory of the evolutionary origin of conscience still leaves the conscience an undisputed fact. Though it may be argued that the moral sense is only the final outcome of cosmic forces that have been working for ages upon ages, having its germ in the unconscious efforts of the lower forms of animal life to maintain themselves, and gradually developing into the conscious egoism, ego-altruism, and altruism which are found in the human race, still the fact remains, that in the developed form the notion of *duty* is the one essential feature, whereas in the germinal form that notion could have had no place. It is in a sense true, no doubt, that the acorn is the germ of the oak; but the characteristic features of the oak cannot be determined by any amount of microscopic or chemical examination of the acorn. And no more can the essence of morality be analyzed and unfolded by any amount of observation of the phenomena of animal life, from those of the lowest of the invertebrata up to the highest of the non-human species. Even the most unqualified form of necessitarianism leaves the unique characteristic of the moral nature undisturbed. The moral ideal, the feeling of obligation, the sense of remorse, the condemnation or approval of other men as blameworthy or praiseworthy, — all this remains, and is implicitly admitted, even when explicitly denied. The notion of the freedom of the will, especially in the sense of unreasoning caprice,¹ may be triumphantly proved to

¹ A notion held by almost no one, yet the one reasoned against most energetically by necessitarians; *e. g.*, J. S. Mill, *Examination of Sir Wm. Hamilton's Philosophy*, chap. xxvi.

be absurd and illusory. It may be argued that no one can create the motives that lead him to action, and that every one must be determined by the strongest motive. It may be insisted that the truth of this principle is assumed, when men attempt by legislation or other means to deter others from bad actions or to incite them to good ones. But underneath all this lies the tacit implication that it is *right* to deter men from crime by the threat of punishment, that it would be *wrong* not to use whatever measures will tend to further the general welfare of men, that it is our *duty* to use means to promote the operation of good motives.¹ A sense of *obligation* is felt which is not self-imposed, and which cannot be created or annulled by one's self or by the authority of other men, however numerous or powerful they may be. The law of righteousness, whether obeyed or not, is acknowledged to be the supreme standard according to which conduct should be regulated.

Now, what is the bearing of this fact upon the question of theism? From the mere existence of this idea of a moral law we cannot directly and necessarily infer the existence of a Divine Lawgiver, — a being whose power and will created the law. To such an inference the unanswerable objection at once presents

¹ An instance of thorough-going necessitarianism is found in H. G. Atkinson and Harriet Martineau's *Letters on the Laws of Man's Nature and Development*: "I am what I am, a creature of necessity; I claim neither merit nor demerit" (p. 30.). "I am what I am; I cannot alter my will, or be other than what I am, and cannot deserve either reward or punishment" (p. 191). "Free will! the very idea is enough to make a Democritus fall on his back and roar with laughter, and a more serious thinker almost despair of bringing men to reason" (p. 194). "Of course, as a part of nature, as a creature of necessity, as governed by law, man is neither selfish nor unselfish, neither good nor evil, worthy or unworthy, but simply nature, and what is possible to nature, and could not be otherwise" (p. 232). Yet even the one who writes thus can belabor those who disagree with him, and discourses on morality. "The knowledge which mesmerism gives of the influence of body on body, and consequently of mind on mind, will bring about a morality we have not yet dreamed of" (p. 280). So H. Czolbe (*Neue Darstellung des Sensualismus*, p. 92) says the criminal is "forced by physical necessity" to commit crime, but that society is "justified" in punishing him. "Justified," we suppose, in the same sense in which the ocean is justified in breaking through the dams which are built up to hinder its free flow. But why do we not speak of the *ocean's* rights or duties?

itself that, if this Divine Being is conceived as a moral being, then he must himself be amenable to the moral law. He cannot have made the law capriciously. There must be an eternal and immutable reason for its requirements. The law must, therefore, logically precede divine volition, and cannot be the mere product of it.¹

Is, then, atheism as consistent with high moral ideals and aims as theism is? Far from it. No doubt an atheist may cherish a lofty ideal of moral character. Certain notions and rules of justice may become prevalent, and be essentially the same, whatever religious instruction accompanies them. But if atheistic theories of the moral law and the moral sense become generally and practically accepted, they cannot but ultimately react fatally on the moral sense itself; or if they do not, the fact that they do not is itself a proof that the theories are false. Atheism breaks down in its effort to explain the moral sense as regards either its *origin*, its *present working*, or its ultimate *end*.

a. As to the origin of the sense of moral obligation, the theistic theory is simple. It cannot indeed be held that God arbitrarily created the moral law; but it can be held that God is the personal embodiment of the law, and that he implants in the human soul the moral sense which apprehends the law and recognizes the obligation to conform to it. Atheism, on the contrary, has no better hypothesis than that moral notions and feelings have been gradually evolved from mere animal impulses of self-preservation. Regard for the comforts and pleasure of others is held to be the outgrowth of a discovery that such regard will in the long run best promote one's own pleasure and advantage.² But this is, after all, no explanation of the real

¹ On this *vide* Noah Porter, *Moral Science*, § 46; I. A. Dorner, *Christian Doctrine*, § 6; S. Harris, *Philosophical Basis of Theism*, § 37.

² H. Spencer, *Data of Ethics*, chaps. xi., xii. The theory that the moral sense and moral conceptions are purely matters of heredity, though often propounded as if it were an axiomatic truth, is simply not true to the facts of observation. Whatever there may be (and there is no doubt something) in the notion of the hereditary transmission of moral tendencies, the general fact is that moral notions are *inculcated* by training, not infused by physical propagation. A man's character depends much more on his education than on his parentage. Even physical habits are largely due to the imitativeness of children more than to physical inheritance. Much more is this true of moral tendencies.

phenomenon. For, in the first place, if the moral sense is nothing but a development of the mere instinctive love of pleasurable life, it does not appear where the sense of *duty* comes from or what it means. It may be very true that men might by gradual experience have come to see that certain lines of conduct towards other men are most advantageous to themselves; but it does not appear why men should come to think that they *ought* to labor for the promotion either of their own happiness or of the happiness of others. If men, like brutes, have instincts or impulses leading them to care for their offspring or to be kind to their associates, or if they have made the discovery that their own greatest enjoyment is thus secured, very well, this may explain why they *do* so and so, but does not explain in the least why they should think that they *ought* to do so.

But, in the next place, if the conscience is supposed somehow to have been evolved, and to be an actual factor in human life, still so long as it is regarded as being ultimately nothing but an impulse urging one to the securing of his own highest enjoyment, it does not appear how this impulse could ever assume the form, which it has acquired in fact, of an imperative obligation to cherish *universal benevolence*. So far as the underlying impulse is a craving for personal ease and pleasure, the obligation towards others can dictate only such conduct as is seen to procure this personal comfort. The impulse will prompt one to outwit and deceive and injure others whenever the immediate effect seems likely to be a personal gratification; and on the theory under consideration such deceit and injury would be duty. But even though it should be urged that experience has ascertained that selfish pleasure is in the end always best secured by promoting the pleasure of others, still this would bring us only to the point of pursuing a certain course of conduct towards one's immediate associates; it would not enjoin the *love* of man for man's own sake. The theory does not account for that sense of the duty of all-embracing and uncompromising benevolence which has in fact been developed.

But, finally, the evolutionary theory of conscience does not account for the conception of a law that is *one, universal, eternal*, and *immutable*. A rule of life springing from an egoistic

regard to pleasure would be a rule for one's self alone, so that in strictness there would be as many laws as there are persons. So far as conduct relates to one's associates, too, it can on this theory have no unity; for one man's neighbors are quite different from another's; and every one's associates are always changing. So far as conduct has relation to a distant future, there is still less occasion to attribute to it the character of unity and uniformity. Now, of course there is in point of fact a want of unity and uniformity in the moral ideals and conduct of men. The differences amount to mutual contradiction, so far as the details of moral duty are concerned. But in every developed conscience the sense of duty involves the idea of a universal and eternal law. The theist, however, may hold that, just because this moral law is not fulfilled in man as he now is, while yet the conscience insists on its imperativeness, its absolute and universal validity, therefore there must needs be a Being in whom the law is actually realized. The more distinctly moral obligation is acknowledged, and the more elevated one's moral ideal is, the more urgently does one feel the need of a personal God who realizes in himself this ideal, and who presides over the moral universe, able to tell infallibly what the law of rectitude is, and authorized to punish the bad, reward the good, and in general to promote, by intelligent agency, the interests of the moral world.

But to the atheist the phenomena of the moral sense must be a perpetual enigma. For him there is no explanation of their origin, no reconciliation of their divergences, no prospect of the fulfilment of the prophecies which lie wrapped up in the ideals and the imperatives of the human conscience. But more particularly :

b. Atheism, whether of the materialistic or the pantheistic type, is not only unable to solve the problem of the origin of the moral sense, but is put to confusion by its present working. A universe that has come into being through the operation of purely material and unconscious forces has no room in it for free will or for the notion that anything is *wrong*. If everything is as it is by virtue of an iron necessity, then the consistent atheist can recognize no such thing as duty, can cherish no such feeling as blame, and can make no effort to effect any reform. It is

true that many men of this class do lay great stress on morality, and even profess to advocate a purer morality than theists do. But they can do it only by an unconscious denial of their fundamental assumptions. It is indeed almost amusing, after reading treatises whose object it is to set forth how all organisms have been developed by a necessary process from inorganic and unconscious matter, to be told at last that this doctrine is going to result in great advantage to the human race. Hæckel, for example, predicts that "by its aid we shall at last begin to raise ourselves out of the state of social barbarism in which, notwithstanding the much vaunted civilization of our century, we are still plunged. . . . It is above all things necessary to make a complete and honest return to nature and to natural relations."¹ But the fundamental doctrine of materialistic evolutionism is that whatever is necessary. "Barbarism" is a word which it has no right to apply to any stage of the process. When one speaks of the necessity of returning to nature and natural relations, the language, if it means anything, means that a part of nature — to wit, the human race — has somehow got away from nature. But what is nature, in the view of Hæckel, but the sum total of what is? What are natural laws but the actual method of the working of things, inorganic and organic? If men squander property, health, and life; if they lie, steal, and murder, — that must be, according to Hæckel's philosophy, the natural and necessary course of things. What, then, can be meant by saying that it is *necessary* for men to do otherwise than they do? From such a source such talk is an unconscious violation of the very system in whose name it is uttered.² It involves the notion of duty, and of a duty wrongfully neglected, — of unnatural as being a part of nature. The thing proposed is to *change* the course of things. But if the course of things is all natural, then why should it be changed? How can it be changed? Such a change would have to be from the natural to the unnatural, — just the opposite of what Hæckel pronounces to be the great desideratum. In short, atheistic evolu-

¹ E. H. Hæckel, *History of Creation*, vol. ii. pp. 367, 368, London, 1876. In the original *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte*, 7th ed., 1879, p. 680.

² Cf. T. H. Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 9.

tionism can acknowledge the binding obligation of a moral law only by committing suicide.

e. Equally, or still more manifestly, is atheism a failure when the future of the moral world is considered. The notion that the mental and moral faculties of men are nothing but the evolution of physical forces necessarily carries with it, as a corollary, the belief that physical death puts a final end to the existence of the conscious soul. And in fact the two notions are almost always found together.¹ That which is held to be nothing but a power or function of a physical organism must be thought to cease when the organism is dissolved. The inference seems to be unavoidable: Either mind is something distinct from the natural forces which are supposed to have been eternally at work, or else it is only one form which those forces assume in the course of evolution. In the latter case mental action must, like all force, be transformable into other forms of force. The whole amount of force being conceived as absolutely fixed and

¹ That Mr. Fiske has avowed his belief in personal immortality can only be regarded as a happy inconsistency, which he can hardly convince any one but himself that he is not guilty of. He insists, indeed, that his doctrine is quite opposed to materialism (*Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 79 and elsewhere); but his reason is that, though physical and mental action are correlated, yet the physical does not explain the mental. Very true; and likewise inorganic action does not explain the organic. Yet the evolutionist would hardly hold that vegetable life is a distinct entity, so that *e. g.* the life of the mushroom is to be regarded as immortal. So long as life and mind are held to be but an unconscious evolution of primeval matter — no force added and none taken away — there is no escape, but an illegitimate one, from the inference that death puts an end to mental action. Mr. Fiske assures us (vol. i. p. 65) that, since the use of the balance has shown experimentally that nothing ever disappears, it is no longer possible to believe in the destructibility of matter. The logic of this is rather remarkable. To most men the fact that experiments have as yet indicated that changes in the form of matter do not involve a disappearance of matter could hardly be a demonstration that matter *never does* disappear; at the most one could only infer that we do not know that it ever does. Still less can it be inferred that it has become impossible to believe in the destructibility of matter. But if the balance is such an infallible and omniscient test of existence and persistence, and if the soul after the death of the body persists as a distinct entity, then the balance ought to be able to show the fact. For a good treatment of this topic cf. J. Martineau, *Modern Materialism*, pp. 137 *sqq.*, New York, 1877.

incapable of increase or decrease, the supposition that, upon the death of the body, the soul continues forever afterwards as a distinct force detached from the evolutionary process of the great complex of physical forces, is a violation of the fundamental doctrine of the system. It would imply that mind is something *created* outright by the physical forces, — a supposition for which atheistic or pantheistic evolutionism has no room. According to this system, human life is only a succession of individual lives, each one of which, after passing through its brief period of conscious pain and pleasure, is irretrievably ended. Whether the pain or the pleasure is the greater, is itself a matter of dispute. Whether one shall be a pessimist, with Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann, or an optimist, with Herbert Spencer, depends largely or wholly on training and natural temperament. But the prospect is dismal enough at the best. Hopes may be cherished respecting the distant future of the race; but there is no sure warrant for the hope. Mr. Spencer's own doctrine recognizes a principle of dissolution as well as one of development. But even if the hope of a gradual elevation of the human race is cherished, still those who cherish it can never see it realized, since their conscious existence is extinguished at death. And even if we could know that ages hence culture and heredity combined would produce generations of men whose lives are to be free from suffering, what of that? At the best, each individual life is short, and ends in nothing. There may be found a certain beauty in it, but it is the beauty of a torso, the meaning and design of which is an insoluble enigma. Life, even in that imaginary future, would consist only of a series of phenomena most fitly to be compared to the rise and fall of waves on the great ocean. As the several waves emerge from the level surface and sink into it again, so out of the great All, at one point and another, there emerges a conscious life which, after its brief course is run, is destined to be lost again in the great unconscious mass of forces that constitute the ultimate reality. These fitful waves are endowed with the capacity of thought, of pleasure, and of hope. They become inspired with ideals and with aspirations that reach out into eternity. They are possessed with a longing for the privilege of unceasing ad-

vance and greater and greater freedom of development in the conscious life with which they have been invested. But all this is a mere phenomenon of the fleeting consciousness. And when each individual life is merged again in the great unthinking, unknowing, unfeeling, unhoping ocean of being, one can only say of it, —

“ Like the dew on the mountain, like the foam on the river,
Like the bubble on the fountain, thou art gone, and forever.”

One who adopts the materialistic view in earnest will hardly be able to avoid asking himself the questions: Why should I vex myself with either hopes or fears respecting the future of the human race, seeing that I can never know anything about it? Why should I regulate my conduct with reference to men who are not yet born? Why, in general, should I take pains to work for any particular development of the race? If men are nothing but brutes in a higher stage of development; if this development has come about by a natural process which has taken care of itself, — then why not let the future development also take care of itself? Why trouble ourselves with notions as to what course the evolution *ought* to take? Why try to take into our own hands the management of the process which belongs to nature herself? How do we know what direction evolution may take in the future? How can we be sure that, even with the best intentions, we may not be working against, rather than for, the end towards which the cosmic forces are tending? This is not a merely imaginary state of mind. It is precisely what many materialistic evolutionists openly avow.¹

When any one takes this ground, it is hard to see how the disbeliever in a personal God, however altruistic, can well reply to him. For both alike hold that there is no free self-determination, that all things are controlled by a rigid necessity, and that human knowledge is limited to present phenomena, so that what has been in the past, and, still more, what is to be in the future, is utterly beyond the reach of cognition. Both alike

¹ See illustrations in Professor Harris's *Philosophical Basis of Theism*, pp. 475-486.

must hold that no intelligence determines the process that is taking place. If so, then there can be no design in the process as a whole, no plan according to which it is working; there is accordingly not only no Moral Governor controlling the system, but it has in itself no known moral end; there is and can be no fixed and universally binding law; but rather each individual can only do whatever he is impelled to do by the forces which are operating on him and in him.

It is only an impotent and self-contradictory effort to avoid this dismal conclusion, when, after having eliminated a personal Moral Governor from the universe, atheists and pantheists personify an abstraction, and talk about a moral order of the universe,¹ or about a power outside themselves which makes for righteousness. Such talk implies that there is something *fixed* in the notion of righteousness or moral order. And this, again, implies a certain authoritativeness in the conceptions of the mind, a certain definiteness and permanency in the deliverances of the moral judgment. But such permanence and authority are impossible on the atheistic or pantheistic basis. The mind which is itself only the incidental product of the play of cosmic forces cannot set itself up as superior to them or as possessing any immutable character whatever. What we seem to know we only *seem* to know. The present phenomena of the moral sense not only differ among themselves, but are liable to be succeeded by other phenomena different from all the present ones. Righteousness thus becomes a thing of no fixed meaning. The conception of it, even if not soon destined to become extinct, is at the best variable and vague. To say that a power outside of us is making for it is to say nothing intelligible on

¹ Fichte's favorite phrase. *Vide* his *Ueber den Grund unseres Glaubens an eine göttliche Weltregierung*, where he says, "This moral order is the *Divine*, which we assume" (vol. v. p. 183 of his *Sämmtliche Werke*, Berlin, 1845). "That living and active moral order is itself God" (p. 186). Whether Fichte should be called an atheist (against which he vehemently protested) may be doubtful. His doctrine was apparently somewhat variable. In the above-mentioned treatise (p. 187) he seems expressly to deny that God can have personality and consciousness. In his earlier work, *Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung* (vol. v. pp. 40, 41), he ascribes to God blessedness, holiness, and omniscience.

the hypothesis in question. Righteousness is a word that has no meaning except as it relates to *personal* conduct. To say that an impersonal power is making for righteousness, is to say that a power knowing nothing about righteousness, caring nothing about it, incapable of exercising it, is constantly working to produce it, that is, is constantly aiming at it. Considering the very partial success of this power, as evinced in the moral condition of mankind, it is marvelous how men could have had such faith in it as Matthew Arnold assures us the ancient Hebrews had. Physical forces may be said to be working for certain ends—to be “making for” them—when they are seen actually and uniformly to produce them. We infer what is going to be from what has been. But to assume the existence of a physical power which is unconsciously working to produce a moral effect, while that effect is confessedly not produced, or at best only in a very imperfect way,—this is neither good physics, good philosophy, nor common sense.¹ Every assumption of a moral goal towards which the world is tending,—of a fixed moral standard by which human conduct is to be regulated and judged,—every such assumption implies belief in a personal God of righteousness. Pantheists or atheists may hold such assumptions concerning the tendency and destiny of things, but they can do so only by a happy inconsistency. Consistent atheism or pantheism can find in the phenomena of consciousness and conscience nothing but a series of illusions. Human life becomes, on this view of things, a mass of contradictions; the world, as a whole, has no end, no meaning; human character has no intrinsic value; human destiny is uncertain; human history, with its aspirations, its griefs, its struggles, its hopes, and its disappointments, is nothing but a melancholy farce.

¹ “Is it possible to imagine a Being which, stimulated by the influence of every existing condition of the cosmic course, should, with purposeless and blindly working activity, impart to that course the ameliorating impulses by which the thoroughgoing dominion of what is good is established,—a Being which cannot consciously indicate the place of each individual and appoint his work, or distinguish what is good in a good action from what is bad in a bad action, or will and realize the good with its own living love, but yet acts *as though* it could do all this?”—Lotze, *Microcosmus*, vol. ii. p. 676.

But not only is the present process of evolution, on the atheistic hypothesis, without any purpose. The same aimless, meaningless process must be infinitely repeated. For if the material world is eternal, its processes of evolution must have been eternally going on. The mind even of an evolutionist can hardly conceive of a material universe as existing for ages in an absolutely motionless, unchanging state, and then suddenly, at some particular moment, beginning to undergo a process of change. At the same time, if, as is commonly assumed, there is such a thing as order and progress in the process of development; if there is an advance from the simple to higher and more complex forms of existence, — why, then, a *limited* time, however long it may be supposed to be, would suffice to bring the development to the stage which has now been reached. If the world has existed eternally *a parte ante*, then the present point of progress must have been reached ages ago. If there is any stage higher than the present one conceivable and attainable, it too must have been reached ages ago. For go back as far as we may, we have still an unlimited stretch of time in which the process must have been going on. We are therefore irresistibly driven to the conclusion that if this development did not have a beginning a limited number of years ago, so that it has only just been able to reach the present stage of perfection (and this the atheistic evolutionist must deny), then there must have been an *infinite series* of developments, it being a law of the evolution that at a certain stage of the evolution the developed world must enter on a state of regress or pass through a sudden cataclysm, thus returning to a state of chaos out of which it must then start again on its course of development towards order and beauty. This is avowed by some representatives of the materialistic doctrine.¹ Indeed, there is no escape from it, if we deny a divine creation. The farce of the universe thus becomes doubly, or rather infinitely, multiplied. Not only is there no purpose in any development at all; not only is the present chapter of this process meaningless and aimless; not

¹ *E. g.*, J. H. Thomassen, *Bibel und Natur* (Leipzig, 1869), p. 63; *Geschichte und System der Natur*, p. 70; Herbert Spencer, *First Principles*, chap. xxiii.

only is it as a whole unconscious of itself; not only do the individual organisms in it that have the faculty of consciousness find their consciousness and conscience illusive while they last, and destined soon to pass into non-existence; — not only this; but this aimless development as a whole comes to an end, and then begins again and passes through the same or a similar course; and so on in an infinite succession. If it is impossible to see the meaning or use of a single one of these evolutions, still more impenetrable is the mystery of an endless succession of them. That after the world, through a long process, has attained a certain stage of order and beauty, it should be hurled back into chaos again, and then Sisyphus-like work its way up into order again, only to be forced still again to go through the same process, each process being in turn but a repetition, for substance, of the preceding, and all together governed by no conscious power, — that this should be the case is an insoluble puzzle. It is mysterious enough that there should be one such meaningless process; but to have it infinitely repeated makes the mystery infinitely dark.

The point of all this is not so much in the implication that the mind requires to know what the specific meaning of the several phenomena of the universe is, as rather that the mind demands that the universe, as a *whole*, must have *some* meaning, that there must be some plan, some purpose, some aim, some goal, in it all; — in short, that there should be a *reason* for the universe of things, even though the reason should be only in part understood. The teleological problem of discovering particular adaptations of means to ends may be ever so complicated or difficult; one may be ever so much in doubt what this or that means; but none the less does the mind demand that the universe as a whole shall mean *something*. The teleological argument is often criticised and pronounced inconclusive, because of these difficulties or weaknesses in the particular application of it. This criticism would have great weight, if the notion of a God, or the tendency to believe in a God, first originated in the observation of these particular teleological adaptations, and if the belief itself depended on finding everywhere indisputable marks of intelligent contrivance. The case is, rather, the reverse of this. The antecedent instinctive feeling

that there must be a design, and therefore a Designer, for the universe in general,—this it is which prompts the search for particular adaptations. This is the reason why men, when the particular design of a thing cannot be seen, nevertheless are disposed to think that there is some use, some purpose, even when the purpose cannot be detected. Because it is naturally assumed that there must be a reason for the *whole*, therefore it is assumed that there is a reason for each *part*, however uncertain one may be as to what the particular reason is. Undoubtedly this tendency to find design in nature springs from the fact that in men themselves the formation of plans is an essential part of their rational constitution. This is sometimes alleged as an argument against theism. It is said that the theistic impulse is nothing but a childlike tendency to personify inanimate things. Particular objects, or general forces, or the universe as a whole, is in imagination invested with a personal will. But (so it is reasoned) as the maturing child learns, little by little, to recognize these personifications as illusions, so the developed reason of man learns to recognize that the tendency to assume a supreme Person as underlying the forces of nature is nothing but a child-like fancy having no solid foundation. It is sufficient to say in reply that the point now urged is just the fact of a tendency to assume a personal agency as operative in the natural world. That this tendency may, in particular cases, lead to an inaccurate or extravagant fancy is no disproof of its general soundness. It may easily be proved that many childish personifications are illusions; but it has never been proved that there is no God.

Similar reflections may be made concerning the moral argument for the divine existence. The practical force of it is best brought out when we consider what the consequence is of adopting atheism as the true theory. The argument does not lie in any formal deduction of the fact of a Divine Being made from the phenomena of the physical or moral world. Neither the intuitions of the moral sense nor the facts of the world's history furnish any *demonstration* of the divine existence. But a sound moral sense recoils from the thought of a world *without* a moral Ruler and Judge. The same impulse which, in general, inclines

men to think that the world as a whole must have *some* end inclines them, in particular, to think that the moral world must have some *good* end. If it is almost impossible to conceive of the cosmos as passing through all its processes for nothing, as not being under the control of an intelligent Power who plans its movements and changes, it is likewise almost impossible for a moral being to conceive of the world of moral beings as having no final cause, as not controlled by an intelligent and morally upright Ruler. Men are not led to the positive belief in such a ruler by the evidences, found in nature and history, of an all-wise and benevolent Maker and Governor. The argument is altogether too inconclusive. The enormous evils and sufferings and wrongs with which the world is filled might rather seem to favor the opposite conclusion, that the Supreme Ruler, if there is one, is deficient in goodness and wisdom. Accordingly one of the principal arguments for the fact of a future life is found in just this moral disorder and inequality of the world as we see it. But the argument presupposes that there is a Moral Ruler who is disposed to rectify all evil. The truth is, that back of all attempts to find in nature evidences of the perfect holiness of God there is a virtual, even though unconscious, assumption, that there must be a Divine Being who is perfect in moral character. This being the assumption, men search for proof and illustrations of the assumed truth. The belief, or the tendency to believe, leads to the argument, rather than the argument to the belief.¹

In saying this we do not forget, what is frequently insisted on, that religion often appears to be quite independent of morality. In the ruder forms of it it seems to be a selfish and superstitious fear of unmoral, or even of malevolent, beings, rather than a recognition of a Moral Ruler. It is argued, therefore, that ethical conceptions have nothing to do with the genesis of religion. But the more degraded races are not to be taken as illustrating the normal tendencies of humanity. Where religion is of this rude sort, morality is also but rudely developed. And

¹ "All arguments [for the divine existence] are merely reasons given to justify our *faith* and the particular manner in which we deem it necessary to *conceive* this highest principle."—Lotze, *Grundzüge der Religionsphilosophie*, p. 5.

as truly as the deities of men are apt to be regarded as characterized by traits like those of the men themselves, so truly must the deities be conceived as possessing ethical traits at least as distinct and elevated as those of their worshippers. We are, however, not now considering the question of the historical origin and original form, but rather that of the ultimate ground, of theistic conceptions. It matters little, so far as this question is concerned, whether religion first took the gross form of fetichism, which has gradually developed into an ethical monotheism, or whether, on the contrary, the lower forms of religion are degenerations from an original purer form. Wherever the higher forms are seen, there an ethical element is found. And when a reflective analysis contemplates the phenomena of theism, it cannot well avoid recognizing the moral sense as a weighty factor in the theistic conception.

The atheistic hypothesis serves, therefore, to shock the mind into a consciousness of its own latent impulses. The clear recognition of the logical and necessary consequences of atheism — the necessity it puts upon us of assuming that a world exists, full of manifold beauties and intelligences, yet existing through no intelligent cause, directed by no purpose, regulated by no moral controller, having in general no reason for existing and issuing in no worthy end, — this, as it forces upon us the sharp alternative which theism *versus* atheism presents, reveals the strength and validity of the theistic impulse and the real force of the theistic argument. It is easy to make objections to the theistic conception. But let one begin on the opposite side and try to adopt atheism, in its unadulterated form, as his theoretical and practical belief; and then he finds how much greater and more fundamental difficulties are encountered. Yet one or the other doctrine must be true. And men will not in the long run be content to embrace a doctrine which requires them to hold that the world in general and the human race in particular are the sport of a blind power, all history meaningless, and all life a dismal farce.

All this simply proves a natural *tendency* in man to theism. It does not prove a direct perception of God, but only the possession of mental and moral impulses which favor a belief in

the existence of one. Now, in so far as the question before us is, how men first came to cherish the actual belief, it is not absolutely settled by this demonstration of the tendency to the belief. The actual belief is a communicated one. And the reality of an innate tendency to the belief can be inferred, not from the mere fact that children accept it when communicated (for they might with almost equal readiness accept many untrue and even almost absurd things, if such were universally taught them), but still more from the persistence with which the theistic belief maintains itself even after the objections to it have been urged with their greatest force; and most of all from the repugnance which every sound mind and sound moral sense feels towards the atheistic hypothesis when it is seen in all its legitimate consequences.

Theism is thus seen to have its roots in a tendency to assume the existence of a personal power (or personal powers) akin to human beings in intellectual and moral faculties, but superior to them, and exercising a control over the movements of nature and of human history. God is conceived as like man, but with a more or less complete exemption from the limitations of humanity. It is an important truth which Feuerbach distorts, when he says,¹ "From what a man's God is you can tell what the man is; and again, from what the man is you can tell what his God is: the two things are identical." It is indeed not true that God is only the deification of man, — a poetic objectification of human emotions and thoughts. But it is true that all genuine theism is anthropomorphic; it does not assume that man makes God in his own image, but it does assume that God made man in His image. Unless God is conceived to be, like man, a being possessed of a rational intelligence and a free moral will,² — a person forming and executing purposes, — then there is no valid ground for pretending to be a theist. The ontological and cosmological arguments at the most do not bring us any farther than to the assumption or recognition of a Universal Force, or an Unknown Something, which may be identical

¹ *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, p. 17, Leipzig, 1841.

² See this forcibly elaborated by President J. Bascom, *A Philosophy of Religion*, chap. iii., New York, 1876.

with the essential principle of a soulless material universe. But such a God is no God at all.¹

When it is objected, whether by professed theists, like Mansel, or professed agnostics, like Herbert Spencer, that the attributes of infinity and absoluteness cannot in thought be reconciled with a true personality, the reply is short: Who is able to assure us that God *is* absolute and infinite in any such sense as to exclude the attribute of personality? There is no law of thought, or impulse of the religious nature, which compels us to assume any *such* absoluteness. Least of all has the agnostic, who professes to know nothing about a Divine Being, any right to know so much as that he is an absolute being in such a sense that he cannot be personal. The religious impulse leads to the assumption of a God who is a morally and intellectually perfect person. If this perfection is inconsistent with absoluteness and infinity, very well; let these high-sounding abstractions be sacrificed; no harm will come to any one. The notion of a Deity precedes that of his absoluteness, and will remain even if the latter is abandoned.² The old ontological argument of Anselm presented the spectacle of an attempt to prove the existence of God by the very definition of God; the modern agnostics undertake to find in the definition of God a proof of his non-existence, or at least of his unthinkableness. The one style of argumentation is as futile as the other.

The gist of the theistic argument, then, in brief is this: The mind of man is instinctively inclined to think that the universe must have a purpose; that, as a whole, it is *for* something; further, that it must have a moral end, a good end; and consequently that there must be a moral and intelligent Power presiding over it, and governing it in wisdom, righteousness, and love. As soon as one reflects on the matter, and whenever one takes in what is involved in any theory of a universe destitute of a personal Ruler, one recoils from the proposition that the complicated system of the universe is the result of the operation of fortuitous and unintelligent physical forces. And then

¹ See Exeoursus III. in the Appendix.

² Cf. Bascom, *A Philosophy of Religion*, p. 91; E. R. Conder, *Basis of Faith*, pp. 62 *sqq.*; S. Harris, *Philosophical Basis of Theism*, § 55.

when one observes the numberless individual marks of purpose, — of particular adjustments of organ to organ, of things to persons, of means to ends,¹ — this instinctive tendency to look for a conscious design is confirmed. And when the atheistic suggestion is made that these apparent evidences of an intelligent plan may be merely accidental, or that the adjustments which we see are only the survival, so to speak, of a chaotic and blundering *nisus* of nature, only those productions being perpetuated which *happened* to be furnished with the organs and environments favorable to development and reproduction, — the refutation of this does not need to depend on one's ability to prove that this was not, or could not have been, the actual fact. Rather one may reply: Why *should* I make an assumption which requires me to regard the universe and its history as a meaningless farce? For at the best the atheistic hypothesis is nothing but a conjecture, even though the theistic one should also be pronounced to be the same. If, then, I am obliged to choose between the two conjectural modes of accounting for the fact of adaptations and contrivances, why should I not adopt that conjecture which harmonizes with my feeling that there must have been a *reason* for the world as a whole? and consequently that a Being possessed of Reason and moral Purpose has determined the course of things in it? Why should I not adopt that conjecture which allows me to think that there is a personal God who knows me and cares for me, — a God toward whom I can cherish a filial trust and love?²

¹ See especially Paul Janet, *Final Causes* (Edinburgh, 1883, 2d ed., tr. by W. Affleck); J. L. Diman, *The Theistic Argument*; Wm. Jackson, *The Philosophy of Natural Theology* (London, 1874).

² Physiciens, in his *Candid Examination of Theism* (London, 1878), after arguing that all the positive theistic arguments are fallacious, and that scientific thought finds no need of a personal God in order to account for the universe and its phenomena, yet finally, after sketching an imaginary debate between a theist and an atheist on the question of "metaphysical teleology," in undertaking to adjudicate between them says, "The degree of even rational probability may here legitimately vary with the character of the mind which contemplates it" (p. 95). "The grounds of belief in this case logically vary with the natural disposition and the subsequent training of different minds" (p. 99). In other words, if one is theistically inclined, he will argue in one way; if atheistically inclined, in another.

When, then, it is objected that there are many phenomena in nature which do not suggest a designing cause, that many things appear rather to be the product of a blind and unfeeling power, one does not need to be able to discover the occult purpose in order to parry the atheistic inference; it is not even necessary to show that more careful research has often disclosed the purpose of what had seemed to be without it. It is sufficient to fall back on one's ignorance, and to assume that where there is so strong a presumption that the *whole* is the result of a plan, and where there are so many obvious individual instances of ingenious adjustment and benevolent arrangement, the comparatively few inexplicable things may well be left for the present unexplained. A parent does many things which to a young child seem strange, unwise, or even cruel. But the child does not therefore argue that he has no parent.¹

Finally, if it is objected that this tendency to believe in the existence of a God is, after all, no proof that a God does exist, the reply is very simple. Doubtless it is not a compulsory proof, else no one would ever doubt the conclusion. But if a strong and general tendency to believe in the objective reality of certain principles or existences is no evidence of such reality, then the foundation of all knowledge is undermined. What evidence have we that, whenever a change takes place in the world, there must have been some *cause* of it? This demand for a cause is nothing but a strong tendency of the mind. Some men have undertaken to disparage the value of this tendency, too; but they find it impossible to secure many followers, or even to be self-consistent in their skepticism. Men are so constituted as to think that what they are impelled by a strong natural impulse to believe to be objectively true *is* objectively true. If they can hardly help thinking that there is a material world existing in space, that is practically the convincing reason for their thinking that it *does* exist. If they find in them an insuperable tendency to conceive of material bodies as having

¹ The objections to the teleological argument derived from evolutionism need not be considered at length. Evolutionists themselves admit that evolution does not do away with teleology, but rather relieves it of some of its difficulties. See Asa Gray, *Darwiniana*.

three dimensions, that is the decisive evidence that these bodies are so constituted. In short, when we reduce any belief, however unavoidable or indisputable it may seem to be, to its ultimate grounds, we can get no farther than to say that we cannot help believing so.

Now, the impulse to ask, What is it for? is scarcely less imperative than the impulse to ask, What is it from? The various tendencies of the soul which lead to the conception of a supreme personal Being are just as legitimate and trustworthy as any others. If they are discredited as not demonstrating the objective reality of the God who is believed in, then a similar treatment applied to all fundamental and intuitive beliefs reduces us to pure Pyrrhonism or Nihilism.

Of course it cannot be contended that the knowledge of God is precisely analogous to that of the external world. The simple fact that men's conceptions and impressions of divinity are and have been so exceedingly diverse and almost contradictory, whereas they are substantially in agreement as to the facts and appearances of the objects of sense, shows that there is not the same kind and degree of force in the two classes of impelling tendencies. The cognition of a purely spiritual being, either because of the limitations of our present mode of existence, or because sin has blinded our spiritual vision, cannot be called direct knowledge in the same sense as the cognition of material objects is. Left to themselves, men might have agreed that there is *probably* a supreme personal Power. They might have had a common longing and hope for a clear manifestation of the fact of such a God. But there would still have been the *possibility* that the world was swayed by an unconscious, though all-pervading, force. There would still have been the possibility, however repellent the thought, that the universe both of inanimate and rational beings was existing for no purpose. Persons who had come to the knowledge of other persons only through direct perception and intercourse could not be *sure* of the existence of a Divine person, if he made no palpable and personal manifestation of himself. Still less could they have come to a certain knowledge of the particular attributes of this Being. Of course, in process of time the conjecture concerning a Supreme

Being might have taken the form of a belief, and the belief again might have assumed the aspect of an assured knowledge. Theism thus transmitted would have been implicitly accepted by each new generation on the mere testimony of the preceding. But in this case the ground of *certainly* in the belief would have been merely the testimony of others. Monotheism, polytheism, fetichism, would all rest on the same foundation, monotheism having only the advantage of being most in accordance with enlightened reason. As soon as the belief is questioned, it is seen that the mere fact of a traditional handing down of the belief is of itself no strict proof of its correctness. The testimony is found to be valuable only so far as it tallies with and confirms the general impulses and tendencies of men.

But in another form testimony plays a very important part in the confirmation of theism. And here we come to the second factor in the basis of theistic belief; namely, —

II. Revelation as a ground of assured belief in a personal God and of a definite knowledge of him. This is testimony, as it were, at first hand. It is like the personal appearance of a man about whom we have heretofore known only by conjecture or hearsay. It is evidence in addition to that which is found in those innate tendencies which incline men to adopt theistic conceptions. When the Deity is supposed to have manifested himself in some palpable way, even though only for a single time, the fact of this manifestation is handed down and becomes the ground of the assured confidence with which the theistic belief is held.

Of course, belief in a revelation must presuppose this inclination to belief in the existence of a Divine Being. Absolute, stolid atheism, — a positive disbelief in the existence of anything superhuman or supernatural, — if this were the natural and ordinary attitude of the human mind, could hardly be overcome by any special revelation. Such atheism would necessarily assume a skeptical attitude towards any apparent or pretended manifestation of a God. Even if the disbelief were in a particular instance overcome by some remarkable demonstration, it would afterwards return again, if such disbelief were indeed the natural attitude of the human mind. The alleged

revelation would soon be repudiated as an illusion. The original and natural unbelief would re-assert itself, and continue to be the dominant sentiment of men. But given a general disposition to believe in a Divine Being; given a general desire to be assured of the reality and of the character of a God already believed in, or at least conjectured, — then a revelation will be effective and lasting in its tendency to establish men in the sure conviction that there is indeed a God. The revelation, when accepted as such, furnishes a ground of certainty concerning the Divine Being which exceeds, and in a sense supersedes, the belief which may have existed before.

All this holds true quite irrespective of the question whether any particular alleged revelation is a genuine one or not. The point here to be insisted on is that an antecedent tendency to believe the world to be under the control of a personal God prepares one to *desire* and *expect* a revelation of such a God. If that desire and expectation are or seem to be realized, the revelation is in the very nature of the case a clearer and more positive source of knowledge than the antecedent theistic impulse could be. Otherwise there could be no ground for the desire itself. Take the case of the ordinary Christian. He finds himself in a community filled, and even in a sense constituted, by Christian doctrines which have been handed down, and which form the source and substance of the religious thinking of the Christian world. The fact and the character of a personal God, together with the account of what he has done in order to save mankind, are an essential part of the Christian body of doctrine. All this comes to each individual as the contents of the Christian system, before he has begun to think independently, before either doubt springs up or he becomes clearly conscious of any innate tendencies to believe in a Divine Being. The simple fact is that the child in a Christian community is told by his elders about the fact and the character of God as soon as he is able to take in the instruction. If we ask how the instructors came by their own impressions and convictions, the same answer must be given; and so the chain reaches back to the beginning of the Christian Church. The first disciples of Christ received from him positive communications concern-

ing God, his character, and his purposes respecting men. "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," was their request ; and his life and words gave the answer. Whatever they may have believed and hoped before, Christ's revelations were to them more authoritative and conclusive than any previous instructions or convictions. That his teachings were largely in harmony with their previous convictions and opinions must have helped to win their confidence in him as an inspired teacher. But when the confidence was created, and they could say with assurance, "We know that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God ;" when especially their confidence was confirmed and made invincible by his resurrection, — they found in him the ultimate and infallible source of religious truth. Though they may before have had no doubts about the fact of a Divine Being, yet now, if doubts had arisen, they would have been at once overcome by this same confidence in the infallible authority of their Master. Because *he* believed in God, because he claimed to have come from God and to have revealed the gracious purposes of God, therefore they could not but believe in God. They trusted his veracity and his competency so implicitly that all previous traditional beliefs were worthless, as compared with their assurance that he spoke the truth, and that he had made known to them the Father. When they accepted Jesus as a divinely inspired Revealer of God, they had a new ground of certainty. Their previous beliefs, themselves resting on the tradition of an earlier revelation, were now strengthened. The words of one who professed to come directly from God, and whose whole character and conduct confirmed his claims, introduced them into a new region of religious assurance. Whatever innate tendencies there may have been to believe in a God, whatever confirmation this tendency may have received from reflection and tradition, yet the ground of calm and firm *assurance* was now found in the self-evidencing character and claims of the great Prophet who brought to light the things heretofore dimly known or blindly accepted.

And what was true of the original disciples holds true, substantially, of Christendom in general. Christians do not, indeed, now have the same immediateness of personal acquaintance

with Jesus which those disciples had; but they have what in some respects more than compensates for the want of it: they have the evidence of Christian history as a confirmation of Jesus' claims. Christianity now, as then, rests on the personal authority of its Founder. Christians trace to him not only their religious hopes, but also their religious knowledge. What the Christian thinks or knows about God he receives through the medium of the Christian revelation. In spite of himself, by virtue of a training which began in his earliest years, he has become imbued with Christian principles and Christian beliefs, derived from the revelation brought into the world by Jesus Christ, and accepted because he is regarded as authoritative and true. And so it is not an extravagant thing, — nay, it is a most reasonable and obvious thing, — to say that if a Christian finds himself troubled by atheistic doubts, he may properly dispel them by reflecting that, if such doubts have any validity, then Jesus ought still more to have had them, whereas, on the contrary, he had none. He professed to know the Father, to come from him, and to be in constant fellowship with him. If atheism is true, then Christ was not only no true prophet, but either a gross impostor or at the best a misguided enthusiast. In case, now, a Christian is beset with speculative doubts about God, it is legitimate for him to quell them by the reflection that Christ had no doubts, and that Christ's testimony on this point is sufficient to outweigh all the difficulties which speculation can possibly raise. Indeed, so long as one remains a Christian, no other course can be taken. It would be simply absurd to profess to have faith in Christ, if in the very center of his religious life and teaching he was the victim of a delusion, or else was guilty of a base deception. If one has (as every real Christian must have) implicit faith in the absolute trustworthiness of Christ as a religious guide, then his testimony concerning God is more conclusive than all the arguments of metaphysicians or than all possible reflections of one's own. It is clear, then, that when the question is raised, what it is that gives *assurance* to a Christian respecting divine things, as over against the uncertainties and doubts which may arise, the answer must be that it is his faith in the Christian revelation itself.

That God is a living reality is made *certain* to the Christian mind by the fact that God has *manifested* himself in Christ to the world.

And what is true of those who accept the Christian revelation as genuine is also true of those who are adherents of other religions. They believe what they believe, not simply on the ground of innate intuitions or independent reflection, but on the ground of a supposed revelation in which the Deity has disclosed himself. It is not necessary to substantiate this statement by a detailed examination of religious history. The fact is admitted by all. Wherever a religious faith is vigorous and positive, it rests on a real or supposed revelation. When faith in the genuineness of the revelation is undermined, the religion itself loses its vitality. When the Greek and Roman mythologies began to be recognized as fables, general religious skepticism came in; theism instead of being a firm faith became a matter of speculation. Cicero found occasion to write a treatise to prove the reality of a Deity. And so generally, when faith in a supernatural revelation is lost, faith in a personal Deity is either lost or becomes doubtful and lifeless. Deism may live for a time on the strength of a theism nursed by faith in the supernatural; but by degrees it will degenerate into pantheism or pure atheism.¹ A God whose existence and character are only inferred from the phenomena of the universe, with its mixture of good and bad, beauty and ugliness, pleasure and suffering, with its doubtful progress towards the better, and with no certain message from its author to tell men whether he cares for them or even has a personal consciousness of their existence, — such a God cannot long retain the clear and strong faith of his creatures. Religion, in order to have any vitality, must involve a *belief*, at least, that the object of worship has made himself definitely known. The speculations and conjectures which may grow out of the theistic tendency of men's minds are too vague and discordant to produce a common and assured belief. There cannot be a *community* holding one definite conviction concerning a Divine Being and united in a common worship of him, unless the Deity is supposed somehow

¹ Cf. Luthardt, *Apologie des Christenthums*, vol. iv.

to have authentically and authoritatively revealed himself. Such a supposition will develop itself, with or without good grounds. If a Buddha or Confucius merely by his own insight detects the errors of his fellows and teaches a new or a reformed religion, and if his teachings are accepted and become the foundation of a new religious community, he will come to be regarded (whether himself claiming it or not) as specially inspired, and his teachings as therefore having a higher authority than that of mere human opinion.

Of course it may be argued that, inasmuch as there are many pretended revelations, not all of which can be genuine, revelations in general are discredited by this multiplicity and inconsistency, and that therefore, although assurance of faith in a divine being may come from assumed revelations, yet such revelations are proved by their very diversity to be spurious; so that the whole superstructure resting on them is deprived of its security. Be that as it may. Our present point is not that the fact or the character of God is disclosed by any or every alleged revelation; but rather that definite and confident *belief* in such a revelation is essential to a lively, and especially to a common, belief in a God. If there is a natural tendency in men to believe in a Divine Being, none the less certain is it that there is a natural tendency in men to desire an authoritative *communication* from the Deity—some special manifestation which shall make men feel *acquainted* with him. Whether any such revelation has been made; which of all the alleged revelations, if any, can substantiate itself as the genuine one,—these are entirely different, though very important, questions. But it is of no little account to emphasize this tendency to *desire* an authentic revelation. If the innate tendency to believe in a God is to be accepted as one reason, at least, for the truth of theism, then equally the natural desire to receive a special communication from God may be taken as furnishing a presumption, at least, that one has been made. If there are intrinsic reasons for believing that there is a personal God presiding over the universe, there is also reason for believing that he must desire to make himself clearly known to his personal creatures. If it were certain that no such revelation

had ever been made, this absence of a revelation would throw doubt on the trustworthiness of the theistic impulse itself.

But here there presents itself again the troublesome fact of a multiplicity of alleged revelations, and of revelations so diverse from one another that not all of them can have been genuine. What shall be said, now, respecting this fact? Three possible courses can be taken with reference to it: (1) It can be concluded that all pretended revelations are spurious, and that all religion is natural religion, or even pure delusion. (2) It may be argued that some one or more of the revelations may be genuine, the others being spurious. (3) It may be argued that all the alleged revelations, though conflicting with one another, are derived, in a more or less corrupt form, from one primeval revelation. The first course is excluded by what has already been said. Respecting the other two it may be said that a theist can consistently adopt either of them. The genuineness of a particular revelation, like the Christian, does not prove or disprove the genuineness of another one made at a time so remote that no conclusive evidence concerning it is available. And just because the data for settling the problem concerning a primeval revelation are so scant or wanting altogether, it may seem to be an idle occupation to discuss it at all. But, on the other hand, every discussion about the actuality of a revelation inevitably runs into the question about its possibility and probability; and this at once leads to the question whether the race has ever been without it. To many minds the credibility of any alleged historical revelation is invalidated, if it is assumed that during the whole previous history of mankind no knowledge of God or of his will was had except what had come from men's unaided conjectures. The feeling is this: A special or supernatural revelation is credible only in case the need of it is obvious; but if there was a need of one some thousands of years after men began to live on the earth, there must likewise have been a need of it from the outset. Either this presumption in favor of a primitive revelation must be rebutted, or the probability of such a revelation must be assumed.

CHAPTER III.

THE QUESTION OF A PRIMEVAL REVELATION.

THE preceding discussion has made it clear that whatever may be true as to this question, we cannot assume that a special revelation was the original source of a theistic tendency of mind. A predisposition to believe in a God, and a desire to experience some manifestation of his presence and character, must be assumed as implanted in the primeval man. If it should be held that man, without any native tendency to believe in a God, had the notion of one communicated to him by a special revelation, without which revelation he would necessarily have been and remained a pure atheist, such a view would indeed merit little attention; for against an atheistic bent of mind innate in the human race no special revelation could for any length of time maintain its influence. Indeed, it is not clear how an ingrained atheistic mind could be made to believe in a God at all.

Yet some writers seem, in their treatment of this subject, to assume that the theory of a primeval revelation implies just this doctrine of innate atheism as the aboriginal condition of mankind. Thus Dr. A. M. Fairbairn, in his discussion of the matter, apparently considers the theory of a primeval revelation as designed only to explain how the first idea of God arose in the human mind. He says, and says truly, "Revelation may satisfy or rectify, but cannot create, a religious capacity or instinct." But Dr. Fairbairn's argument goes further than to defend this proposition. A primitive revelation, he says, is "a mere assumption, incapable of proof — capable of most positive disproof."¹ What, now, is the argument? This is it:² "If

¹ *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion and History*, pp. 21 *sq.*, American edition (pp. 13 *sq.* in the English).

² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

there was a primitive revelation, it must have been — unless the word is used in an unusual and misleading sense — either written or oral. If written, it could hardly be primitive, for writing is an art, a not very early acquired art, and one which does not allow documents of exceptional value to be lost. If it was oral, then either the language for it was created, or it was no more primitive than the written. Then an oral revelation becomes a tradition, and a tradition requires either a special caste for its transmission, becomes therefore its property, or must be subjected to multitudinous changes and additions from the popular imagination, — becomes, therefore, a wild commingling of broken and bewildering lights. But neither as documentary nor traditional can any traces of a primitive revelation be discovered; and to assume it is only to burden the question with a thesis which renders a critical and philosophical discussion alike impossible.”¹

¹ Similarly Emile Burnouf (*Science of Religions*, p. 47, London, 1888. In the original: *La Science des Religions*, Paris, 1872, p. 82. The translation is simply execrable) says, “There is not a scholar to-day who considers this opinion as anything but erroneous. It is contradicted by the knowledge of texts, which disclose no point of contact between the most ancient Hebrew books and the *Veda*; also by the comparative study of languages, which separates in their origins and in their systems the Semitic idioms from the Aryan idioms; . . . lastly, by this simple reflexion ruling all facts, that, when humanity is in possession of a true principle, there is no example of its ever being allowed to perish.” This last reason is a curiosity of logic. The proposition is of course true, — true, even to the extent of being absurd, if we may venture the paradox, — provided he refers to *known* examples of the loss of a true principle; for if such an example were known, the principle would not be lost. But if there were really instances of such a loss, then of course the fact of the loss *must* be unknown; and to try to disprove the fact of the loss by the fact of our ignorance of the loss hardly deserves the dignity of being called a fallacy; it is rather an instance of Hibernianism.

Max Müller (*Introduction to the Science of Religion*, Lect. I. p. 30) says: “The theory that there was a primeval preternatural revelation granted to the fathers of the human race . . . would find but few supporters at present; no more, in fact, than the theory that there was in the beginning one complete language, broken up in later times into the numberless languages of the world.” This comparison cannot be meant to imply that there was not one primeval language; for in his *Lectures on the Science of Language* (vol. i. pp. 447, 448) he says: “We can understand not only the origin of language,

This is surely a very summary way of despatching the theory. That the primitive revelation, if there was one, was not a written one, is of course at once to be granted. But why it could not have been oral, or in some other way palpable to the human senses and apprehension, is not so clear. In that case, we are told, the language for the revelation must have had to be created. Just how much is meant by this is not obvious. It might mean that human language, as a whole, would have had to be created in and with the divine act of revelation; or it might mean that, in addition to a language already existent, a new vocabulary would have had to be created as a medium of the new truth to be communicated. But neither supposition is a necessary one. The problem concerning the origin of language is one which scientific investigation will hardly be able

but likewise the necessary breaking up of one language into many; and we perceive that no amount of variety in the material or formal elements of speech is incompatible with the admission of one common source." Unless these two extracts are to be understood as in direct contradiction of each other, the first must be read with an emphasis on the word "complete." The original language may, and indeed must, have been incomplete as compared with later ones. But still it is hard to see how the comparison of the theory of one original language with that of a primeval revelation helps to fortify his denial of such a revelation. If the various languages, now so different from one another, may be modifications of one common language, the great variety of the religions of the world cannot be adduced as a proof that they have not been derived from a common source. The corruption and development, such as Müller describes in his *Hibbert Lectures*, may have been in a sense natural, the outgrowth of the particular tendencies and circumstances of each particular race; but no amount of investigation of such development can ever go to the length of disproving the hypothesis of a primeval revelation.

A similar comment may be made on Professor Briggs's remark (*Messianic Prophecy*, p. 4): "It was once the fashion to explain the good features of other religions as relics of the primitive divine revelations recorded in the Bible, or as derived in some mysterious way from the Hebrews. But this fashion has passed away with the unscientific age." Yet Professor Briggs himself believes in a primeval revelation; for (p. 71) he says: "Messianic prophecy begins with the dawn of human history." After the fall of man, he says (p. 73), "God appears in theophany as Judge and as Redeemer." If now there was really a primitive revelation, what has become of it? Considering the tendency of men to hand down important truths and beliefs, which is most "scientific," — to suppose that revelation to have been quite lost; or to have been propagated, diversified, and corrupted?

ever to solve. Philologists now generally reject, or even ridicule, the theory of a supernatural communication of language to the first man or men. But they are unable to agree among themselves in what other way language did first have its origin. The truth is, the problem relates to an altogether unique condition of things, for which there is now no analogy. Language is now a developed fact; and every new generation receives it from the preceding generation. There is no instance of the spontaneous invention of a new language on the part of infants who fail to be taught an already existent one. And when we transfer ourselves in imagination to the time when there was as yet no language in use, we are obliged to deal wholly in conjectures, if we attempt to determine by what process the first language came into being. It certainly cannot be proved that its origin was *not* supernatural. If the first man was, as he is assumed to have been by the scientists, a mere infant in knowledge and thought, then the analogy of present experience would favor the supposition that he received language as a communication from without. The capacity to speak must have been in him. He must have had sensations, perceptions, and thoughts which were capable of being expressed in language. He must, in short, have had the same fitness for being taught the use of language which infants now have. Since he was without any human companions who could teach him, the nearest possible approach to the present condition of things would have been a divine impartation of language.

But it is quite immaterial to our present point whether language was a supernatural gift or a natural growth. Let it be assumed that it was the latter. It is still not obvious wherein the point of Dr. Fairbairn's reasoning lies. If the language of the revelation was oral, he says, it was (unless specially created) no more primitive than the written. This assertion is simply unintelligible. Suppose writing to have been invented two thousand years after man had existed and used a spoken language. Suppose, further, an oral revelation to have been made as soon as man had mental capacity and language enough to comprehend it. What can be meant by the statement that such a revelation would not have been more primitive than the written

language? Both parts of Dr. Fairbairn's statement are palpably baseless. The supposed revelation would not require the creation of a language; and it would be more primitive than writing. Whatever the fact may be as to a primitive revelation, this argument certainly will hardly be sufficient to overthrow the hypothesis.¹

Having in this easy way despatched the so-called supernatural theory, together with the so-called natural theories (those which assume religion to have originated from dreams, delusions, etc.), Dr. Fairbairn proceeds to solve the problem by the "historical method." This consists in inferences drawn from a historical examination of Indo-European names of the Deity. The conclusion is that to our early ancestors the sky was a deity called Dyaus, or Deva. So much may be true enough. But when Dr. Fairbairn goes further, and undertakes to explain how men came to deify the heavens, he says that there were two objective and two subjective factors in the genesis of the idea of Deity. The objective were the heaven and its action relative to the earth. The subjective were conscience and imagination. Conscience pointed to a being to whom obligation was due, and imagination discovered that being in the "bright brooding Heaven." And so it is concluded that "the idea of God was thus given in the very same act as the idea of self; neither could be said to precede the other." And so this "historical method" ends with coming, after all, to the "natural" method. The historical part of the investigation only furnishes us some interesting facts concerning the names of the Deity, and makes it probable that the early Aryan religion was purer and more monotheistic than the later. But when the question is attacked, how men first came to the conception of the Deity, resort is had to pure conjecture and assumption.² The human conscience and imagination are alleged to be the determining forces which produced

¹ See Exkursus IV.

² If any confirmation of this were needed, it might be found in the fact that other men, pursuing the same course of investigation, come to an entirely different result. Thus Burnouf (*Science of Religions*, p. 243; in the French original p. 407) finds the origin of religion in the search after the causes of the phenomena of every-day life, and makes no account of morality.

the mighty conception. Here no historical or philological inquiry leads the way. The inquirer simply falls back on human nature as he finds it now, and *guesses* that the first thought of God must have come from the operation of conscience and imagination in men who had only their own souls, the brooding heavens, and the surrounding earth, from which to derive their conceptions. This conjecture may be, and doubtless is, much nearer the truth than the one which derives religious ideas from dreams or deceptions; but it is none the less a conjecture, having no necessary connection with the historical discussion, — indeed, having no special connection with that at all; for manifestly the conjecture must be as applicable to Shemitic as to Aryan races, though the philological investigation applies only to the latter. Moreover, Dr. Fairbairn reasons as if the Aryans were a strictly primitive race, and came to their religion absolutely without ancestral help. But surely it cannot be meant that the Aryan language was the language of the primeval man, and that we may infer from its features precisely how the first man got his religious notions. The Aryans, so far as we can trace them, had their ancestors, and those ancestors doubtless had a religion, and doubtless communicated their religion to their descendants. The main question, therefore, is hardly touched by any such historical and philological investigation. It may be said, indeed, that no one can prove the reality of a primeval revelation, since there are no historical documents that reach back far enough to establish such a theory. But equally true is it that no one can disprove the theory, — least of all by an argument that concerns only one branch of the human race and a period later than the origin of the race itself.

On any theory, the problem concerning the first origin of religious ideas is a peculiar one, materially different from the question how such ideas now originate or propagate themselves. Whether we regard man as developed out of bestial forms or as suddenly created with angelic capacities fresh from the hand of God; whether we think that all human acquirements were the result of a long process of experiment, or came directly by miraculous impartation, — make whatever suppositions we may, the one certain thing is that the original man, in respect to

intellectual, moral, and religious development, existed under unique conditions.¹ Present analogies cannot be applied to him. For the present fact is that all the culture of the new-born child is mediated by parents and elders. All knowledge of an abstract or scientific sort is communicated. Even the child's direct perception of the external world is confused and unintelligent, till it is directed and classified by those whom he lives with. Language is an existent and universal possession. The child learns it almost as soon as he can learn anything, but he learns it from others. It is the medium through which his teachers communicate knowledge to him, and by which he learns to express his own thoughts and feelings.

But all must have been radically different with the first man. Whatever theory of his origin one may adopt, it *must* belong to the theory that this man could not have got his training from human intelligent parents. It *must* be assumed that no hereditary influence could have made him naturally inclined to think about religious things. It *must*, in short, be assumed that what is now most influential and decisive in determining the first thoughts concerning God was then totally wanting. The first man, whether he is looked upon as semi-bestial or as angelic, as an infant or as an adult, had no human help, such as all human beings have now, in coming to his self-consciousness and to his religious ideas.

The absence of language as a means of communication and of self-culture in independent reflection, makes the condition of the first man radically peculiar. Let language have been acquired however it may, at any rate the first man, without language, stood in an altogether anomalous position. The most exact analogy would be that of an infant born now and somehow kept alive, but without any intercourse with other human beings. But now, whenever anything like this occurs, the person, instead of developing an independent culture, tends more and more to lose the traces of humanity entirely. And this is, after all, not a really analogous case; for on the one hand an infant now has at least certain hereditary gifts and tendencies

¹ See this point forcibly presented in the Duke of Argyll's *Unity of Nature*, pp. 523 *sqq*

which the first man cannot have had, while on the other hand the first man cannot have been a mere infant.

The evolutionist may seem to relieve the problem of some of its difficulties, when he assumes a gradual growth of animal intelligence in some one of the higher brute races, until at last by slow gradations articulate language took the place of inarticulate sounds, and step by step more general and abstract conceptions were developed, and finally the idea of God grew out of the superstitious fancies of fetichism, animism, etc. But though this theory makes the notion of a first man somewhat shadowy, inasmuch as it obliterates all sharp distinctions between brutes and men, and though a slow growth of language and of religious conceptions may not *a priori* be pronounced impossible,¹ yet even then we have to assume a condition of things for which there is no present analogy. The first thought of a God, at whatever point we may fix it, must have been the highest and entirely independent thought of the most advanced adult; and this is a vastly different thing from the thought of God communicated to the infant mind by elders who have generations of theists behind them from whom their belief has been received.

With the origin of the idea of God must have been associated words for the expression of it. And here arises a new anomaly. Now the words are already in existence, possessing a significance which long usage has stamped upon them. But then the words had to be invented. Whether simultaneously with every new conception, or closely following it, the language had to be created. By what law of association, by what peculiar impulse of the soul, we cannot tell. The present change and development of language always depends on the language already in existence. An absolutely new word cannot be originated; or if it can be, it can come into use only by mutual agreement on the part of those who can already communicate ideas by means of a common language. But when there was as yet no language, and an entirely new one was to be invented, the whole relation of things was radically different. It does not relieve us of the

¹ Yet the transition from speechlessness to speech is still acknowledged by evolutionists themselves to be an unsolved problem. *Vide* DuBois-Reymond, *Die sieben Welträthsel*, p. 83 (Leipzig, 1882).

anomaly to assume an extremely slow development of intelligence and language; the anomaly would rather be only intensified. For now the most marvellous fact in regard to language is not the slowness, but the rapidity, with which with his undeveloped faculties a child can learn a language. Even if Sir John Lubbock's prospective effort to educate dogs into men should be successful, the case would still not be analogous to the original assumed transformation of apes into men. For that original transformation is supposed to have come about of itself without any education from a higher source, whereas the poor dogs, though they have lived for centuries in close association with men, remain dogs still; and their transformation into men is looked for only as the result of a very specially diligent and patient training.

Take whatever view we may, then, there was something altogether unique in the mental history and experience of the being that could first properly be styled a man, when he first had what can properly be styled a conception of God.

But we are here more particularly concerned with the problem as it shapes itself to the mind of a strict theist. The atheistic evolutionist, whatever plausibility he may succeed in weaving around his hypothesis, can of course contribute nothing to the solution of the question, what relation the living God assumed towards the first being who was able to lift his thoughts upwards to his Maker. Theists, especially Christian theists, can hardly content themselves with the purely evolutionary view of the origin of man. Even though some concessions may be made as to man's physical structure; even though the extremest Darwinian theory of his physical connection with the lower animals should be adopted; still, whoever believes that man, as a religious being, holds vital relations to God, will find it difficult or impossible to believe that the human race, on its intellectual and spiritual side, came into existence by a gradual and imperceptible process,—the brute growing into a man, and theism being the slow development of blind instinctive cravings and superstitious conceits into a purer and loftier notion of a Divine Being for whose service he was made, while yet that same Divine Being let the process take its slow course, and never once manifested

himself to the struggling and groping heart, never interfered to help his creatures into clearer views, or to bring to bear upon their development the knowledge that he cherished towards them any conscious regard or paternal love. The influence of the current drift towards evolution may be strong; and many theists may naturally be inclined to concede as much as possible to the theory. But at some point they must break away from the all-embracing circle. The theory in its extreme form has no room for any special interposition. Mere scientific observation and inference cannot find room for any such disturbing or accelerating force from without. And shutting out divine interference at one point, it equally shuts it out in all. Supernatural revelation becomes an abnormality, or even an impossibility. Personal acquaintance with God, even if his existence is assumed, becomes also impossible. Men may speculate about God. They may perhaps be right in believing that some higher Power exists, distinct from the visible universe; but the speculation is only speculation, and can never amount to knowledge, even theoretical knowledge, still less to a practical and personal knowledge, of the Absolute One.

But a theist, especially a Christian theist, must approach the question about the origin of the theistic belief with a different conception of things. He cannot but hold that the creation of man was a marked event in the history of the universe. He cannot be content to assume that the human race was evolved by imperceptible growth from an unhuman state, and that all the intellectual and spiritual experiences of man are only animal instincts in a higher state of development. To him man must be a very distinctly defined being; and human history must have had a very definite beginning. To him, therefore, still more than to the atheistic evolutionist, the origin of the notion of a God must have been a unique thing, not to be explained by any present analogy. He must reject the theories which make religion the product of superstitious fears and delusions, not only because these presuppose that theism is without any solid basis, but because they are inadequate to account for the persistence of theistic beliefs. But, if he speculate at all, he must have some theory as to how the notion of a God origi-

nated. And he must also recognize, even more than the atheist, the essential uniqueness of the conditions under which the theistic idea first arose.

Let us now come back to the above-mentioned theory which, under the name of historic method, explains the beginning of theism by asserting that conscience and imagination led man to ascribe deity to the sky above him. The extreme evolutionist would at once say that we need first to define conscience and inquire concerning its origin. He would find it to be only the developed form of bestial instincts, — a development not yet finished; so that the voice of conscience is an ever-changing one, and never a mirror of any objective immutable truth. To him, therefore, conscience in the first man (even if he can determine what degree of animal development to dignify with the name of manhood) would be only another term for the mental fancies and illusions which his own theory posits as the source of the theistic conception. But Dr. Fairbairn, as a Christian theist, who finds in the action of conscience the source of theism, must assume a well-developed and distinctly defined conscience. He must attribute to the conscience of the aboriginal man a certain clearness and authority of utterance. He must have in mind a conscience essentially such as men have now; and he must have some theory as to its origin. Now, unless he explains it, as he hardly will, in the evolutionary way, he must assume either that the conscience, as a full-orbed faculty, was brought suddenly into being by a divine *fiat*, or else that it was divinely implanted as a germ, which was then gradually developed into a real conscience. But in either case we have an anomalous state of things. There is now no such thing ever known as a complete conscience coming suddenly into existence.

Conscience, as we know it, is always a product of training. The new-born child appears to be substantially as devoid of moral sense as the new-born lion. It is only by a gradual process that a well-defined faculty of moral judgment manifests itself. If, now, the new-created man was at the very outset possessed of a perfectly constituted conscience, it could only have been by virtue of an immediate creation and impartation. If

without any experience of the relations of man to man he was able nevertheless to understand the requirements of the moral law, such a power could have come from nothing less than a supernatural act. It is at the best hard to conceive such an impartation; but whoever can conceive it ought to find no greater difficulty in conceiving the first man as supernaturally instructed concerning the Divine Being.

But let us take the other part of the alternative, and suppose the first conscience to have been gradually developed out of a germinal one. We still find ourselves dealing with an entirely anomalous case. For the primeval man had no parental or other human instructors such as all children now have, and without whom the latent faculties of the child are never developed into distinct and normal activity. If the first man's conscience required external personal training to make it a normal conscience, then, since there was no human teacher, we must assume that God in some peculiar way manifested himself and acted the part of instructor. But this again introduces supernaturalism in its sharpest form. Dr. Fairbairn could of course not accept such a view; for it makes God reveal himself to man *before* the conscience is sufficiently developed to suggest the notion of a God, whereas his theory is that the notion can have come only as the suggestion of a developed conscience. How, then, does he conceive this primeval conscience to have got its development? We are unable to conjecture; but whatever his answer may be, the one certain thing is that the development could not have been like that of which we now have any knowledge. It is very certain, at all events, that the "historical method" of investigation is unable to disclose how the primeval conscience became developed. The problem is left untouched.

But however great may be the obscurity which rests upon the question, one thing, we repeat, is absolutely certain: The primeval man was in an exceptional state; the analogies of present life cannot be applied to him. He had no tradition, no instruction, from his ancestors. If, then, one is disposed to press present analogies in judging respecting the religion of the first man, one is led to favor, rather than to reject, the theory

of a primeval revelation. The revelation would have supplied to him what now is given by tradition. The force of tradition is now so great in determining men's religious opinions that some even question whether the present religious beliefs of mankind have any other foundation than a blind adoption of what has been held before. The closest possible analogy to the present condition of things would have been secured to the first man, if his religious conceptions had been first called forth by some external communication. And in his case this could have been nothing but a divine revelation. For him, so to speak, the supernatural was the only natural method.¹

One need, therefore, not be overawed by the allegation that it is "unphilosophical" to assume a primeval revelation. And when we are told that such an assumption is not only not proved, but capable of positive disproof, we can only say that the disproof is still to be discovered. The ostensible arguments against it consist in mere assertions, or else rest on radical misconceptions of what the theory opposed really is.

Thus, Dr. Fairbairn says that the theory of a primeval revelation as the source of the idea of God would imply "what Schelling happily termed 'an original atheism of consciousness.'"² Of course a theory of primeval revelation may be held in such a form as to assert or imply a total want of theistic sense in the original man. But probably the person is yet to be found who ever really entertained any such a notion as that man was first created with no tendency to believe in a God, and was afterwards forced into the belief by a supernatural revelation. And only such total want of *tendency* to theism can be properly called "atheism of consciousness." It would seem to be little less than absurd to suppose that God would make human beings with no constitutional inclination to believe in him, and then

¹ "If the law prevailing in the infancy of our race has been at all like the law prevailing in the infancy of the individual, then man's first beliefs were derived from Authority, and not from either reasoning or observation. I do not myself believe that in the morning of the world Theism arose as the result of philosophical speculations, or as the result of imagination personifying some abstract idea of the Unity of external Nature." — Duke of Argyll, *Unity of Nature*, p. 3.

² *Studies, etc.*, p. 22, quoting Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie*, p. 141.

undertake to supply that deficiency by means of a special outward communication. But what is the difficulty of supposing *both* that there is implanted the native inclination, and then that God gratified that inclination by an objective manifestation of himself? This would only be in accordance with the whole constitution of things in general. Men come into existence with faculties of perception fitting them to take cognizance of the material world. These faculties are meaningless and useless, unless there is an objective universe which can be perceived by the senses. The tendency, the ability, to perceive is first created, and then the object of perception is brought before us, and we perceive it. The child is created with a tendency to seek nourishment from the mother. There are the necessary faculties and organs, and there is the strong instinctive longing. But the organs and the longing do not constitute the knowledge of the maternal source of supply. The parent must be presented objectively in order that the instinctive tendencies may be transformed into positive cognition. Suppose, now, some one should object to the necessity of this palpable appearance of the mother, on the ground that the innate capacities and instincts of the child are sufficient to enable him to arrive at the knowledge of his parentage. Suppose he should say that the doctrine of the necessity of such a manifestation implies an "original motherlessness of consciousness" on the part of the child; what should we think of such a style of argumentation? Yet this is a precise parallel to the reasoning of those who find in the theory of a primeval revelation an implication that the primeval man was afflicted with an "original atheism of consciousness."

Analogy, we conclude, favors, rather than otherwise, the theory of a primeval revelation. It does so by suggesting that the parental and ancestral traditions which now form so large and essential a part in developing the theistic belief must originally, when there was no such instruction, have been replaced by a direct communication from God himself. This argument is, indeed, not logically demonstrative. It does not *necessarily* follow, because all men, since the first man, have received their first religious conceptions as a traditional impartation, that therefore the first man also received his from an outward person, — who,

in his case, could have been no other than God. It is *possible* to suppose that the first men, purely through the operation of their own minds, worked their way up to some kind of a theistic belief, and that then this belief was transmitted and gradually modified as the race increased in numbers. But in making such a supposition we are departing from all analogies; we are indulging in a pure hypothesis, for the truth of which not the first shred of positive proof can be adduced. This explanation of the origin of theism may call itself philosophical, but it can hardly be called satisfactory.

We are considering the problem now as it presents itself to those who believe in the existence of a personal God. Such cannot but ask themselves whether God *desires men to know him*. To ask the question is to answer it, if God is really regarded as personal, and man as made for a worthy purpose. That God should make men and implant in them aspirations after God and immortality, and not even *desire* that they should be able to get beyond vague longings and uncertain guesses into the peace of an assured personal knowledge of their Creator, — this is well-nigh inconceivable. But if we assume that God, having made men, must have desired to be known by them, the next question is, whether God must not at once have made himself known to men by some special manifestation of himself. This also seems almost self-evident. If desirous of being known by men in general, why not by the first men? If such a thing as a revelation was ever to be made at all, why should it not have been made then? If it was *possible* for such a revelation to be made, the *fact* of it would seem to follow of itself.

But the *impossibility* of a primeval revelation is just what is urged as an objection against the theory. Dr. Fairbairn's argument dwells on the difficulty involved in the want of a language. The argument from the inherent impossibility of a divine communication is still more sharply presented by Pfeleiderer,¹ who says: "How should primeval man, with mental faculties as yet entirely undeveloped, have been capable of grasping the difficult thought of the one infinite God and pure Spirit? . . . The acquisition of higher general ideas presupposes a no

¹ *Religionsphilosophie*, 2d ed., vol. ii. pp. 6, 7.

small degree of preparatory training. The attainment of spiritual conceptions, which in the education of our children is crowded into years, because they have before them the heritage of the past which has thought for them, — this could, in the case of the childhood of the race, be acquired only by a process of culture extending through hundreds and thousands of years. A ready-made communication of the knowledge of God by a primeval revelation breaks down, therefore, simply because primeval man was, at the outset, psychologically incapable of grasping such instruction."

This is sufficiently explicit, even if not very conclusive. The force of the argument depends on two assumptions, neither of which is proved. The one is that the primeval man was a mere child in intellectual power. The other is that the knowledge of God is real only when it amounts to a clear intellectual apprehension of him in his infinity. It is described as the acme of philosophic thought, and therefore as coming necessarily late in human development.

The first assumption, though a mere assumption, can yet not be disproved. But it is unnecessary to determine just what the intellectual capacities of the primeval man were. The argument breaks down chiefly because the other assumption is palpably erroneous. The knowledge of God which may be expected from a revelation is not primarily or chiefly a philosophical conception of him in his absoluteness and infinite perfections. Were this the case, it may be argued that he can never be known at all. At the best only the more intellectual and spiritual in any age of the world could truly know God even in a partial sense. The knowledge of God, however, which man chiefly needs to have is an ethical knowledge, — a knowledge of him as a real person, as a loving Father, and as a just Ruler, — a knowledge of him as a higher Being, holding control of human and earthly affairs, and ready to attend to human wants. Such a knowledge required no elaborate philosophical culture in the primeval man, any more than it requires the same now in the merest child, who, as soon as he begins to talk, gets some conception of God, though utterly incapable of grasping the generalizations of the philosopher. Let the primeval man

have been ever so simple and childlike ; no one can ever show any reason why he could not have understood something about a Divine Being, — enough to serve the purpose of a real knowledge. God is doubtless in some sense infinite ; but his deity does not consist merely in his infinity. And whatever the primeval man needed to know of God as a Ruler, a Friend, a Father, he certainly was capable of knowing. Indeed, it sounds little less than ridiculous to hear the primeval human race pictured as such a benighted, groping company of creatures, stumbling along through thousands of years, with no positive knowledge of that which it is of most concern to know — and that, simply because God *could not* be known till after these thousands of years of searching. And the strangeness of the theory comes out all the more strikingly, when we find that the original man is, after all, credited with the faculty of seeking and finding a superhuman power in the world.¹ Suppose, now, that the revelation did not attempt to go beyond what man himself was able to think or conjecture by himself ; suppose the revelation consisted only in a palpable self-manifestation which simply *confirmed*, as correct, the native longings and surmises of the human soul ; suppose, in short, that God revealed himself in order to transform speculation and desire into assured knowledge, and without attempting to present any higher and more difficult conception than human apprehension could grasp, — what then ? In so far as man's conjectures and premonitions were correct, they would be confirmed. Man would stand consciously over against a God whom before he had only felt after if haply he might find him. What, then, is the difficulty in supposing a revelation which attempted to give no more than man was able to receive ? The whole difficulty in the doctrine of a primeval revelation is an artificial one, coming from the gratuitous assumption that its only object could have been to impart a neatly scientific and philosophically perfect conception of God's essential nature and infinite perfections. There also underlies this objection the assumption that nothing could be imparted which was not already possessed. The revelation, it is said, could not have been apprehended till hundreds and thousands

¹ *Religionsphilosophie*, vol. ii. pp. 24 *sqq.*

of years had trained the human race to grasp the necessary generalizations. The inevitable inference is that no revelation, earlier or later, could really enlarge the extent of human knowledge. In short, the argument virtually bears equally against the possibility of any revelation.

And yet the very argument by which this conclusion is reached lays stress on the advantage which children now have in receiving from their elders the mature results of past thinking, so that they learn in a few years what it took primeval mankind centuries to learn. Surely, if the mere child now, with undeveloped powers, can grasp the notion of a God, as communicated by his parents, may not the aboriginal man, infantile though we may choose to conceive him, yet have been able to take in the notion of God as communicated by God himself?

A similar reflection forces itself upon us when we read the discourses of such men as Theodore Parker and F. W. Newman, wherein they set forth the doctrine that revelation is and can be nothing but the soul's instinctive apprehension of God. They recognize the fact, indeed, that pure monotheism has by no means been the universal religion of men. They cannot shut their eyes to the grossness of fetichism and many forms of polytheism. But, says Mr. Parker,¹ "each of these forms represented an idea of the popular consciousness, which passed for a truth, or it could not be embraced; for a great truth, or it would not prevail widely; yes, for all of truth the man could receive at the time he embraced it."

It is astonishing to see how serenely oblivious such writers seem to be of the plainest facts. They apparently conceive that each individual evolves his own religion and theology out of his own heart and brain, or that if one takes his religion from another, he is guilty of a grave offense. No revelation from without is admitted to be even possible. A "book-revelation" is especially denounced as a delusion or even as an absurdity. The argument is that whatever pretends to be a revelation must prove itself to be such; that the recipient must be competent to test the claims of the pretended revelation; but that the very fact that he is able to test and judge the worth of the

¹ *Discourse of Religion*, 4th ed., p. 102.

professed revelation shows that he must virtually already have the revelation within him.

The truth in the matter is very simple. Of course a revelation of divine things cannot be made to a stone, nor to a tree, nor to a beast. There must be a *capacity* to understand the things communicated, else there can be no communication. Mr. Parker himself¹ admits the power of one man to "waken the dormant powers" of another. What, then, are we to make of his declaration that the nations that have been sunk in the lowest forms of fetichism and polytheism have had all of truth that they could receive at the time? Take two tribes both of which are living in the practice of cannibalism and every beastly vice. The one is visited by missionaries, and after a few years is led to embrace a pure theism and a pure morality. The other meanwhile remains in its besotted condition. Will any one say that now in both cases the tribes have all the truth that they could receive? Is it not manifest that the difference between the two does not lie in any difference of capacity, but in the fact that in the one case the dormant powers have been awakened, and in the other not? In other words, the one has received a *human* communication which has been the means of transforming its conceptions and its practices. Cannot a *divine* communication do as much? How is it that a capacity to receive a revelation from man proves that one cannot come from God? The world is full of illustrations of the power of some men to communicate to others what without such communication they would never have thought or known. Nearly all knowledge is in this sense the result of revelation. The deists who undertake to convert men to deism hope and expect to awaken convictions and opinions which otherwise would not be cherished. As Mr. Rogers² has keenly shown, they practically hold that "that may be possible with man which is impossible with God."

A similar comment is suggested by Mr. Greg's proposition that the human mind cannot *receive* an idea which it could not *originate*; that is, could not originate "in the course of time and under favorable conditions." If an idea, he says, "from

¹ *Discourse of Religion*, 4th ed., p. 197.

² *Eclipse of Faith*, 10th ed., pp. 63 *sqq.*

its strangeness, its immensity, its want of harmony with the nature and existing furniture of the mind, could never have presented itself naturally, would not the same strangeness, the same vastness, the same incompatibility of essence, incapacitate the mind from receiving it, if presented supernaturally?"¹

This objection, though propounded as quite conclusive, rests on such a singular conception of the relation of things that it is even difficult to reply to it seriously. The author apparently thinks, in the first place, that revelation can have to do only with *ideas*; and in the second place, that these ideas must be so strange and so incongruous with nature and with man's mental constitution as to be intrinsically hard or impossible to receive. The reply is very obvious: (1) Even if it were true that revelation deals only with ideas, and were also true that what is revealed might in course of time have been originated by the human mind, it would not follow that these same ideas might not be communicated supernaturally, and thus become a possession of man vastly *sooner* than otherwise. Doubtless the human mind is capable of evolving the most intricate principles of geometry; but that fact does not prevent their being *communicated* to thousands who never *would* of themselves have come to any conception of them. But (2) revelation does not have to do only with ideas; it has to do with facts. Revelation, if it is anything, is chiefly a history, —it is God making himself known in events, not merely inspiring thoughts in the human mind. If, for example, the birth, life, deeds, and words of Jesus Christ were a divine revelation to man, they might be such, and present no idea which, by its strangeness or immensity or want of harmony with nature and with the human mind, should make it difficult or impossible for the mind to receive it. But would it follow that man in the course of time would *originate* the facts and truths of Christian history? But (3) even in so far as we confine our attention to ideas which man might and does originate, what we want to know is, what ideas are *true*. For example, men have had the most various conceptions of God, — all the way from the low conceptions of the fetich-worshiper to the most

¹ *Creed of Christendom*, 8th ed., vol. ii. pp. 172 sq.

abstract and shadowy conceptions of the pantheist or the agnostic. Now, assuming that none of these notions have come from revelation, we must still raise the question, Which of them is *correct*? Which corresponds to the *fact*? If a revelation can settle that question, it will do a glorious service; and no one can have any interest in arguing that any one or all of these notions of the Deity could not have been *originated* except by a supernatural revelation. Religion does not consist in airy speculations, without regard to the truthfulness of the speculations. It consists in serving the true God.

Pfleiderer has another objection against the theory of a primeval revelation. If actual, he says, it must have been one and self-consistent, presenting the absolute truth, so that, if the first family had it, there could have been no such endless number of mutually contradictory systems of religion in the world. This objection also, if valid, must of course be equally valid as against the assumption of *any* actual revelation whatever, since no alleged revelation has in fact, even when fixed in a written record, secured uniformity of opinion even within the circle directly affected by the revelation. The possibility of a modification or corruption of the revelation is surely too obvious to need demonstration. If this possibility is a reason why a primeval revelation would have been useless, then for the same reason, if not to the same degree, any later revelation would be made ineffectual. Pfleiderer says: "If God was able to communicate the true faith to mankind by means of a primeval revelation, must it not have been just as easy, and even easier, for him to make sure that this valuable knowledge of primitive man should not at once be lost?"¹ If it is easier to prevent a revelation from being corrupted or lost than it is to make one, and if, as we very well know, even the so-called revelation the record of which is most fully preserved is nevertheless subject to the grossest perversions, then the only conclusion must be that *no* revelation has really been made or can be made. And in the ordinary sense of revelation, this is no more than Pfleiderer himself would affirm.

¹ *Religionsphilosophie*, vol. ii. pp. 5, 6. So Zeller, *Ursprung und Wesen der Religion*, p. 7.

Still another objection, however, is urged by him. The theory of a primeval revelation, he says, contradicts the facts of history, inasmuch as the farther back we go, the cruder become the religious notions of men, whereas if the first man had an accurate revelation, the reverse would be the case. There would be much force in this objection, if the alleged fact were proved. But the more thorough investigation of religious history tends to show that the real fact is just the opposite of the alleged one.¹ It has been made evident that the earlier forms of the religions of India and of Egypt were purer than the later, so that the argument against a primeval revelation from this source is turned rather into an argument for it. When we consider how easily the external features of a religion are retained and emphasized, to the neglect or total loss of the inner substance; when we see how great superstitions and corruptions have crept into the Christian Church and still hold sway, in spite of the wide-spread circulation of the original Christian Scriptures,—we find no difficulty in believing that a primeval revelation may have suffered great perversions as it was handed down. But this does not prove it not to have been given, unless it proves that no revelation ever has been, or ever can be, given. All the difficulties found by the so-called philosophy of religion in the hypothesis of a primeval revelation grow out of assumptions which make all revelations (if we retain the name at all) purely natural processes. We have found no difficulties in the way of such a revelation which do not substantially lie against any supernatural revelation. The foregoing considerations, therefore, are fitted to meet, in part, the objections which are made against the claims of alleged particular historical revelations. But these require a separate and fuller treatment. And as Christianity makes the most decided and plausible claims to the character of a revealed religion, the general questions respecting revelation may be conveniently combined with the special questions that arise respecting the Christian revelation.

¹ Cf. Max Müller, *Hibbert Lectures*, 2d ed., p. 68; Renouf, *Hibbert Lectures*, 2d ed., p. 249; Duke of Argyll, *Unity of Nature*, pp. 542 sq. Burnouf, however (*Science of Religions*, p. 100), affirms the opposite.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION. — GENERAL FEATURES. — MIRACLES
DEFINED.

THE claims of Christianity to be regarded as a divine revelation may be considered with reference to the *contents* 1.
of the alleged revelation, or with reference to the *form* of it. 2.
That is, we may give prominent attention to the facts and truths which Christianity professes to make known, or, on the other hand, to the more external features which stamp it as a special revelation from God. The two methods of treatment cannot be absolutely detached from each other; but relatively they may be. And it is the second of the two that we propose to pursue in the following discussion.

These more external features which characterize the Christian revelation relate chiefly to three points: The limitation of the revelation to a particular *time*; the demand which it makes upon men's faith in particular *individuals*; the stress which it lays upon a particular mode of *outward authentication*. In each of these cases the peculiarity may be treated as an argument for, or as an objection against, the alleged revelation.

I. It is one feature of a revelation, in the ordinary sense of that word, that it must be limited to a particular time and place. It must be addressed to some particular person or persons, while men in general can only receive it mediately from the organs of the revelation.

Now, against this there arises the objection that, if a revelation is needed at all, it is needed for all, and that there would be an inexcusable partiality and inequality in singling out some particular persons, times, and places, as the ones to be favored with the communication. J. Stuart Mill puts this objection forcibly as follows: "There is one moral contradiction, inseparable from every form of Christianity, which no ingenuity can resolve and

no sophistry explain away. It is that so precious a gift, bestowed on a few, should have been withheld from the many; that countless millions of human beings should have been allowed to live and die, to sin and suffer, without the one thing needful, the divine remedy for sin and suffering which it would have cost the Divine Giver as little to have vouchsafed to all as to have bestowed by special grace upon a favored minority.”¹

Furthermore, the theory of special revelations is open to the objection, above suggested, that, in the process of transmission, they must become corrupted; and to the additional one, that the more remote the time of the revelation, the more uncertain become the evidences of the reality of it.

Finally, it is objected that no special historical revelation can be accepted as such, if it conflicts with the intuitions and conclusions of one's own reason; while if it merely agrees with these, it is superfluous. This is Lessing's "broad ditch," which with all his effort he was never able to get over, — "Accidental truths of history can never become the proof of necessary truths of reason."

It seems, therefore, plausible to hold that, if God really reveals himself at all, he must reveal himself to all men impartially, to each man individually, so that there need be no uncertainty as to the fact or the character of the revelation.

But if this is the alternative, then of course the conclusion must be that there never has been any true revelation at all, since nothing is more certain than that there has been the greatest diversity of religious beliefs in the world. Revelation has not put an end to doubt and anxious speculation; it has not made all men of one mind respecting God and spiritual things. Some men (for example, Theodore Parker) talk about "the absolute religion," as if amidst all the diversities of religious beliefs and practices there could be enucleated a common belief and a common religion. But it is manifest that there can be no agreement as to what the absolute religion is; each one will have his own definition of it. And in any case the term "reve-

¹ *Three Essays on Religion (Utility of Religion, p. 115)*. Cf. M. Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, p. 344.

lation " is not, and cannot be, applied to these varied theories as to what the absolute religion is.

The simple fact, then, is that there are no infallible intuitions, no "necessary truths of reason," which constitute, or take the place of, a revelation, and furnish to mankind one common and immutable system of religious truth. Whether the theist can or cannot satisfactorily explain to himself why there is no such direct and uniform revelation to every individual, the fact remains that there is none. And so the question, whether there may not have been a local, historic, special revelation, is really left untouched by the objection. If there *were* a universal and perpetual revelation which makes all special revelations superfluous, then doubtless belief in such special revelations would be irrational. But as the case actually is, there is no such objection in the way of special revelations.

As to the difficulty which is felt on account of the possibility of the corruption of a revelation through tradition, and on account of the uncertainty which lapse of time throws over the credentials of the mediators of the revelation, the reply is very near at hand: the historical method of communicating religious truth is simply in perfect accord with the method by which knowledge in general is communicated. What is generally known or believed is not what comes intuitively to each individual without outward intervention. On the contrary, even what seems to be most intuitive is in great part accepted first on the ground of testimony. The truths of natural science become the possession of the many only through the medium of faith in the word of teachers and elders. Not many can, and still fewer do, go directly to the sources of knowledge, and acquire immediate proof of the truth of the propositions communicated. The whole constitution of human society rests on this basis. If religious truth is liable to be perverted and corrupted through transmission, so likewise is every kind of truth. Whatever may be thought of it, however defective and loose such a system may seem to be, it is a simple fact that men are so constituted, and so related to each other, that what they know and think comes almost wholly as a communication from one to another, and is accepted as a simple matter of credible

testimony. Even what seems to be the product of individual and independent thinking is never purely such. Strict originality is nowhere to be found. Every mind bears the impress of the world of thought by which it is surrounded. And even those who break away from their environments, — the reformers who seem to spring by an innate impulse into some new or forgotten truth, — these are no exception to the rule. Luther did not become what he was by his own unaided intuitions. He was educated by Paul, and Augustine, and Huss, and Tauler, and Staupitz; and through them, in combination with his own experience and reflections and his general knowledge of Christian truth, he was trained for his peculiar work. Any one who should rise up with some new and hitherto unheard-of scheme of religious or scientific doctrines, claiming that it is the direct product of his intuitions, might indeed find some followers; but by the most he would be simply ridiculed, and by none more surely than by those who object to Christianity on the ground that it rests on history and not on the intuitions.

It is, therefore, a sophism to represent revelation as unsatisfactory and uncertain because it comes to us historically, and not by direct intuition. If this were the case, it would be proper and necessary to assume an attitude of permanent doubt as to all the science and history which comes to us as a communication from others. The doctrines of revelation, while they do not contradict any of our intuitions, do not profess to be the product of pure intuition. The vital things in the revelation are historic facts. And what the historic facts are alleged as revealing is not doctrines which lay claim to be necessary truths of reason, but truths concerning God which the reason itself would not have reached, or, at the most, would not have been able to attain as *certain* truths. As Professor Bruce¹ has well observed, the facts of Christianity have in reality done for a large part of the world precisely what Lessing said no historical fact could do for him: they have introduced a fundamental change in men's conceptions of God.

It is, then, no objection to the doctrine of revelation, that the revealed system has to be propagated by human tradition.

¹ *Chief End of Revelation*, p. 186.

From the nature of the case this *must* be the method, in spite of the fact that this method opens the door to numerous perversions and misunderstandings of the original revelation. This can be avoided only by such an absolutely compulsory inspiration, imparted to every man, as should instruct him infallibly how to understand the revelation. But if such an inspiration were feasible and actual, then it would practically supersede the revelation itself. The inspiration, not the original revelation, would, in fact, be the authoritative thing. A single special revelation, left to be transmitted from one generation to another, would be replaced by an innumerable number of special revelations, each independent of the other, but all perfectly agreeing with one another. But no one pretends that there is any such infallible and uniform revelation imparted to all individuals; so that the question whether there may not have been one or more special historical revelations is not touched by the objection. The objection can, at the best, have force only on the assumption that, if there were a God, he certainly would make himself infallibly known to every man, and that, since he is not thus made known, therefore there is no God at all. But we are not now dealing with atheists.

It remains possible to assume that, but for the blinding and corrupting influence of sin, men would have a direct and correct knowledge of God, so that special revelations would be needless. This is a very reasonable hypothesis, though no one can determine exactly what would have been the mode of man's cognition of God in that imaginary state of sinlessness. We may conceive that the knowledge would come as the result of an intellectual process of reflection, or as a sort of ethical intuition, or would be something analogous to our direct cognition of the external world. But whatever speculations one may indulge in respecting this matter, they do not help us materially in the solution of the question as to the present fact. Men are not sinless. They do cherish the most false and fantastic conceptions of God. Even with all their revelations, real or pretended, they are sadly deficient in moral and spiritual excellence. But even though sinfulness may make a

direct and full knowledge of God impossible, it may yet be possible for God to reveal himself in an exceptional and historical way.

But taking men as they are—a sinful race—it is by no means clear that it would be an advantage that the knowledge of God should be direct and complete. There are some considerations which make a more indirect method of communication seem preferable. An immediate presence of the Divine Being, realized by men constantly, would have, we must suppose, an overpowering effect on them. In so far as religious character is a matter of growth, it would seem to be desirable that a certain freedom should be accorded to the mind in its appropriation of religious truth and motive. An unavoidable, all-absorbing sense of the Divine Presence, involving, as it would, a constant consciousness of the uncompromising and inexorable demands of the divine holiness, would simply overwhelm one, and make a free development of character impossible. If the immediate and ever-pursuing sense of the presence of the infinitely Holy One should act compulsorily, the result would not be the production of a moral character, since this can come only as the product of free choice acting under motive. If such an immediate vision of God were possessed by sinful men, we can hardly conceive the consequence to be other than either a paralyzing terror or a hopeless hardening of heart. In order to the attainment of a holy character, there must be the possibility of doubt and of resistance. Men are on probation, and there must be room for faith and unconstrained choice, if there is to be developed a really moral personality.

But whatever might have been this imaginary relation of God to man, the fact is that such a direct intuition is wanting, and that men may disagree and doubt not only concerning the exact nature and character of God, but also concerning his existence. And we are not required to decide whether God might not and ought not to have proceeded otherwise in his dealings with men, but simply to find out what he has in fact done. If there is such a thing as a direct intuition of God accorded even to sinful men, very well, we have all the benefit of that, whether there has been a revelation or not. If there

has been a revelation, it is so much in addition to what we should have had without it.

This objection, therefore, against the hypothesis of special revelations, that revelation ought not to be confined to particular times, places, and persons, is an objection to the constitution of things. It does not invalidate any truth or advantage which there may have been in a special revelation, to say that there ought to have been no need of any special revelation at all.

II. Cognate with the foregoing general characteristic of revelation as being something special in time and place, is another, that revelation requires one to put peculiar confidence in certain *individuals*. Christianity in particular insists on making the personal authority of Jesus Christ a controlling thing in religious belief and life. To some this is a serious objection. It seems like putting a man in place of God. It requires one to pay allegiance to a fellow-man. It requires us to take on trust what he affirms respecting God and spiritual things, and to suppress our own opinions and judgments, however carefully and conscientiously they may have been formed, provided they disagree with his. Moreover, what he held and taught comes to us, after all, through the medium of still other men, so that, even if he were worthy of such implicit trust, we cannot be entirely certain as to what he was, or what he would have us believe or do.

This is an objection the force of which depends almost entirely on the mood of the individual. Whoever feels competent to form his own opinions concerning the universe and his relations to it; whoever feels no need of any spiritual illumination or deliverance, — such a one will always rebel against the requirement of submission to Jesus Christ as his Master and Redeemer. Historical evidence and arguments, however cogent, will not be conclusive to such a man.

But to others — and those the most truly rational — this peculiar feature of Christianity, that it requires faith in a historical person, is a recommendation rather than an objection. It is just in accordance with the order of things under which all men do and must live. All men have to be in-

fluenced in opinion and practice by trusted teachers. From the beginning of life till the end of it all men depend on others for the knowledge they get and the motives that inspire them. It cannot be otherwise. Life is too short, and human faculties are too feeble, to make it possible for us to get on otherwise. If we can receive information from one who can be *trusted*, that is the short way, and perfectly satisfactory way, of getting knowledge. But, the objection occurs, not all those who undertake to give instruction can be perfectly trusted. True; but none the less are we dependent on instructors. And the more incompetent they are to give absolutely trustworthy information and example, the more need would there seem to be of some authority eminent and trustworthy enough to command the common faith of men, and to unite them into a harmonious community.¹ The more evidence there is that some one man, like Jesus Christ, is really worthy to be trusted as a Revealer of divine truth, the more reason is there for rejoicing that such a source of light has been found, and for accepting his revelations.

Moreover, if Christ is regarded not merely as a revealer of truth, but as a Leader claiming personal obedience, trust, and affection, here too the natural and normal cravings of men are

¹ There will doubtless always be found those who will cherish the conceit that the ideal condition of mankind is that in which every one evolves independently his own opinions and beliefs. One of the latest of these oracular and amusing utterances is to be found in Mr. Royce's *Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, p. 323, where we are gravely instructed as follows: "Most of us get our prejudices wholly from the fashions of other men. This is cowardly. We are responsible for our own creed, and must make it by our own hard work." But the author himself, in his Preface, disclaims any strict originality. He has studied Kant, and Hume, and Schopenhauer, and Hegel, and Berkeley, and other philosophers; and from them he has derived his creed. But most men are unable to have recourse to such sources of "prejudice." They *cannot* spend so much time and thought as Mr. Royce has been able to spend in elaborating out of learned books their own belief. Are they to be called "cowardly" for not doing what they cannot do? But if the meaning is that every one, with or without time and native capacity, must judge for himself as to the correctness of all the information which he receives from his infancy up, then it can only be said that such a notion is simply ridiculous. The ability to judge presupposes instruction already given.

met. The declamations often uttered against authority, the demands made that every one shall be free to choose his own religion and work out his own ideals, — all this is simply irrational and impracticable. Men are fitted and obliged to live under authority. The child must be subject to the parent, the citizen to the state. He who submits most cheerfully to the necessary restraints of society shows the most manliness. Or if the laws of the household or of the state are sometimes unjust, the legitimate inference is, not that government as such is iniquitous, but that human government is imperfect. We are thereby led to look for a more worthy leader and ruler. What means the universal tendency to form parties founded on adherence to this or that eminent man? What is the secret of the hero-worship to which all are more or less inclined? It lies in the fitness and power of personal character to win enthusiasm and service; it lies in the natural craving for concrete, rather than abstract, models of worthy living. Virtue, to be understood, must be actual. Mere ideas of excellence, clothed in words ever so elegant or eloquent, are cold and powerless, compared with the incarnate virtues of a living man. There is no real virtue, except in virtuous beings. To be impressed by it, we need to see it, as much as, in order to be impressed by a beautiful landscape, we need to look at an actual one, not merely to imagine an ideal one. What men need is, not that this instinct should be crushed, but that it should be rightly directed. If this craving for a model of holy character can be met by presenting it with a worthy object; if all that can be conceived of purity, benevolence, loveliness, and grandeur in moral character can be found concentrated in an actual being; if this being is seen to be connected with us by ties akin to those which bind us to parents or friends; if, instead of following a vague, abstract, ideal, self-imposed rule of action, we can follow one which is presented in a concrete form in this personal embodiment of all that is excellent in thought and character; if those who are enslaved by sin can be made to feel the personal presence of one who, while sinless himself and irreconcilably hostile to all moral evil, can yet bring to the guilty but repentant soul the assurance of forgiveness and of help in the

conflict with temptation,— then we should have just what the instincts and exigencies of mankind seem most to require. And this is what Christianity presents, when it gives us Jesus Christ as a model, as an authority, and as a Saviour. In him the boasted “natural perception of truth” can detect that perfect revelation of divine truth, that manifestation of God himself, for which the race has been longing. In his life

“The law appears
Drawn out in living characters.”

The great power of Christianity consists in this very fact that it is a historical phenomenon, an objective reality which mere idealizing thought can neither produce nor nullify. The power of it in short is, and always will be, found in the fact that it is an *authority*, and that its authority is invested in a *person*.

If it is still objected that it does not become a man to commit himself implicitly to a mere fellow-man and to follow his direction, the answer is obvious. It is essentially involved in the Christian conception of Jesus Christ, that he is not a mere man, possessing intrinsically no higher dignity and authority than any other man, but that he is a unique man, peculiarly linked with God; that he has a peculiar nature as well as a peculiar commission; that he is not only a man, but at the same time more than man, possessing superhuman and supernatural endowments, and therefore entitled to claim peculiar allegiance.

But this leads to the consideration of another feature of the Christian religion, often adduced as a weakness, though really an indispensable condition of the validity of its claims; namely,—

III. It involves the assumption of a supernatural agency.

Revelation, in its specific sense, denotes a self-manifestation of God, made at some particular time and through the agency of particular individuals. Such a revelation, being limited, historic, and local, must have features which mark it as peculiar and certify it as genuine. In so far as the self-revelation of God is a universal and perpetual one, it is made through the ordinary and natural channels. Special revelations must be such as are not made in this usual and natural way; in other words, they must be supernatural. In order to be recognized as

exceptional and obvious expressions of the divine will, they must be attested by extraordinary, miraculous signs.

Miracles have generally been regarded not only as accompanying facts of a divine revelation, but as proofs of the reality of the revelation. In recent times, however, it sometimes almost seems as if the whole question of miracles had undergone a radical revolution. Not only is the fact of their real occurrence contested, but it is contended that in any case they could serve no useful purpose. And Christian apologists, instead of treating miracles as an effective weapon to be used against the enemy, not unfrequently appear to regard them rather as weak fortresses undergoing attack and in imminent danger of being captured. But while it may be true that the older apologists have often misconceived the true nature and meaning of miracles, and while there is need of careful definition, the force of the argument remains essentially what it always has been.

In defining a miracle we need to guard against overstatement on the one hand, and understatement on the other. In general, miracles are to be defined as events produced by special, extraordinary, divine agency, as distinguished from the ordinary agencies of inanimate and animate nature.

1. It is an overstatement, when a miracle is spoken of as a violation, or suspension, or transgression, of the laws or forces of nature. Many theologians have been guilty of this overstatement, though it is not true that this is the general conception which has prevailed, and certainly not the one now most commonly propounded by Christian apologists. And many who use these terms in their definition of a miracle do not mean by them what unbelievers in miracles find in them. Thus, it is certainly not meant that in working a miracle God comes, as it were, into collision with himself, transgressing his own laws, or attempting to better what is already "very good." It is not meant that "the same God who is accustomed to work through the orderly arrangement of the world" is in miraculous events "disturbing and upsetting this orderly arrangement."¹ It is

¹ M. J. Savage, *Belief in God*, p. 90. When Professor Park (in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*, American ed. art. *Miracles*) uses the term "violation" in his definition, he so explains it as nearly to agree with those who

not meant that the general system of natural forces is suspended, or even that any one of these forces is temporarily abrogated. But still the expression is infelicitous. Even in the mildest sense it suggests a disturbance of the regular course of things such as there is no ground for assuming. All the agencies of nature are divine agencies. They produce their effects in an orderly and, to a great extent, calculable way. There is no necessity for supposing that they are ever suspended. A *general* suspension of any force, such as gravitation, would work general chaos and ruin. The ordinary effect of gravitation may sometimes be counteracted by some other force, as when a piece of iron is drawn up and held by a magnet. If now such an effect were produced by divine intervention, but not through the ordinary interaction of physical forces, the effect would be a miracle. But no law is violated any more than when such a counteraction is produced by the normal operation of natural forces.

Skeptics are only too eager to adopt this overstatement in the definition of miracles. Even Hume does so, although his philosophy makes the expression "violation" practically meaningless. For he makes the notion of causality to be nothing but the consequence of an experience of the repetition of one object or event following another.¹ But if that is all there is in it; if there is nothing in the nature of any force causing it to produce a certain effect; that is, if there is no inherent necessary connection between the antecedent and consequent, — then an

repudiate this term. Thus under "B. 6" he gives the following definition of a miracle: "A work wrought by God interposing and producing what otherwise the laws of nature *must* (not merely *would*) have prevented, or preventing (Dan. iii. 27) what otherwise the laws of nature *must* (not merely *would*) have produced." This practically agrees with the exposition of Dr. W. M. Taylor (*The Gospel Miracles*, p. 11), who objects to the word "violation," and defines a miracle as simply the "introduction and operation of a new cause." Mill (*Logic*, Book III. ch. xxv. § 2) in like manner defines a miracle as "a new effect supposed to be produced by the introduction of a new cause." Similarly J. H. Newman, *Two Essays on Miracles*, 2d ed. 1870, p. 4; Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural*, p. 338; Warington, *Can we believe in Miracles?* ch. iii.; Principal Cairns, *Christianity and Miracles*, p. 4 (*Present Day Tracts*, vol. i.).

¹ *Essays*, vol. ii. p. 63, Green and Grose's edition.

exception to the ordinary sequence is not intrinsically incredible. The general testimony to the effect that certain antecedents have been followed by certain consequents simply shows, on this principle, that this is in fact the usual order; but it is intrinsically just as credible that a different sequence should take place. All that is needed is trustworthy testimony to the exceptional occurrence. Such testimony, on Hume's principle, would not be a contradiction of the ordinary experience, although Hume calls it such. The fact that a hundred men have testified to seeing A follow B furnishes, on his principle, no reason for expecting that the hundred and first man will not testify that *on a different occasion* he saw B follow A. Each sequence is a fact by itself — an ultimate fact — believed in simply because experienced or attested; but there being no ground for supposing that there is any intrinsic and necessary connection between the antecedent and consequent, an event deviating from the perceived order is just as much to be believed, when experienced or attested, as an event which conforms to it. Moreover a miracle, on this view of the case, cannot be distinguished from any unusual event.

Hume's argument, therefore, would have been stronger, if he had held to the existence of natural forces operating by an inherent necessity, — the doctrine which now commonly obtains among scientists. To them the notion of a *violation* of natural law has a genuine meaning such as it could not have had to Hume. An allegation that an established natural force has ever been suspended in its operation has to such men an intrinsic incredibility, because it contradicts their very notion of what a natural force is, namely, a force operating uniformly and incessantly. The weight of a uniform experience and testimony is supposed by them to have proved more than the mere individual facts of the experience, namely, the fact that there are material forces operating according to an inward necessity, and therefore operating in a perfectly methodical manner. Accordingly, we find now the author of *Supernatural Religion*, before he takes up and defends Hume's argument, combating Dr. Mozley, who had adopted substantially Hume's doctrine of causation, and vigorously contending that "an order of nature

is at once necessary and fatal to miracles.”¹ With this anonymous author nature is a real thing, having a “constitution” and “laws.”² This is to him the certain thing. Whether there is a personal God or not, he does not profess to know. He appears to doubt it, and demands, at any rate, a demonstration of the tenet before he can even entertain the thought of a miracle.³

But atheists or agnostics, so long as they remain such consistently, can never be made to believe in miracles. It is more important to avoid exaggeration in the conception of miracles, when dealing with professed theists who are so convinced of the inviolability of law, as the eternal expression of the divine will, that they regard it as impossible to prove the reality of any event which violates those laws. Thus, Weisse⁴ argues that, even in witnessing or hearing about miracles, we depend on the validity and uniformity of natural laws. We can trust the testimony of eye and ear only in so far as they follow the laws of sight and sound. It is, therefore, he says, absurd to make our faculties, whose trustworthiness depends on the inviolability of natural law, themselves accept an allegation which implies the assumption that natural law in other cases has been violated. Consequently, even if we do not see through the process, and are not able to trace the operation of natural forces, we yet assume that they have operated.

This is a more subtle objection to miracles than Hume's. But its force lies in the tacit assumption that miracles, if occurring, would be *violations* of natural law. And Rothe adopts the true and only valid line of defense, when he contends that miracles are *not* violations of natural law, for the simple reason that the efficient force in the working of miracles is entirely

¹ Vol. i. p. 60. Canon Mozley, by his definition of miracles as “contradictions” or “suspensions” of physical law (*Bampton Lectures*, pp. 19, 128, ed. 6), and by his adoption of Hume's doctrine of causation, exposed himself to some of the severe strictures which he received in *Supernatural Religion*.

² *Ibid.*, p. 49. For a criticism of the author's use of Hume and Mill, cf. T. R. Birks, *Supernatural Revelation*, ch. xvii.

³ See Exkursus V.

⁴ *Philosophische Dogmatik*, vol. i. pp. 96, 100, 229. Cf. Rothe, *Zur Dogmatik*, p. 88, who replies to him.

independent of natural law. It is not a natural force reversed in its operations, but another, higher, supernatural, force performing an *effect* which is perceptible through the natural use of the senses. Whether or when any force is supernatural rather than natural, one must decide, not by his senses, but by his judgment. The tricks of the juggler, though apparently contrary to all natural laws, are yet assumed to be, though in an unknown way, conformable to them. These displays of skill produce results as startling and apparently as miraculous as those which are regarded as really miraculous. By what right do we call the one miraculous, and the other not? The juggler, indeed, does not pretend to be working a miracle; but may not the professed miracle-worker be after all only a juggler, though not so honest as he? In any case, does it not depend on the mind of the observer whether the act or phenomenon is regarded as miraculous or not? To this it must certainly be answered, Yes. In reply to Weisse, who had adopted as his own the language, "I would not believe my eyes, if I should see a supernatural miracle take place before them," Rothe pertinently observes, "The *causal* connections and relations of this visible fact no one is ever able to see anything of, in heaven or on earth; but that they are supernatural, that is, that the fact is a miracle, is simply *concluded*; and the experience of the fact is, in this conclusion, one of the premises which require it."¹ In other words, a phenomenon is regarded as a miracle or not, according as the direct unseen *cause* is assumed to be supernatural or not. Whether it is supernatural, or only a rare or mysterious action of natural forces, must be *inferred*, as one best can infer, from the circumstances. In either case, an adequate cause is assumed: it may be a natural cause; it may be a divine agency, acting aside from natural laws in an exceptional way. Whether one believes the latter to be the fact, depends, first, on whether he believes in a God at all, and next, on whether he is convinced that in this particular instance there is sufficient reason for assuming a special divine intervention. There is no violation of law in one's seeing the objective phenomenon; the only question is,

¹ *Zur Dogmatik*, p. 92.

whether the *cause* of the phenomenon is natural or not. In a given case, therefore, for example, an apparent multiplication of loaves, making what would be enough for only a few suffice for thousands, whoever sees the appearance must judge for himself whether the extraordinary supply has come in some natural, though unknown, way, or whether a supernatural power has directly furnished the supply. In such a case, the judgment must depend chiefly on the consideration, what the character and professions of the principal visible agent are; whether he professes to have wrought a miracle or not; and, if he does, whether he is one who could be supposed to deceive intentionally, or to be easily deceived himself; also on the consideration, whether the person performing the deed claims to be, and probably is, divinely commissioned to work miracles.

The vexed question, what is to be understood by natural forces and laws,¹ does not affect the decision of the problem before us. Whether all natural phenomena be regarded as the immediate product of divine agency, or as caused by the operation of natural forces acting in a uniform and regular way,—in either case, a miracle is an exception to the ordinary course of events, and an exception attributable to a special divine or supernatural intervention. It is sometimes said² that the ancient Jews could have had no well-defined conception of a miracle, since to them everything was a direct product of divine power, and a miraculous event could have been to them, at the most, nothing but an unusual or startling event; whereas modern science has now taught us to regard natural forces as the immediate, if not the sole, cause of the phenomena which we observe. These forces are now conceived as working uniformly and universally. A merely novel or startling event is assumed to be just as natural as any other. The investigation of such events always tends to show their connection with the established forces of nature. A miracle,

¹ The proper distinction between these two terms, often used interchangeably, is well given by Dr. W. M. Taylor (*Gospel Miracles*, pp. 14, 15), “Force is the energy which produces the effects; but law is the observed manner in which force works in the production of these effects.”

² *E. g.*, by Ritschl, *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*, 1861, p. 440.

therefore, now appears to be more difficult to establish than at a time when no scientific conception of natural law existed, and when anything and everything might be regarded as a direct and special manifestation of the divine power and will.

It is certainly true that the question of miracles has in this way come to have a somewhat different aspect from what it once had. But the difference can never radically alter the problem. The advance of science and the prevalence of the doctrine that secondary causes are everywhere at work, and at work in a uniform way, — this may diminish the number of events which are to be classed among the miraculous; but it does not do away with the notion of the miraculous. On the contrary, the more sharply one may define and emphasize the operation of natural forces as the ordinary cause of visible phenomena, the more definite and clear becomes the conception of a miracle. So long as God is conceived as directly doing everything, a miracle could at the best be to men's minds only some *unusual* display of divine power; there could be no sharp line of demarkation drawn between the miraculous and the non-miraculous. Now, however, a miraculous event must be regarded as caused by an altogether special intervention of God, over and above the ordinary operation of his natural forces. But the practical problem of miracles remains essentially the same that it always was. The ancient Jews, though they may have had no theory of natural force and natural law, like that of modern times, yet certainly had a conception of the regularity of ordinary events. They knew what to expect when they awoke from day to day. They expected to see the sun rise regularly, and to see the seed sprout which they put into the ground. God was to them a God of order. But if any unexpected and wonderful thing occurred, and especially if it occurred in connection with a professed communication from God, — this was to them a miracle, an exceptional mode of working on the part of God, designed to call special attention to the divine communication. And this is essentially the present conception of miracles. To use the words of Prebendary Row,¹ the idea of a miracle "postu-

¹ *The Supernatural in the New Testament*, p. 127.

lates the presence of a force or forces which are adequate to counteract the action of those already in existence and to produce the adequate result." In other words, a miracle is a new and supernatural agency inserted into the complex of forces ordinarily in operation, just as a man, by the exercise of his volition and physical power, diverts the forces of nature from their ordinary course of working.

2. On the other hand, however, we need to guard against understatements in the definition of miracles.

Respect for the sovereignty of law need not carry us so far as to seek to *explain* miracles in respect to the mode of their occurrence, and to show their essential conformity to, or dependence on, natural law. Some Christian writers weaken rather than strengthen the argument from miracles by their dread of anything "magical" in them. Thus the miracle at Cana has been explained as a sort of *acceleration* of the natural process by which the moisture of the earth and air are transformed into the juice of the grape, and this again into fermented wine. Such speculations are idle, and really explain nothing.¹ *Such* an acceleration of natural agencies would be in any case equivalent to the application of a *special* force

¹ Cf. Westcott, *Gospel of the Resurrection*, p. 37. Olshausen, who propounds this view, says indeed that by it "the miracle is neither removed, nor explained naturally; the essence of the miracle consists in divinely effecting the acceleration of the natural process" (*Comm.* on John ii. 7-10). This being so, it is not easy to see what is gained by the hypothesis at all, especially as it is entirely without foundation, if not even without any clear meaning. If the making of the wine were an accelerated process of nature, then since the *natural* process requires a grape-vine, a growth of grape-clusters, the operation of sun and soil on the vine, etc., an acceleration of *this* process would be impossible without all these elements. It is indeed conceivable that all this process could be condensed into a few minutes; but it is very certain that this was not the case; and since it was not the case, it is impossible to see how the miracle can properly be called an acceleration of the natural process, whatever may be the hypothesis which one chooses to adopt concerning it. It may be imagined, for example, that the elements of which wine consists, being in existence in the soil and in the atmosphere, might have been suddenly and miraculously brought into the water, and so there was no outright creation of anything. But this would not have been the *natural* process; and if anything else is meant, probably no one, not even the propounder of the hypothesis, could tell what the meaning is.

which is distinct from any natural force; and so the miracle is in no wise made intelligible by the hypothesis.

Still less satisfactory is the theory which tries to mitigate the difficulty of believing in this miracle by transferring the marvel from the physical to the mental world. It has been suggested that the water found in the water-pots continued to be water, but through the wonderful influence of Jesus' preaching was made to *taste* as if it were wine. And the example of mesmerizers who are able to delude their subjects in a similar manner is adduced as a forcible illustration of the great probability of this conception of the case!¹ It is difficult to treat

¹ This is substantially the view of J. P. Lange (*Leben Jesu*, vol. ii. p. 308, English edition, vol. ii. p. 137), and of Beyschlag (*Leben Jesu*, vol. i. pp. 307-309), following the lead of Neander (*Leben Jesu*, p. 272. The English edition, p. 176, Bohn's *Standard Library*, makes Neander contradict himself). Matthew Arnold's comment on this explanation (*God and the Bible*, Popular edition, pp. 22-23) is well deserved: "This has all the difficulties of the miracle, and only gets rid of the poetry. It is as if we were startled by the extravagance of supposing Cinderella's fairy godmother to have actually changed the pumpkin into a coach and six, but should suggest that she did really change it into a one-horse cab."

Rev. H. R. Haweis, in his *Picture of Jesus*, pp. 54 *sqq.*, thinks it "trivial and dishonoring to Christ" to suppose him to have used any such occult power. His own explanation (called by him a "natural explanation") is that Jesus and his attendants brought not only wine enough for their own use, "according to custom" (how did Mr. Haweis find out about any such custom?), but anticipating the probable exhaustion of the supply (why should they?) brought more than they needed (*i. e.*, about five hundred quarts!) in order to be ready for the emergency. But not wishing to "do a kindness to get praised by others," Jesus told his disciples to leave the wine *outside*, so that, when needed, the wine could be "served up out of the host's own pots," and thus prevent the host's knowing that the supply had failed. For this reason also the rumor of something miraculous might have been started. Of course the command, "Fill the water-pots with water," has to be amended by striking out the last two words. Of course also Jesus, according to this "natural explanation," practised deception on the people at the feast. But this seems to Mr. Haweis a small offense compared with what it would have been to "wound the host's feelings" by letting him know that the wine had run short. It is very kind in the author of this remarkable hypothesis to tell his readers, both at the beginning and at the end of his exposition of it, that he does not ask any one to accept it. Most persons will probably avail themselves thankfully of this kind indulgence.

such a notion seriously. If the analogy of mesmeric influence means anything, it must mean that the supposed miracle was after all no miracle. If this is not meant, then we must suppose that a real miracle was wrought, only that it was wrought on the minds of the company, not on the water. But this does not relieve us of the "magic" which is so much dreaded, and it does burden us with the assumption that Jesus was guilty of a stupendous deception.¹

Others, while refraining from the attempt to explain the *modus operandi* of particular miracles, seek to propitiate the prejudice against miracles by laying down the general proposition that miracles, so far from being violations of natural laws, can be wrought only with the co-operation of the forces of nature. Thus Professor Ladd, whose general view of miracles we can assent to, seems to be here needlessly cautious. He criticises Rothe as being unwarrantably unguarded in saying that nature has nothing to do with the effect produced in the case of all proper miracles, and affirms, on the contrary, that "no event in history can even be conceived of without the co-operation of all the preceding forces and laws of the physical universe." "Miracles," he says again, "must be conditioned upon the existing course of nature."² These are statements which need qualification, or at least explanation, before they can be assented to. When, for example, it is said³ respecting the wine made at Cana that, "even if we suppose its elements to have been wholly new creations, they were conditioned upon preceding and existing laws and forces of nature," what is meant? If it is only meant that the wine made by Jesus was composed of the same elements as other wine, the statement affirms what is so self-evident that it hardly needs to be made at all. That would be only affirming that the wine made was

¹ This is virtually admitted by Beyschlag, who says (*Leben Jesu*, vol. i. p. 310): "That the Evangelist did not see through this psychical miracle, but interpreted it as a physical one, a miracle of transubstantiation, will be urged by no intelligent man [!] against this view, which in fact resolves all difficulties, and even permits us to assume a dream-like unconsciousness on the part of the company concerning the occurrence."

² *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 296.

³ *Ibid.*

real wine, and not, say, water somehow made to taste like wine. But we are reminded¹ that, according to the narrative itself (John ii. 9) "the water was, so to speak, the physical basis of the miraculous wine." But how does this help the matter? Water is indeed a large part of wine; but that which makes it specifically *different* from water is *not* water; and the statement that water was the physical basis of the wine throws no light on the question, how these additional, wine-producing elements got into the water, or in what sense the water itself was changed into wine. The statement seems to be intended as an intimation that there was no creative act in the case; but what it can mean beyond this it is difficult to conceive. When, however, it is said that the miracle, even though one of outright creation, cannot "even be conceived of without the co-operation of all the preceding forces and laws of the physical universe," we must say that it would be more nearly correct to affirm just the opposite, namely, that such a miracle cannot be conceived as wrought *with* the co-operation of those forces. To affirm such a co-operation is to affirm that the forces of nature *operate with* the miracle-worker in producing the miracle. The fact, however, manifestly is that, in so far as physical forces are operative in the case, they do not help to produce the miracle, but rather work against it. In so far as the act is miraculous, natural forces cannot be said to tend to produce it, for that would be equivalent to saying that it is not miraculous. Of course, the *product* of the miracle becomes amenable to natural law. The wine at Cana, whether an outright creation, or otherwise miraculously produced, must of course, after it was made, have operated like other wine. It adjusted itself to the natural course of things. And any such miraculous *effect* must be conceived as subjected to the ordinary laws of nature. But it does not follow that every miraculous *cause* must be conditioned on natural forces. It is difficult to see what fair exception can be taken to Rothe's proposition,²

¹ *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 296.

² *Zur Dogmatik*, p. 102. And with this Köstlin entirely agrees (*Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*, 1864, p. 258): "God who, being a personal spirit, is self-determining, whose power does not discharge itself, as it were, in an invol-

“In its genesis *this* miracle [the kind strictly so called] does not touch the realm of natural laws and their jurisdiction at all; but as soon as it is once performed by God’s absolute act, it too is at once an organic part of ‘nature’ and amenable to its law.” Professor Ladd says,¹ “To maintain that the miracle is accomplished in a wholly supernatural fashion, and without the co-operation of second causes, is to separate it from all human experience.” But every miracle must, in a certain sense, be separated from all human experience, else it would not be a miracle. The *effect* of the miraculous agency must, it is true, be something palpable, and in that sense a part of human experience. But that which is distinctively miraculous in a miracle is not the effect, but the *cause*. The bread given to the multitude on Lake Tiberias was doubtless nothing wonderful; it was simply bread. The miracle was in the production of it. And to say that the multiplication of the loaves was something separated from all human experience, that is, something utterly unlike ordinary human experience, is simply to say that it *was* a miracle. With Rothe we insist that a miracle is no violation of the laws of nature for the very reason that it has nothing to do with them, so far as its *causation* is concerned. It may have to do with them, and generally speaking must have to do with them, in the sense that nature is the field in which the miraculous agency operates, and that therefore the existing forces of nature must be recognized and dealt with. Those forces may perhaps in the miraculous agency be used, may be diverted into a channel where of themselves they would never operate. In such a case, however, the *miraculous* agency is not the natural force, but the supernatural force, — something above the natural force, not conditioned upon it, but rather the power which originally *conditioned* it. But we have no right to untary impulse, and who in his love himself voluntarily created the finite world, can and will in like manner, whenever he directly intervenes in it, so limit his power, in itself unlimited, that it shall not undo the finite world, but rather only introduce into it a product which then itself belongs entirely to the complex of the finite world.” So Christlieb (*Modern Doubt*, etc., p. 307) : “The laws of nature are in no way suspended thereby [by miracles]; but . . . the products of the miracle . . . take their place in the ordinary course of nature.”

¹ *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 296.

affirm that in miracles natural forces are always or generally used at all. In miraculous healing, for example, where we might be most inclined to look for the operation of natural processes, under the direction of a superior will, it is impossible to determine how far, or whether at all, the ordinary forces of nature operated in effecting the cure. Still less have we any ground for assuming that such miracles as the raising of the dead or the feeding of the multitude were wrought by making use of forces of nature.¹ If those forces of nature operated in these cases *in a natural way*, or only as mere human agency could direct them, then the acts in question *were not miracles*. And the only alternative is to assume that the effects were not produced by natural forces operating in a natural way. But in this case there are two possibilities: Either the effects were produced by natural forces operating in a non-natural (supernatural) way, or they were produced by a supernatural force distinct from natural forces. But a natural force can be made to act in a non-natural way only by a supernatural power, so that these two possibilities are practically identical. The *distinctive* thing in the miraculous deed is the exercise of the *supernatural power*. Whether that power uses natural forces as the *means* of effecting the miraculous result, or effects the result *directly*, without the use of natural forces, is quite immaterial.²

¹ Mr. Warrington (*Can we believe in Miracles?* pp. 117 *sq.*) in arguing the point that miracles are not violations of natural law, suggests concerning this miracle that, as the essential constituents of bread and fish are derived from air and moisture, the *material* of the miraculous supply may have been derived from the natural source; only "the manner and means of production is vitally different." But, he says, we cannot say that any force was acting in opposition to its natural laws. "On the contrary, we simply do not know what forces were at work; and to talk of any of their laws being violated is simply impossible." This hypothesis may seem akin to the acceleration theory of Olshausen, but is essentially different. It does not make the *process* of production an acceleration of the natural process, but quite the contrary. But it would be equally true that no natural law is violated, if, instead of miraculously putting together materials derived from earth and air and so forming bread and fish, Jesus had *created* the material. We do not affirm that this was the case; we only insist that in either case no law of nature is violated, because in either case the efficient cause is something distinct from the forces of nature.

² "The essence of a miracle consists in the immediate action of a rational

There is, therefore, no warrant for laying down the proposition that a miracle cannot be performed without the co-operation of second causes. Indeed such a proposition, taken in any strict sense, is quite untenable, if we retain any faith in miracles at all, unless we resort to the theory of an outright "violation" of natural laws, against which this very mode of conception is directed. For if the natural causes "co-operate" to produce a miracle, they must do so either by operating in the natural and ordinary way, — in which case there is no miracle, so far as this operation is concerned; or else they must operate in a manner contrary to the natural and ordinary one, — in which case there would be a *violation* of natural law in the strictest sense of that term. Absolutely nothing is gained by any such attempt to connect miracles with natural forces. It is impossible to specify what second causes were used, for example, in the multiplication of the loaves. All that could be known was that the bread made its appearance where it could not be naturally looked for. Where it came from, how it was produced, could of course not be a matter of perception. It was simply *inferred* that in some supernatural way Jesus had produced the supply. To the spectators and beneficiaries of the miracle it was quite immaterial whether Jesus accomplished the result by some mysterious manipulation of natural forces and substances, or by an immediate exercise of supernatural force. It is impossible to understand how a co-operation of second causes was necessary, as Professor Ladd asserts,¹ in order that miracles may render service to faith and realize their final purpose. It is hard to see why any believer in real miracles should not assent to Rothe's language when he says:² "It has always seemed strange to me when I have seen ex-

free will in nature, directing its physical agencies to the effecting of results which, without this supernatural direction, they would not have effected." — Prof. S. Harris, *The Self-revelation of God*, p. 478. But would the author limit his definition to that supernatural action which works on nature and directs physical agencies? It *may* be, indeed, that no other miracles have been performed; but if an absolutely new substance should be *created* by divine power, would not that be a miracle?

¹ *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 296.

² *Zur Dogmatik*, p. 101.

tors who believed in a revelation, and were avowed defenders of the Biblical miracles, yet in some sort troubled by such miracles as that at the marriage in Cana, and the miracle of the loaves (the very ones which are especially well attested), and troubled for the reason that in the case of these one cannot picture the process to the mind. I do not understand the difficulty; for that this cannot be done lies expressly in the very notion of miracles, whenever, as here, they are taken in all their strictness." (See Exeurgus VI. in the Appendix.)

The preceding observations indicate what should be said of another mode of conceiving miracles, which is sometimes resorted to in order to remove the objection that God would not interfere with the regular operation of his own laws. It is that miracles are the product of the laws of nature, but of a higher, occult order of nature. A miracle, according to this view, is not only not contrary to nature, but is strictly in accordance with it. Nature is compared to a clock so ingeniously constructed that certain wheels in it move only once in a century, so that to those living at such times the phenomenon would have all the appearance of a miracle, though really the natural and necessary result of the construction of the clock. So miracles, it is thought, may be provided for in the divinely constituted order of nature, but wrought only by these rarely operating forces, and therefore occurring so exceptionally as to produce the effect of a special divine interposition. In short, miracles are the necessary effects of a higher law of nature.¹ In

¹ Cf. Dr. J. F. Clarke's quotation from Ephraim Peabody (*Orthodoxy*, etc., pp. 64, 65). Dr. A. P. Peabody seems to favor this view in *Boston Lectures*, 1870, on the *Sovereignty of Law*, pp. 189 *sq.*, where he compares miracles with the meteoric showers. In his *Christianity and Science*, p. 101. the more ordinary view appears to be argued. In his *Christianity the Religion of Nature*, p. 66, however, he says, "Miracles may be natural, not only absolutely, as in accordance with the Divine attributes, but also relatively, so far as the laws and the order of the universe are concerned." Schleiermacher advances a similar view (*Der christliche Glaube*, vol. i. § 20, ed. 1). Professor von der Goltz (*Die christlichen Grundwahrheiten*, p. 352) says that miracles "have for our human conception the character of the surprising and the inexplicable, they are signs of divine power, witnesses of a supersensual order of the world; but for God they are strictly according to law. . . . The miraculous world of revelation is supernatural, in so far as the notion of nature is limited to the sensuous world.

this way it is thought that miracles can be made more intelligible and credible than when they are conceived as independent of natural law.

But this conception makes the essence of a miracle consist, not in the specialness of the divine agency, but in the ignorance of man. The same element of human ignorance may make miracles out of inexplicable tricks of jugglers, or out of irregular natural phenomena, such as the occasional appearance of new stars. In both cases we should have to say that, while we do not suppose the occurrence to be independent of natural law, we simply do not know what the law is. Such events may be startling and wonderful, but they are not miraculous, except in the loose sense that everything may be miraculous if one only chooses so to regard it. Many writers, like Augustine,¹ speak of all the works of nature as marvels, inasmuch as they all involve inexplicable mysteries. This is very true, but a miracle does not consist in the inexplicableness of an event. And no more does it consist in its mere rareness, provided it is yet the product of natural forces acting naturally. If now it is assumed that the so-called miracles are really as much the product of natural forces as any other, only that the forces operate in a more occult way, then, *as soon as we have come to take this view of the matter*, the miracle loses all special significance. If the resurrection of Christ was brought about by physical forces acting just as necessarily as gravitation, and was therefore necessary in the same sense as the irregular appearance of comets, then that resurrection cannot of itself mean more or prove more than any other natural event which

It is natural, in so far as one takes into view man's destination to lead a spiritual life, and the relation of the heavenly nature-world to the earthly nature-world." Bishop Temple (*Relations between Religion and Science*, p. 195) likewise suggests that the miraculous sequence of phenomena may be "after all that of a higher physical law as yet unknown." Quite similarly Canon G. H. Curteis (*Scientific Obstacles to Christian Belief*, Lect. iv.). He represents miracles as designed to produce an effect, and as having really produced it, though afterwards they may be recognized as having been quite in accordance with physical law. Against this conception Prof. A. B. Bruce (*Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, pp. 48 *sqq.*) argues forcibly and conclusively.

¹ Cf. A. Dorner, *Augustinus, sein theologisches System*, etc., pp. 71 *sqq.*

may startle by its strangeness, but nevertheless belongs as much to the machinery of nature as the most familiar things of every day life. This theory of miracles is in fact harder to believe than the ordinary one; and therefore there is nothing to recommend it. There is something excessively forced in it. It would be next to impossible, for example, to make men believe that God from all eternity decreed that the forces of the universe should operate in such a way that on a single occasion, in a single place, water should suddenly be transformed into wine, or a few loaves of bread should suddenly be multiplied into hundreds. It is not enough to say that in such a case the law is occult; we cannot easily conceive that there should be any *law* in the case at all.¹ But even if the abstract possibility of such a thing were conceded, the question still arises, What is gained by it? If the miracle is supposed to be designed to produce a special effect, to convey some religious lesson, or to confirm the words of some divinely commissioned messenger, why, then it must be assumed that the whole machinery of the universe was planned so that these peculiar events should take place in a natural but startling way, in order to make the *impression* of a divine intervention. But if the only reason for these peculiar provisions in the world's machinery was to produce this impression on these comparatively few occasions, there would seem to be no reason why the desired impression should not be produced rather by that which *ought* to produce it, that is, why there should not be a *real* divine interposition independent of physical laws. It certainly must be just as easy for God in his eternal plan to determine here and there, in the course of his providential government of the world, to interpose directly to produce effects which his ordinary natural forces would not produce, as it is to determine to have the effect brought about by a curious, and to human eyes

¹ Except in the sense that whatever God does there is a good reason for, and that it is done in accordance with an eternal purpose. The law is, in this case, not a law of *nature*, but a law of the divine mind. This is apparently all that Bushnell means when (*Nature and the Supernatural*, pp. 261 *sqq.*) he argues that God's supernatural agency "is regulated and dispensed by immutable and fixed laws."

absolutely untraceable, operation of a physical force. And if just as easy, then of course much better, since surely the better way must be for God to *do* what he desires to *seem* to do. As Bishop Alonzo Potter well observes,¹ if miracles are only fore-ordained results of physical law, then “not only would the language in which they are described in the Bible be deceptive, but those who wrought them would in one important sense be impostors, and the miracles themselves a fraud.”

3. We may here consider the distinction often made between absolute miracles and relative miracles. The distinction is differently made by different writers. Thus Thomas Aquinas defines a miracle as that which is done contrary to the order of all created nature.² Others would define an absolute miracle as one caused by the suspension of only a particular law or application of a law; others again, as an effect produced by the intervention of a special divine activity other than that of the forces of nature. Relative miracles likewise may be variously conceived. One notion is that of an act or event which produces the effect of a miracle, though in strict reality a purely natural occurrence. Another is that which makes all acts of the rational free-will supernatural, and so in a certain sense miraculous. Another is that which makes a relative miracle consist in natural processes modified by divine power.³ Or, again, stress is laid on the distinction between miracles wrought directly by divine agency and miracles wrought through the agency of human beings.⁴ It is manifest that the whole distinction is a somewhat loose one; what some would call an absolute miracle would be to others only a relative one.

The burden of the foregoing discussion is to the effect that the distinction is more apt to be misleading than helpful. The principal distinction to be defined is that between a real miracle and a pretended or seeming one. Amidst all apparent diversities of conception there need not in fact be any very

¹ *Religious Philosophy* (Lowell Institute Lectures delivered 1845-53, published 1872), p. 124.

² *Summa Theologica*, Pars I. Qu. ex. art. iv.

³ So Professor Ladd, *Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 334.

⁴ Cf. Dörner, *Christian Doctrine*, § 55, 4.

material difference in the definition of a real miracle. The principal variation is to be found in regard to the question above touched upon, whether in the strict miracle God makes use of existing natural forces, or works immediately without making use of them. But even this difference is often more apparent than real. Thus Gloatz, after an elaborate survey of the question of the relation of miracles to natural law, concludes that Rothe and Julius Müller and others are wrong who hold that God works miracles without the mediation of existing natural forces, and states his own view as follows: ¹ "An absolute miracle would annul the existence of the universe, or transform it into God. God also works miracles, as complicated phenomena, by means of the general forces of nature and out of the possibilities and conditions involved in them, from which alone, however, they can be as little explained as the higher orders of nature, and man with his influence on nature. They may . . . be conceived as performed, in accordance with the will of God, by higher spirits, but also immediately by himself, the Creator, the great Geometer and Mechanic, who has in his hands all the threads of the complex of nature, and can connect them in the most varied ways." The working of a miracle is thus made analogous to the act of man, when he avails himself of his knowledge of natural forces and substances for bringing about what nature, left to itself, would never produce. Similarly Otto Flügel,² illustrating his point by reference to the miracle at Cana, says that, in so far as the wine is not conceived as an outright creation, the only manner in which an immediate act of God, without the use of natural agencies, can be conceived, is the pantheistic one, according to which things are only conditions, *modi*, of the divine substance. His own conception is that the miracle may have been, so to speak, "an improved and apocopated natural process," the elements necessary to transform water into wine being abundant in the atmosphere, and only needing by a manipulation of natural forces to be brought together in order to produce the best wine.

But just here we are brought to the question, *How* are these natural forces manipulated? When men avail themselves of

¹ *Wunder und Naturgesetz* (in *Studien und Kritiken*, 1886), p. 543.

² *Das Wunder und die Erkennbarkeit Gottes*, p. 36. Leipzig, 1869.

their knowledge of nature in order to bring about changes and effects which natural forces of themselves would never produce, they accomplish their purpose by using natural agencies, by directing them into such a channel, and combining them in such a way, as to effect a predetermined result. It is distinguished from purely natural processes only by the direction which the human purpose gives to the operation of natural forces. Thus, it is natural for water to move downwards, and, when there is a descending channel, to move in a body in that channel. An earthquake, or some other natural convulsion, might change the channel, and in that case it is simply natural for the water to move in the new channel. If, now, men determine to change, and do change, the course of a river, the only thing not strictly natural about the process is just this *determination*, with the several volitions that are involved in it. It is quite natural that the spades should move to the place of excavation when carried by the workmen; quite natural that when pressed by the feet they should pierce and loosen the earth; quite natural that the soil should by the use of the proper instruments be removed; quite natural that the river, when the new channel is deep enough and is brought into connection with it, should flow in it; — just as natural as if a similar change of channel were produced by some remarkable natural force or combination of forces.

But suppose, now, that such a change were to be effected *miraculously* by divine power. How are we to conceive the act? If the alteration of the channel were suddenly produced by an earthquake, or a meteorite, or by some other such agency, we should still say that the phenomenon, however startling or mysterious, is after all a natural, and not a miraculous, event. If God is to produce the effect miraculously by means of any natural force, he must do it by causing this force to operate otherwise than in a natural way. If, for example, an earthquake is made to take place where or when it would not take place under the normal and natural working of natural forces, why, then the force which intensifies or accelerates the operation of the natural agencies cannot itself be a natural force; it must be a supernatural force. And so we gain nothing

by the hypothesis that in a miracle natural agencies are made use of. If the elements by which the wine was produced at Cana were miraculously brought together from the surrounding atmosphere, this bringing of them together is just the thing to be accounted for. If *human* ingenuity should succeed in inventing a way by which the wine-producing elements of earth and air could be suddenly brought together, the combination would have to be effected by calling into service natural forces. It could not be done by a mere volition. The natural forces could be made to operate in a different direction from what they would if left to themselves; but they would still be themselves. Their essential nature would not be changed. If now the same holds true of God; if in producing a so-called miracle he is absolutely limited to the use and manipulation of substances and forces that already belong to the system of nature; if the essence of the miracle consists only in a hitherto unobserved combination of forces already operative, — then it becomes a puzzling question, by what right any event is designated a miracle at all. For the combinations of physical forces are constantly varying. Every phenomenon which is not exactly a repetition of some other may be said to be the result of a new combination of natural forces. Nearly everything that happens would be miraculous, if the mark of the miraculous is novelty. The weather of no one day is exactly like that of any other day. The play of motion in the water of a cataract is perpetually changing. Every individual tree or animal has features of its own, the result of new combinations of physical forces. But these peculiarities of individuation are by no one called miraculous. Nor are the more rare and startling phenomena of nature called miraculous, even though they are unparalleled and inexplicable. The peculiar hue of the western evening sky which began to appear somewhat suddenly in the autumn of 1883, and continued for two or three years, has never been explained, and perhaps never will be; but it is not pronounced miraculous; it is assumed that it was the result of natural agencies acting according to natural law, although beyond the reach of human research. The new phenomena which result from the new combinations are supposed to be

the necessary effect of physical forces whose nature and mode of operation have been eternally prescribed by the Creator.

Neither newness, nor strangeness, nor inexplicableness, therefore, constitutes an event miraculous. What then is it which warrants us in calling any event a miracle? When we are told that miracles are phenomena wrought "by means of the general forces of nature," though not to be explained from them alone; when it is intimated that God, as "the great Geometer and Mechanic," so manipulates "the threads of the complex of nature" as to bring about an occurrence which is to be distinguished from the ordinary ones that can be explained from the general forces of nature alone,—we must ask, *What is that force which modifies the forces of nature* so as to bring about the exceptional, the miraculous result? And if it is a force of nature *not* acting according to its own laws, then this *deviation* from its normal course of action must be ascribed to a *supernatural* force; and *this* is what constitutes the anomalous action a miracle. That which produces the deviation cannot be itself one of the forces of nature acting according to its own laws. Gloatz himself speaks of it as "a *newly* manifested causality of God."¹ Plainly it must be such. And if it is a newly manifested causality, then it must be an agency distinct from the natural action of natural forces; that is, it must be an immediate and supernatural exercise of divine power.

But may this divine power produce an effect in nature without making use of natural forces? Why not? Human agents are indeed obliged to depend on the laws and forces of nature when they undertake to modify the course of nature. A man who lifts a stone does not abolish the force of gravitation, nor does he create any new physical force; but he avails himself of natural forces in order to produce a movement which otherwise would not take place. But is God limited in the same way? Men can manipulate natural forces; but they must do it by means of the forces of their own physical system. God has no physical body whose arms and fingers can be thrust in here and there to modify or check the operation of his natural forces. Is he then more limited than man? Could not

¹ *Wunder und Naturgesetz* (in *Studien und Kritiken*, 1886), p. 543.

God cause a stone to rise up from the earth without the use of muscles or any other physical instrument? If it is said that he might do this by means of some already existent natural force, then we have this dilemma: If the natural force which raises the stone operates *naturally*, say, as when a volcano hurls stones upward, then there is no miracle. If, however, in order to raise a stone miraculously, some natural force is specially diverted from its normal sphere and mode of operation, that is, is made to act *unnaturally*, or *supernaturally*, then there comes back the question above raised, What is the force which causes this exceptional working of the natural force? It cannot be another natural force working naturally; and if it is another working unnaturally or supernaturally, then the question recurs, What is the cause of *that* exceptional effect? And so we are driven to the absurd assumption of an infinite series in order to substantiate a miracle, unless we simply assume that God, *without* the use of a physical force, produces exceptional effects in the physical universe.

The distinction between absolute and relative miracles is, therefore, untenable. Whether actual miracles shall be called absolute or relative, is a mere matter of definition. If an absolute miracle is one which involves the suspension or temporary abolition of all the laws of nature, then all miracles can be only relative ones. But if an absolute miracle is one which is produced by a direct exercise of divine power, superadded to the forces of nature, then all real miracles are absolute ones. With regard to such things as the plagues of Egypt, which seem to have been only an intensification of ordinary and natural phenomena, if they were miraculous at all, they were such by virtue of a special divine power intensifying the operation of the natural causes. In other words, the natural forces were not left to be controlled by nature. But as soon as we make this supposition, we assume a miracle in the strictest sense of the word. If the swarms of lice or of flies were ordinary as to kind, but only extraordinary as to degree, the question to be answered is simply this: Was the exceptional character of the plagues purely natural, just as we assume the occasional extraordinary prevalence of grasshoppers to be now-

a-days? Or was it caused by a special intervention of divine agency for the purpose of producing a special result? One can take what view he pleases: one may deny the credibility of the narrative; one may eliminate from it all that seems to attest a supernatural agency; but one cannot do this and at the same time properly call the occurrences miraculous. The alternative is sharp and clear: If the forces of nature, operating undisturbed by special supernatural intervention, produced those plagues, then they were not miracles in any sense. If, on the other hand, the peculiar character of the plagues was due to a special interposition of divine agency, then a *miracle* took place, in as true and emphatic a sense of the term as if the waters of the Nile had suddenly begun to turn back and flow up hill towards the south, or as if an entirely new species of insects had been created and let loose on the Egyptians.

In a lax and improper sense the term "miracle" may be applied to certain striking occurrences or coincidences, while yet there may not be reason to assume a special supernatural intervention. If one choose to call such events miracles in a relative sense, no harm is done, provided a careful distinction is maintained between them and miracles proper. It is obvious, however, that the events in question are such as might be called wonderful by some, and not at all by others. What are called providential events — occurrences which have a striking and important bearing on the character and life of an individual — become such to the individual by virtue of their peculiar relation to his circumstances or feelings. To others the events may be in no sense remarkable. The peculiarity of the events does not consist in themselves, — in their relation to divine causation or to natural laws, — but in their accidental relation to the individual's circumstances. It is manifest that, according to what is called the law of chance, such coincidences must be numerous. It depends, moreover, wholly on the mood of the individual whether the events which he experiences shall be called providential or not. Some men, of a lively and impressible temperament, may find special suggestions and lessons in almost everything; others, of a more stolid make-up, find nothing specially impressive. To make these subjective impressions

constitute the essence of the miraculous (as is done by Ritschl and his school), is a caricature of the doctrine of miracles. If this is all there is in a miracle, then there are no miracles in the genuine sense at all.

The question of so-called special providences is one respecting the philosophy of which there will probably always be doubt and diverse opinions. If these providences acquire their special significance solely from their accidental relation to individual circumstances, and are of themselves as purely the normal result of the ordinary forces of nature as anything else that happens, then the specialness consists merely in the chance coincidence, and there is nothing in any sense miraculous about them. And there is, generally speaking, no just ground for assuming any special divine intervention in the case of so-called special providences. But there have been some events in which the providential lesson seems so striking, and the coincidence so improbable, if regarded as purely the result of the natural working of ordinary forces, that the hypothesis of some kind of special divine arrangement will always seem plausible.

Here belongs also the question of answers to prayer. If specific prayers are answered, does the answer involve a miracle? Or is there some other way of explaining the facts, yet without denying that prayers are veritably answered? There are at least two admissible suppositions. (1) The universe, with all the working of its natural forces, may from eternity have been adjusted with reference to the foreknown prayers that were to be answered. In this case, the natural operation of things brings about the accomplishment of the thing asked for. The answer to the prayer is as real as if effected by a supernatural and special interruption of the ordinary course of nature. The event which constitutes the answer may be in itself no more marvellous than many others which occur. For example, when Luther prayed for the life of Melancthon, and Melancthon recovered, though he had seemed to be at the point of death, the recovery, though striking, was not more remarkable in itself than many others which have taken place after all hope of recovery had vanished. The remarkableness

consists, in the case specified, only in the coincidence between the recovery and the fervent prayer. It cannot be proved that any law of nature was disturbed or diverted in its operation; but it may be supposed that nature was eternally constituted with reference to the accomplishment of the thing to be prayed for. Or (2) it may be supposed, as Dr. Chalmers¹ conceived, that the answer is effected by a divine influence wrought on the invisible and untraceable powers of nature, while yet to all visible appearance the uniformity of nature remains undisturbed. "It may be not by an act of intervention among those near and visible causes where intervention would be a miracle; it may be by an unseen but not less effectual act of intervention among the remote and occult causes, that he adapts himself to the various wants and meets the various petitions of his children." No one can controvert such a hypothesis; for no one is able to trace out the concatenation of causes that result in the production of any given event. An answer to prayer brought about by such a method would differ from a miracle commonly so called only in its not being palpable to human senses that an intervention had taken place. It would, however, be essentially as miraculous as an intervention occurring in some one of "the wonted successions that are known to take place." This hypothesis differs from the first one in that it represents God as in a sense changeable, constantly modifying his activity in accordance with the contingency of human volitions and desires.

Whatever may be thought respecting the method of God's providential working with reference to such cases, they differ materially from the palpable miracles wrought in connection with special revelations of the divine will. The latter must be regarded as attributable to a special divine agency distinct from the natural forces of the material universe.

In conclusion, we may remark that, notwithstanding the many infelicities and inconsistencies in the definition of miracles, there has been, after all, no great diversity in intention and in fact. A miracle has by Christian thinkers been generally regarded as a

¹ In a sermon on *The Efficacy of Prayer consistent with the Uniformity of Nature*.

work wrought by special supernatural intervention, and serving to attest the reality of a divine revelation.

But this starts another question which requires to be considered: What is the use of miracles? Have they any evidential value?

CHAPTER V.

THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF MIRACLES.

NO thoughtful man can ever have any interest in trying to prove the fact of miracles, unless he antecedently assumes that miracles are useful and needful. And the common opinion concerning their use has been that miraculous works have served to attest the divine commission of men (and especially of Jesus Christ) who have professed to be the organs of a revelation from God. The argument, briefly stated, is this: The mere *profession* which a man might make, that he is a special messenger of divine truth, would be of itself no sufficient proof that he is such. Men may make false pretensions; they may aim to deceive others, or may even deceive themselves.¹ As a safeguard against such deceptions, and as essential to a full proof of the reality of a special revelation of the divine mind, there is need of some *palpable* mark of divine attestation.² An inward inspiration may be sufficient to convince the messenger himself that he has been charged with a special message; but this inward experience cannot of itself serve to others as a proof of one's divine commission; for they can know of it only as he affirms it; and knowing the possibility of intentional or unintentional deception, and considering the general presumption against the truth of any such affirmation, they must regard his mere assertion as no sufficient proof of the truth of the thing affirmed. If, however, his assertion is accompanied by the exertion of supernatural power, they have the additional evidence needed that God himself has accredited him as a special messenger.

The argument presupposes belief in the existence of a God — a personal God — and a personal God disposed and able to

¹ Cf. Dörner, *Christian Doctrine*, § 55.

² Cf. Pres. J. H. Seelye, on *Miracles* (in *Boston Lectures*, 1870, pp. 207 *sqq.*).

make himself known by means of a special revelation. A miracle cannot demonstrate the existence of God to an atheist. To him any strange or exceptional occurrence can only be what the tricks of the juggler or *lusus naturæ* are to all men, — simply observed facts, which are presumed to be produced by *some* force of nature, however unknown or rarely operative.¹

It is scarcely less clear that miracles can have evidential force only to one who assumes the need and antecedent probability of a divine revelation. Even a theist — especially if pantheistically or deistically inclined — may hold that there is no need of any special self-manifestation of God; that nature and the human intuitions afford a sufficient disclosure of the divine nature and will. Whoever so thinks cannot believe in miracles; for to believe in them would imply to him that God acts irregularly for no worthy purpose; that he acts capriciously; that he acts, as it were, the part of a juggler. To him, as to the pure atheist, strange and inexplicable events would be simply strange and inexplicable, as many things are and must be to all men. They could not prove to him that the man through whom they seem to be wrought is a prophet bearing a revelation.

If, nevertheless, men professing atheistic views have sometimes been led by the evidence of miracles to a belief in God and revelation, it must have been because they were not thorough and radical in their disbelief, but had tendencies and susceptibilities of which they may themselves scarcely have been conscious, and which prepared them to welcome the evidence that God had indeed made his existence and his will manifest.

Apart, however, from men of this class the evidential value of miracles is denied or questioned by many who are not

¹ "Considered by itself, it [a miracle] is at most but the token of a super-human being. Hence, though an additional instance, it is not a distinct species of evidence for a Creator from that contained in the general marks of order and design in the universe. A proof drawn from an interruption in the course of nature is in the same line of argument as one deduced from the existence of that course, and in point of cogency is inferior to it. . . . A miracle is no argument to one who is deliberately, and on principle, an atheist." — J. H. Newman, *Two Essays on Miracles*, pp. 10, 11, 2d ed. Cf. Warington, *Can we believe in Miracles?* p. 219.

only theists, but professed Christians. The doubt takes somewhat this form: At the best a miracle is an event which requires peculiarly strong evidence before its own reality can be accepted. But even if the fact of one is made probable, still it is nothing in itself but an outward physical phenomenon; it may, for aught we know, and as seems indeed to be affirmed in the Bible, be wrought by demoniacal as well as by divine power. The mere fact of a miracle, therefore, at the best proves nothing more than the exercise of an extraordinary or superhuman power; it does not prove that the worker communicates divine and infallible truth. We must know about the character and doctrines of the miracle-worker, before we can commit ourselves implicitly to him. We must trust him, before we can trust his miracles. It being easy to produce the appearance of something miraculous without the reality of it, we may properly doubt the genuineness of the miracles so long as we have no assurance of the trustworthiness of the person. Consequently the miracles, even if proved, do no good; for they are proved genuine only as we presuppose the trustworthiness of the man who professes to work them; but if this trustworthiness is assumed, then the miracles are not needed. The doctrine proves the miracle, not the miracle the doctrine. Miracles are, therefore, useless if real; but being useless, they are presumptively not real.

Many strenuous defenders of the reality of miracles, however, assume, though in a modified form, an attitude of doubt concerning the evidential value of miracles.¹ In its least objectionable form it is to be found in such men as Archbishop Trench, who says:² "A miracle does not prove

¹ *Vide, e. g.*, Köstlin, *Die Frage über das Wunder*, in the *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*, 1864. "Who would hope," he says (p. 206), "in dealing with the unbelief of the present day, which rejects the fundamental truths of the Bible respecting the living God and Christ the Redeemer, to be able first to bring the unbeliever to a conviction of the historical reality of the story of the Bible miracles, and thence to lead him on to accept those fundamental truths?" Cf. James Freeman Clarke, *Orthodoxy, its Truths and Errors*, pp. 68 *sqq.* Bishop Lightfoot (*Christianity in Relation to Skepticism*, Report of the

² *Notes on Miracles*, p. 27, ed. 13.

the truth of a doctrine, or the divine mission of him that brings it to pass . . . The doctrine must first commend itself to the conscience as being *good*, and only then can the miracle seal it as *divine*." Later, however, when he takes up more particularly the evidential worth of miracles, he says:¹ "Are then, it may be asked, the miracles to occupy no place at all in the array of proofs for the certainty of the things which we have believed? So far from this, a most important place. Our loss would be irreparable, if they were absent from our sacred history." He then goes on to say of Christ's miracles that they are not, what Lessing would have them, a part of the scaffolding of revelation. "They are rather," he says, "a constitutive element of the revelation of God in Christ. We could not conceive of Him as not doing such works." This conception of the miraculous in Christianity is a common one at present among theological and apologetic writers. Thomas Arnold of Rugby, comparing the Biblical miracles with those alleged to have occurred in modern times, says² that "miracles were but the natural accompaniments, if I may so speak, of the Christian revelation; accompaniments, the absence of which would have been far more wonderful than their presence. This, as I may almost call it, this *a priori* probability in favor of the miracles of the Gospel cannot be said to exist in favor of those of later history." And later on he says:³ "Miracles must not

Church Congress held in Nottingham, 1871, p. 78), regards the evidence from miracles as varying according to the intellectual characteristics of different ages. At first, he says, they were of subordinate use because the miraculous and even the magical were too readily believed. Afterwards when the idea of regular sequence became current, the evidence from miracles was forcible; "but as the idea of law still further prevails, and prevailing overpowers the mind, from being a special evidence they become a special objection, themselves needing extraordinary testimony to establish their truth."

¹ *Notes on Miracles*, pp. 99, 100.

² *Lectures on Modern History*, p. 133. Cf. Dorner, *System of Christian Doctrine*, vol. ii. p. 182; G. P. Fisher, *Supernatural Origin of Christianity*, p. 509; Alexander Mair, *Studies in the Christian Evidences*, p. 192.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 137. Similarly, S. T. Coleridge, *The Friend*, vol. ii. p. 142, H. N. Coleridge's ed. So F. D. Maurice, *Kingdom of Christ*, vol. ii. p. 209, 3d ed. "Either the strange stories spoken of are in accordance with the Scriptural idea of the Founder of a spiritual and universal kingdom, or they are not.

be allowed to overrule the Gospel; for it is only through our belief in the Gospel that we accord our belief to them." But Baden Powell goes considerably farther when, after a discussion of this question, he concludes: "If miracles were, in the estimation of a former age, among the chief *supports* of Christianity, they are at present among the main *difficulties* and hinderances to its acceptance." ¹

The question before us may be put in this form: Is the decisive evidence for Christianity independent of the alleged miracles, so that one may be a good Christian with or without faith in the miracles? Or, *vice versa*, does faith in Christianity depend on antecedent faith in the reality of the miracles? Or, finally, shall we adopt a middle course, and say, with Pascal, that the miracles prove the doctrine, and the doctrine proves the miracles?

I. Is then faith in miracles a matter of indifference? It cannot be questioned that nowadays there is in many, even sincerely Christian, minds a strong tendency to take this view. The intrinsic improbability of supernatural occurrences; the great number of spurious or doubtful miracles; the problem presented by the swarm of pretended, and often well-attested, ecclesiastical miracles;² the absence of any necessary connec-

If they are not, no evidence whatever could establish the authenticity of the document containing them; for they would be self-contradictory; we should be bound to reject them because we believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. On the other hand, if they are, we should require evidence to account for their omission in any record professing to contain the history of such a person."

¹ *Essays and Reviews*, p. 158 (New York, 1874). Cf. Sterling, *Essays and Tales*, vol. ii. p. 121; Renan, *Life of Jesus*, p. 189. "If ever the worship of Jesus loses its hold upon mankind, it will be precisely on account of those acts which originally inspired belief in him."

² Such as Constantine's vision, the Port Royal miracles, and the modern instances of alleged miraculous healing in answer to prayer. *Vide* J. H. Newman's *Two Essays*, essay ii., who defends the genuineness of ecclesiastical miracles (though the book was written before he became a Romanist), and G. P. Fisher, *Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief*, chap. x., who takes the opposite ground. Tholuck, *Ueber die Wunder der katholischen Kirche* (Part I. of his *Vermischte Schriften*), favors the notion of a gradual disappearance of the apostolic *charismata*. Christlieb, *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*, pp. 330 *sqq.*, takes the ground that miracles do occur nowadays,

tion between physical marvels and spiritual truth,—all this prepossesses the mind against miracles in general. And if, nevertheless, the fact of their occurrence is admitted on the strength of Biblical testimony, the admission is a reluctant one. It is this state of mind which has given rise to the judgment frequently expressed, that nowadays Christianity is believed in, not *because of*, but *in spite of*, the miracles.¹ The spiritual aspects of Christianity are held to be the thing of chief concern; and it is felt to be a burden rather than a help to have to accept, along with the moral and religious teachings of the Bible, all those stories of marvelous occurrences for which there seems to have been no occasion, and which now expose Christianity to the ridicule of naturalists.

We may here distinguish three classes. First, there are those whose disinclination to believe in miracles amounts to virtual, or even avowed, disbelief, while still they profess to hold to all that is essential in Christianity. This class is represented by such men as Pflleiderer and Lipsius in Germany, Matthew Arnold, W. R. Greg, and E. A. Abbott in England.²

Another class may be called agnostics as regards miracles. They would leave it an open question what miracles are, and whether they really occurred in the sense commonly attached to them. The use of them is often declared to have been confined to the time of their occurrence, so that to us of the present day it is of no practical importance to believe in them, or to hold any definite theory concerning them. In this class, though by no means all taking precisely the same ground, are to be

especially on mission ground. So Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural*, chap. xiv.

¹ A terse form of expression, perhaps derived originally from J. J. Rousseau, who in his *Letters from the Mountains* (letter III., vol. ix. p. 77, of his works, Edinburgh, 1774), says, "I know not well what these our fashionable good Christians think in their hearts; but if they believe in Christ on account of his miracles, I, for my part, believe in him in spite of his miracles."

² O. Pflleiderer, *Religionsphilosophie*, 2d ed. R. A. Lipsius, *Lehrbuch der evangelisch-protestantischen Dogmatik*. Matthew Arnold, *Literature and Dogma*. W. R. Greg, *The Creed of Christendom*. E. A. Abbott, *The Kernel and the Husk, Philochristus*. (The authorship of these two last mentioned works, though they are published as anonymous, is an open secret.)

reckoned such men as Ritschl and his school in Germany, Baden Powell and J. R. Seeley in England, Athanase J. Coquerel and F. Pecaut in France,¹ and F. H. Hedge in the United States.²

Thirdly, there are those who accept the fact of the miracles unreservedly, but do so simply because their general faith in the Christian religion seems to necessitate it.

The modern rationalistic school in Germany (Pfleiderer, Lipsius, Biedermann, etc.) and the Ritschl school are strenuously opposed to each other; but respecting miracles they come by a different process to a similar result. The rationalists, who believe in the value of metaphysical speculation, question or reject miracles because of the philosophical difficulties they involve. The Ritschlites, who repudiate metaphysics, ignore or subordinate the question of miracles because the definition and discussion of them lead to metaphysical subtleties. Both agree that they constitute no important part, if indeed any part, of real Christianity. Both agree in reducing the supernatural either to a minimum or to a nonentity. The two schools, in their several wings, even overlap one another in this respect. Rationalists, like Keim, admit the reality of Christ's resurrection,³ while Ritschlites, like Bender, question or deny it.

¹ Baden Powell, *The Order of Nature, Study of the Evidences of Christianity* (in *Essays and Reviews*). J. R. Seeley, *Natural Religion*. In his *Ecce Homo* he was less skeptical. A. J. Coquerel, *Quelle était la Religion de Jésus?* In the sixth of these discourses, Coquerel says (p. 42): "Be Christians, and believe in miracles, if you find them real and if they are useful to you. Be Christians without the miracles, if they bring the least obstacle, the least shadow, to your piety and your faith. But be Christians." Felix Pecaut, *Le Christ et la Conscience* (1859), p. 416, "The question of miracles is very obscure; . . . I do not pretend to judge it definitively." In his later work, *Le Christianisme Liberal et le Miracle* (1869), he seems to be more pronounced in the rejection of all miracles.

² F. H. Hedge, *The Mythical Element in the New Testament* (one of the essays in *Christianity and Modern Thought*, Boston, 1873), *Reason in Religion* (Boston, 1867).

³ *Geschichte Jesu*, 2d ed. pp. 358 *sqq.*, *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara*, vol. iii. pp. 600 *sqq.* Keim does not indeed distinctly call the resurrection (or rather the reappearance) of Jesus supernatural, but he rejects emphatically the ordinary "natural" explanations. Professor Bender, though disowned by Ritschl

There is something plausible and insinuating in the agnostic ground which is taken respecting the supernatural in its relation to Christianity. It professes to exalt the spiritual and vital elements as contrasted with what is simply external, physical, and accidental. Standing on this ground one can say : The origin of Christianity lies so far back that it is impossible to learn with certainty the exact character of the phenomena which accompanied its introduction. The miracles may have been different in fact from what they are made to appear in the narratives as transmitted to us. At all events, without troubling ourselves to prove or disprove the fact of miracles, or even to define what they are, we do most wisely to leave this whole domain undefined, especially as the essence of Christianity is something entirely different from these outward phenomena. We cannot but recognize Christianity as a beneficent institution ; but whether there was anything supernatural in Jesus or in his disciples, it is immaterial to know. The facts of history prove the superiority of the Christian religion to all others. That which is moral and spiritual in it is impregnable by virtue of its own intrinsic merit. Why should we weaken our position by making the validity of the claims of the Gospel depend on the validity of the argument for miracles, and thus run the risk of losing the main good in trying to rescue what at the best is a mere accessory ? Whatever may have been the original fact, even though we may suppose that the miracles served a useful purpose at the outset, they are too remote and obscure to serve such a purpose any longer.¹

now, was one of his disciples, and has only carried out to the extreme the lessons which he learned.

¹ Says Lessing, *Theol. Streitschriften (Ueber den Beweis des Geistes und der Kraft)*, " If I had seen him [Jesus] work miracles, and had had no reason to doubt that they were true miracles, I should certainly have felt so much confidence in the miracle-worker that I should willingly have yielded my understanding to his, and should have believed him in everything in so far as experiences just as indubitable were not opposed to him." And Schleiermaeher (*Der christliche Glaube*, vol. ii. p. 125, 5th ed.) says, " Though the true acknowledgment of Christ in individual cases may have been occasioned by miracles, . . . they must be, with reference to our faith, wholly superfluous." Essentially the same view is found in G. H. Curteis's *Scientific Obstacles to Christian Belief*, pp. 81-88.

Plausible as this may sound, it is not difficult to show its essential inconsistency with a genuine faith in Christianity. Not but that one who takes this position may be a real Christian. But it is a position intrinsically self-contradictory, and logically tends to a positive rejection of the distinctive claims of Christianity. For,

1. This view of miracles conflicts with a sincere faith in Christianity as being a *special revelation*. The term "revelation" is indeed freely used by thinkers of this class. But the meaning which it has always borne in theological use is discarded. It has always carried with it the idea of a *special, historical, supernatural* communication. But writers belonging to the first class above mentioned now use the term quite differently. Religion is defined as correlative to revelation. As Lipsius puts it, "The divine factor in the religious relation, or God's relation to the human spirit, is revelation; the human factor, or man's relation to God, is religion."¹ In other words, wherever there is religion there is revelation. Of course "revelation" here entirely loses its traditional sense of something *special*, and is made to denote a universal and constant thing.

The right to use old terms in a new or modified sense need not be contested, especially if the deviation is distinctly recognized and stated. But where the deviation is great and radical, there should be some urgent reason for using the old term rather than some other whose current meaning would better express the sense intended. Otherwise a suspicion can hardly be suppressed, that the design is to avoid opprobrium by using words which sound orthodox, but which are used in a radically different sense from the ordinary one.

These writers profess to discard the older rationalism, and even repudiate the name "rationalist;" and it is one characteristic of their deviation from the older rationalism, that they emphasize this divine revelation made to all mankind. But the difference is in words more than in fact. The older rationalists emphasized the authority of the individual reason as the ultimate source and arbiter of religious truth. The modern rationalists emphasize the reality of a reciprocal relation between

¹ *Dogmatik*, § 52.

God and man. The former, in their fear of supernaturalism, tended to hold that no individuals ever were the recipients of special divine influences; the latter, in their fear of supernaturalism, are careful to insist that *all* individuals are more or less the recipients of divine influences. But practically the upshot is the same in the two cases. According to the older rationalists, what men naturally came to believe by the use of their own reason they came to believe by virtue of the reason which God had implanted in them. Indirectly, if not directly, God could be said to have communicated himself to men, having given them a reason by which they could find him out. The modern rationalists have less to say about reason, and more about the religious impulse or instinct. But when they tell us that wherever this religious impulse is there is a divine revelation, it is manifest that the thing meant is little else than what the older rationalists would have assented to. Inasmuch as all miraculous, exceptional divine influences are denied or ignored, the operations of the mind are conceived as the operations of physical nature are conceived, namely, as under the universal all-controlling influence of the divine presence. The older, deistic conception of an absentee God is avoided; there is more of a leaning towards the pantheistic notion of an everpresent power. But in the last analysis the self-manifestation of God is in this case plainly nothing but what the human beings by virtue of their natural constitution come to think about God. The only difference between this and the older representation is that the conviction which arises concerning a divine being is here represented as a recognition of a present God, who is the efficient cause of all things; whereas the other view made God to be farther off, and less immediately concerned with human affairs. In neither case is the self-revelation of God an objective one; in neither case an exceptional or supernatural one. In both cases the human judgment, such as it is, must decide for itself what religious truth and duty are. In neither case is man supposed to be conscious of anything but his own conception of divine things. Pfleiderer¹ says, "*Everywhere*, where any healthy religious impulse, however primitive and childlike,

¹ *Religionsphilosophie*, vol. ii. p. 133.

expresses itself, there takes place also in some degree a revelation of the divine love which aims at a fellowship of love." The revelation, then, consists in the religious impulse; but the impulse must be a "healthy" one. And who is to determine when the impulse is healthy? Apparently the philosopher himself, who first gives his definition of religion, and then calls a religious impulse healthy, according as it conforms to his definition of religion. Another philosopher, with a different conception of the essence of religion, will find either more or less of healthy religious impulses than Pfleiderer. This theologian himself regards Jesus of Nazareth as having possessed this impulse in the highest perfection. He ascribes to him an "innate genius" for religion. This genius, he says, "has for human eyes always something of impenetrable mystery."¹ Yet Jesus' religious development, "always under the assumption of this inborn genius," he says, is explicable: "The impressions of a pious parentage, of a cheerful population, and of beautiful scenery," and an early acquaintance with the words of the prophets,—these were "very favorable circumstances for the development of the religious genius."² Still, inasmuch as many others, certainly Jesus' own brothers, had a like advantage, these outward circumstances cannot alone account for his unique distinction; therefore the assumption of special "genius" must be made. His "pure heart," more than any other, was attuned to the thought of God as Father. The thought was not strictly new with him. He had learned it from the prophets, at least in its essence. But he seized it, and developed it as the central truth, and made it the centre of his own religious experience. And having become penetrated with this idea, he naturally felt desirous to impart to others what he had experienced in himself. Hence he began to preach, and had such success that he gradually came to think that he, and no other, was called to be the Messiah of his people.³

Now let us consider this conception. For this is a fair presentation of the anti-supernaturalistic view from one of the ablest, clearest, and most reverent of the modern representatives

¹ *Religionsphilosophie*, vol. ii. pp. 186, 187.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 191, 192.

of that school. Pfeiderer claims to exhibit the real essence of pure Christianity. According to him, then, revelation is the conception of God and of spiritual truth which God gives to every man who has a healthy religious impulse. By and in the religious impulse the revelation comes. So far as consciousness goes, for all practical purposes, the impulse, the religious impressions, which spring up in the soul constitute the revelation. The case is precisely parallel to that of any other class of conceptions which are found in the human mind. Thoughts about natural phenomena, about social life and political institutions, about psychological, metaphysical, or moral principles,—all these, at least in so far as they are “healthy,” must be divinely revealed for they come from the mental impulses which God has implanted, and come in precisely the same way as the thoughts concerning God. The only difference is the difference in the object to which the thoughts relate. Consequently Jesus was a revealer of truth only in the same sense in which Plato, Shakspeare, and Newton, each in his several sphere, were revealers. They, and such as they, had an “innate genius,” through which they were enabled to evolve more truth than ordinary men. Abraham, Isaiah, and Jesus were gifted in the direction of religious truth; they had a religious genius. In the case of Jesus, we are told, there was even something of “impenetrable mystery” about his religious genius. How much we are to understand by this is itself somewhat mysterious. There is a mystery about any genius. Why one child in a family should be born with a special talent so that he becomes renowned through his brilliant utterances or wonderful discoveries, while his brothers remain insignificant and unknown,—this, too, is an impenetrable mystery; but it is an indisputable fact. When, therefore, Jesus’ extraordinary religious genius is called mysterious, nothing more can be meant than that it was extraordinary, at least for his time and surroundings. But the question still remains to be answered, How can Christ’s life be regarded as a revelation? In the vague sense, that everything in nature and human history reveals God, that is, in the wide and loose sense of the word “revelation,” one may, of course, speak of Christ as making

a revelation. But in no special and peculiar sense can the term be applied to him merely on the ground of any assumed moral excellence. The law of God is revealed by disobedience to it as well as by obedience to it; but in either case there is no revelation in the distinctive sense. The law must be known before obedience can be rendered, so that not even the divine law is revealed by a holy life, to say nothing of the further matters of God's character, his relations to a sinful world, his plans and purposes of mercy or of judgment. To speak, therefore, of Jesus as revealing the divine love, so long as the revelation is conceived as coming from his moral integrity, is to use words without any clear meaning.

Manifestly the term "revelation" is a misnomer, as applied to such a conception of the origin of religious belief. With the same propriety all opinions and feelings—at least, all "healthy" ones—may be called revelations; and there is no reason, unless a disingenuous one, why the term "revelation" should be so diligently used concerning the religious sentiments, and not used concerning other things. No *usus loquendi* is more familiar than the distinction between *natural* and *revealed* religion. But the theory under consideration virtually calls all natural religion revealed.¹ The distinction is simply destroyed by denying the reality of revealed religion as distinguished from natural, though the name is retained as a synonym of natural. One may be pardoned for suspecting that the reason why only religious opinions and feelings are called revelations is that the traditional view has regarded religious truth as having been really, that is, supernaturally, revealed, and that the representatives of this naturalistic view of religion are unwilling to give up the appearance and sound of a religious creed which they have given up in fact.² What-

¹ Matthew Arnold (*Literature and Dogma*, 5th ed., p. 51) says plainly, "That in us which is really natural is, in truth, *revealed*. . . . If we are little concerned about it, we say it is *natural*; if much, we say it is *revealed*." How simple!

² An interesting commentary on this attitude of modern rationalists is to be found in Röhr's *Briefe über den Rationalismus*, p. 21, where he speaks of an untenable distinction between "mediate and immediate revelation." While declaring that revelation (in which he himself does not believe at all) is prop-

ever may be the truth on this point, it is certainly a fact that according to the view under consideration revelation is the prerogative of all men; it belongs to no one man, and to no class of men, exclusively, though some may have a larger share in it than others. The difference is like the difference in mental endowments in general; all have a portion, but not all the same degree of it.

Moreover, how are we to know what and how much revelation is imparted by different men? Evidently through the same religious faculty which itself is the source of the revelation. We can call only that a true revelation which commends itself to our judgment. But the power to sit in judgment on the revelatory character of other men implies that each must regard himself as the ultimate authority, since all are revealers in the same sense. We may admit others to have had more religious genius than ourselves, but how far their impulses were healthy we must each decide for ourselves; and this decision is a part, and to us an all-important part, of the religious revelation of the world. In short, according to the theory under consideration, there is no really *authoritative* revelation; every man is ultimately a law to himself; and "revelation" is only a name to cover up the negation of all revelation in the only honest sense of that term.

This is made all the clearer when we observe that just this class of thinkers recognize and emphasize the gradual development of religious knowledge and sentiment. But this makes their use of the term "revelation" doubly reprehensible. They speak of revelation as a universal prerogative of mankind, in so far as men are religious. Yet they also lay stress on the fact that religious beliefs are transmitted from one generation to another. Now how are these two propositions to be adjusted to each other? It is an obvious fact that

erly only immediate, he says, that "this distinction served a good purpose, being, as it were, the protecting ægis, under which in modern times rationalism developed itself,—an innocent-appearing middle term, which concealed the complete divergence of rationalism from supernaturalism, until the weak eye accustomed itself to the clearer light." It would seem as if history were going to repeat itself, only that now the term "mediate" is less current.

religion is in reality mostly a matter of tradition. What a man believes is not the product of his own independent thinking or instincts, but rather of the communications which have come to him from other men. Undoubtedly we may properly speak of the religious impulse; but it would be a gross misrepresentation of obvious facts to speak as if each individual were in any important degree the author or source of his own religion. It is true, the individual cannot in the strictest sense make a belief his own without an independent act. But in most cases this independent act is nothing but a mere adoption, on trust, of what others recommend; there is no intelligent and independent testing of the doctrine. And even when there seems to be independent thought, and a man breaks away from his immediate surroundings, and repudiates the teachings which he has received, still in no case does this take place wholly without the influence of other minds. A certain contingent must indeed be contributed by the individual. The gradual increase of knowledge and the widening of human thought would be impossible, if nothing sprang up in any mind which had not, in just the same form, come from some other mind. But the originality itself is developed only through the stimulus given by others, and is an elaboration and modification of the ideas which have been communicated, rather than an origination of new ones. The general fact remains, that the bulk of what is known and believed is a contribution from others and is accepted almost implicitly. It therefore grossly exaggerates the importance of individual reflection to speak of all men as having, each for himself, a divine revelation. Aside from the inaccuracy of the word used, as applied to the religious cogitations or feelings of ordinary individuals, an utterly wrong impression is made as to the origin of the religious thoughts themselves. They are not only no revelations from God in the proper sense of that term, but they are not thoughts which the individual has evolved independently out of his own mind. They are simply a commonwealth of sentiments which he inherits and which he shares with his fellows.

Now the doctrine in question really admits this, in that it lays stress on the necessity of a progressive development. Even

Jesus' religious impressions are declared not to be strictly original; he received the substance of his doctrines, we are told, from the Hebrew prophets. Much more, then, must it be said of ordinary men, that the revelation which they receive is after all only the knowledge, or the notions, which they derive from their elders. But in so far as this is admitted, of course the notion of "revelation" even in the loose sense which this school gives to it, fades away into something akin to nonsense. The term can at the best, on this view of things, be applicable only to the new contributions which certain gifted individuals make to the religious knowledge or sentiments of the world. But this cannot be reconciled with that other statement, that wherever there is a healthy religious impulse there is a revelation, or with the still more sweeping statement, that religion and revelation are reciprocal terms, the one being as universal as the other. In short, there is an irreconcilable inconsistency in the use of the term "revelation," clearly betraying the fact that the real thing ordinarily and properly meant by it is not believed in.

2. The negative or agnostic attitude towards miracles leads to self-contradiction and confusion in the views concerning the uniqueness and authority of Jesus Christ. The special relation of Christ to revelation is left undetermined. In deference to naturalism it is assumed that he could have been nothing but a man, that he must have been begotten like other men, and that in his intellectual and moral life he must have been subject to the same laws of development as other men. But in deference to supernaturalism it is asserted that he was a unique man, that he attained a degree of moral excellence absolutely perfect, or at least so exceptionally exalted as to amount practically to a state of perfection. But how this uniqueness is to be conceived or accounted for is not stated. As being simply a man among the millions of men, he must on this theory be regarded as not having been radically different from others. The most that can be assumed concerning him is that he had a superior genius in the direction of religion; that he had a clearer view and a deeper feeling of certain truths than others had; that he had the disposition and ability to set forth ethical and religious truth with peculiar force; and that

in his life he illustrated perfectly his own doctrines and precepts. But if Jesus Christ is declared to be absolutely unique; if it is said that he can have no superior and no rival; if he is recognized as sustaining a permanent relation to all men who seek to hold fellowship with God,—why, then there must be some reason for such affirmations. But the reasons seem to be purely arbitrary on the naturalistic basis under consideration. If it is affirmed that Christ attained absolute perfection, the question at once arises, on what ground this is assumed.

Now the rationalistic theory is essentially an evolutionary one. Progress, according to it, must be successive and continuous, each new step being an outgrowth of the past and the necessary condition of a further advance in the future. It is a violation of this principle to assume that Jesus in any sense completed the revelation of God or the development of religious truth,—to assume that he revealed what can in any proper sense be termed the absolute or final religion. Such an assumption strikes the fundamental principle of the anti-supernaturalists directly in the face; and it is only a subterfuge to attempt to hide the inconsistency under the vague phrase “mysteriousness,” as characterizing Jesus’ peculiar excellence. The mysteriousness may be ever so truly a fact; but to say that Jesus’ character is mysterious does not *account for* his exceptional superiority; it only *asserts* it. And the question comes back: On what ground is this uniqueness assumed to be a fact? No metaphysical or physical principles or theories throw any light on the matter. No *a priori* considerations are adequate to make it appear that Jesus of Nazareth must have been worthy to found the universal religion. If one assumes such a uniqueness on Jesus’ part, unless he does so without any reasons, in pure caprice, he must *depend on historical evidence*. And this involves, directly or indirectly, a judgment respecting the trustworthiness of the evangelical portraiture of Jesus’ character and life. In reality whoever accepts Christ as an authoritative or unique leader does so primarily on the ground of traditional belief. This conception of Christ is handed down to him, and is first adopted on trust. And when he undertakes to examine and justify the belief, he can do no

more than analyze the grounds on which others before him have cherished it. And this leads necessarily to a consideration of the grounds on which *in the first place* this belief gained currency. And such an examination can have no other result than the assurance that the original belief was founded on a conviction that Jesus, in his person and works, was *supernaturally endowed*. Pflleiderer himself goes even so far as to affirm that, on account of the superstitions of those times, Christianity, or any new religion, "could hardly have made its entrance into the world" without the belief that it was accredited by miraculous events.¹ There could be no more emphatic admission that Christ did in fact gain his unique power through the *impression* he made of being supernaturally endowed and commissioned. This is certainly the testimony of the only original witnesses and confessors. If this impression is pronounced a mistaken one, the unique greatness of Christ can now be still held only by a purely arbitrary act of faith resting ultimately on no valid ground whatever.

But the unique spirituality of Jesus is not the only peculiar feature in him belief in which requires to be justified. Still more striking is the fact that he assumed an altogether unique *authority* over men. And historic Christianity has always recognized this authority. Christ, according to all the records and traditions, appears to have assumed to be, in an altogether unique sense, the Son of God, and divinely commissioned to establish a kingdom of God in the world, of which he was himself to be the Head, entitled to issue commands and to exercise authority as the King over the church which was to be gathered together in his name.

¹ *Religionsphilosophie*, p. 437. Similarly Mr. Greg, after arguing that the resurrection of Jesus did not really take place, says: "It seems to us certain that the Apostles *believed* in the resurrection of Jesus with absolute conviction. Nothing short of such a belief could have sustained them through what they had to endure, or given them enthusiasm for what they had to do." *Creed of Christendom*, vol. ii. p. 154. Matthew Arnold (*God and the Bible*, p. 182, popular edition) has to come to the same conclusion: "Only in this way, through profound misapprehension, through many crude hopes, under the stimulus of many illusions, could the method and secret, and something of the temper and sweet reason and balance, of Jesus be carried to the world."

Now the attempts made to present these things philosophically may not always have been successful. Metaphysical subtlety may have undertaken more than was possible to be accomplished by way of setting forth the nature of Christ and the mode of the incarnation. But however inadequate these attempts may have been, it is even more certain that it is still less satisfactory to rest on a theory which simply ignores the essential problem to be solved. That problem is found in the question which the Jews themselves put to Jesus, "By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?" Even if one could be satisfied to believe that in some mysterious manner Jesus attained an altogether unexampled eminence in moral excellence, still it is unexplained how that alone could give him authority over others. His own doctrine (Luke xvii. 10) concerning obedience to the moral law was stated thus: "When ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do." The fact that Jesus was the first to render full obedience to the divine law makes him worthy of our respect and honor; but if he was merely one man among others, it does not appear that his doing what all are under obligation to do gives him any authority over the rest. If he was a perfect man, it was simply because he perfectly fulfilled the law of God. But his fulfilling the law does not make him the author or executor of the law. If it did, then in case another man should also perfectly fulfil the law, we should have two heads of the kingdom of God. And when it is said that Jesus has a sort of supremacy because he was the *first* to attain perfection, we can only say that the being first in time does not necessarily make him first in degree. Ritschl¹ says, "Jesus being the first to make real, in his personal life, the ultimate end of the kingdom of God, is therefore *sui generis*, because every one who should do his duty as perfectly as he did would yet be unequal to him, because dependent on him." But this is only one of the many obscurities which result from the at-

¹ *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*, § 22. Quite similarly Lipsius, *Dogmatik*, p. 541.

tempt to avoid metaphysics.¹ If Jesus, without a previous example of perfect obedience to follow, could rise to the height of perfect obedience, why may not some one else do the same, even without the knowledge and stimulus of his example? And though one should make this attainment partly under the stimulus of this example, it is still not clear how Christ's fidelity to duty gives him any *authority* or peculiar supremacy over all other men. The man who came at the eleventh hour received the same reward as the men who came early. If all who obey are on the same level of mere humanity and mere obligation to the divine law, then all who disobey are guilty each for himself, and all who obey obey each for himself; and all are alike responsible to the divine Ruler alone. It is utterly impossible, on the mere ground of Jesus' peculiar moral excellence, to pronounce him entitled to any authority over other men. And his claim of authority, the assumption of a right to command, the assumption of a personal headship over a community of followers, the requirement of faith in him as the prime prerequisite of membership in the kingdom of God,—all this is inexplicable on the theory that there was nothing supernatural in Jesus, no superiority of nature, and no special commission more than any one else could have gained by simply doing what he ought to do. It is possible to imagine

¹ In his *Christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung*, vol. iii. § 18, 1st ed., Ritschl is more extended, but not more clear and satisfactory, in his treatment of this point. He presents Christ's work under the point of view of an ethical vocation. All men have such a vocation. But other men, even founders of religions, combined the religious vocation with civil and social ones. Christ, however, combined with his no other one. "This fact is explained by the scope of the vocation to which he gave himself. For the vocation of the royal prophet to bring about the ethical dominion of God is the highest conceivable one among all vocations" (p. 389). Again, "Being the founder of the kingdom of God in the world, or the vehicle of God's moral dominion over men, he is unique in comparison with all who have received from him the like end to live for. Consequently, he is that personage in the world in whose ultimate purpose God makes his own ultimate purpose effectual and manifest. His whole labor in fulfilling his vocation constitutes, therefore, the material of the revelation of God which is present and complete in him; in other words, in him the Word of God is a human person." *Ibid.*, p. 393.

the physical miracles eliminated from the Gospel histories, it is possible to construct an expurgated history with these narratives omitted or made "natural;" but in that case we should be more than ever perplexed and staggered by these extraordinary assumptions of authority on the part of one who had done nothing except what he would have deserved to be punished for not doing.

Equal or greater obscurity and confusion appear in the attempt which Herrmann, Ritschl's disciple, makes to define the relation of Christ to Christians and the Christian Church. He says,¹ "The source of religious knowledge is for us neither our morality nor any form of metaphysics, but revelation." The historical facts of Christianity are made to constitute the essence of the revelation. "Jesus Christ," we are told, "must be accounted by us as the final manifestation of the divine will to us."² And not merely is Jesus declared to be an exceptionally excellent man, who first attained moral perfection and made known the divine love, but it is declared that "the ground of religious assurance is to be found nowhere but in him."³ In this sense, as being the ground of our religious assurance, "Christ is the revelation. Our trust in God is constantly mediated by the view of him in whom we have discerned the decisive manifestation and illustration of the divine will to save"⁴ But when Herrmann takes up the question, "by what means Christ becomes to us a revelation or a saving fact," he discusses the evidence of miracles first, only to find in them no conclusive, or even weighty, proof. He says,⁵ "The discussion of the question, whether the evangelical accounts of miracles are trustworthy or not, is for the present task of theology wholly indifferent" His fundamental principle is that nothing can be really a miracle to us except facts which involve an expression of God's love to us individually. Although, he says, we are obliged to regard every event as "a product of nature the mediating causes of which point us into the endless," yet,

¹ *Die Religion im Verhältniss zum Welterkennen und zur Sittlichkeit*, p. 365.

² *Ibid.*, p. 367.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 382, 383.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

he adds, "it is possible for the Christian thankfully to recognize in events that keenly affect him miraculous deeds of God wrought on him, and to believe in the answering of his prayers." ¹ This agrees with Ritschl's definition, ² "For us, miracles are those striking natural occurrences with which the experience of God's special help is connected." ³ In the metaphysical sense, of an act not occurring in accordance with natural laws, we can, it is said, not prove the impossibility of miracles, since we cannot know the extent of those laws. But, on the other hand, in so far as alleged or apparent facts have no religious significance, we cannot call them miracles. The wonderful things reported in the New Testament cannot be proved to be impossible; yet, we are told, "we must demand of the theologian that he see that he has no right to call those facts miracles, unless he is conscious that they form a part of his own life, as proofs of the love of God to him." ⁴ Accordingly the resurrection of Christ, which Herrmann believes in, he accepts only as it verifies itself by its practical effect on the religious life. Faith in Christ, he says, must precede faith in the resurrection; and this event in his life only "exercises on us an undefinable influence which, though it makes itself known in the mood of the believer, yet cannot be further analyzed; and so a demonstration to others who do not so feel is cut off." ⁵

The motive underlying this theory, namely, the desire to vindicate to miracles a religious significance, is commendable; but it leads to such a conception of miracles as practically dissolves them into non-miraculous events. Inasmuch as the most trivial occurrence may have a marked influence on a man's re-

¹ *Die Religion im Verhältniss zum Welterkennen und zur Sittlichkeit*, p. 384.

² *Unterricht*, etc. The idea is probably derived from Schleiermacher. *Vide* his *Reden über die Religion* (Pünjer's ed., 1879), p. 115: "Miracle is the religious name for occurrence; every occurrence, even the most natural and common, as soon as it is such that the religious view of it may be the dominant one, is a miracle."

³ See Excursus VII.

⁴ *Die Religion*, etc., pp. 386, 387.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 388.

religious mood, and it depends wholly on the man's own mood and judgment to determine whether the event is remarkable or not, it clearly follows that what is to one man a miracle is not one to another. In other words, an event is not a miracle by virtue of its relation to the divine causation, but by virtue of its relation to the particular condition and conceptions of the individual who considers it. Herrmann says expressly, "The mistake which cannot be sufficiently condemned [in the ordinary orthodox view of miracles] is that the essence of miracles is looked for in the causal connections of the event."¹ It is difficult to say whether the *naïvete* or the audacity of this assertion is most to be astonished at. When one undertakes to define a word, he is ordinarily supposed to undertake to tell what men in general mean by it. But Ritschl and his school calmly inform us that what men generally mean by a miracle is not the true idea of a miracle at all, — that the true idea, in fact, is not understood except by Ritschl and his followers. The phenomenon thus presented is an extraordinary one. Generally when one undertakes to rectify the popular conception of a word, he is at least expected to retain something of the popular sense in his corrected definition; otherwise the word itself should be abandoned. If it is certain that no such objects as centaurs ever existed, then let us plainly say so, and not insist that, properly speaking, the centaur, instead of being the horse-man of ancient mythology, is nothing but the giraffe. Yet to do so would be quite as sensible as the manner in which the Ritschlites use the term "miracle." Miracles not only etymologically, but in popular estimation, have always involved an element of the startling, — something to be wondered at, something aside from the natural and ordinary course of things. But if now a miracle is to be defined merely as an event in which we recognize God as blessing us, the element of wonderfulness, as well as the element of extraordinariness, is taken away. For according to the theology now under consideration, love is the one attribute of God which swallows up all others; and that God should manifest his love, especially to those that love him, has in it nothing of the surprising; it would be strange if it were otherwise. Moreover,

¹ *Die Religion*, etc., p. 385.

according to the definition of miracles above given, miracles no longer belong to the category of rare things; they are, rather, a part of the regular course of nature; the more men live as they should, the more ought *every event* to be to them a miracle, for God makes all things work together for good to them that love him.¹

It is sufficiently self-evident that this effort to transfer the *name* miracle to something hitherto never meant by it, must share the fate of all similar quixotic undertakings. What it is important to know is how this school of thought stands related to the question, whether miracles, in the sense always current hitherto, really occurred. Here Herrmann unequivocally sides with the rationalistic school, assuming, as scarcely needing any argument, that all events are mediated by natural forces. He differs with them only in that he denies that any one is so well acquainted with the whole round of natural law as to be able to affirm that any alleged event is outside of it. Accordingly the reported miracles of the Bible, improbable as they may seem, may yet be facts, only belonging to a higher order of nature than that with which we are familiar. We have previously (p. 111) had occasion to treat of this (what may be called) Strasburg-clock theory of miracles. The Ritschl form of the theory has one advantage over the other form of it, namely, that it does not make the essence of the miracle consist simply in the element of human ignorance, but emphasizes more the religious impressiveness of the miracle. But it labors under all the objections which otherwise burden the hypothesis, besides the

¹ Teichmüller (*Religionsphilosophie*, pp. 171 *sqq.*, 198 *sqq.*), though an opponent of Ritschl's theology, defines miracles in a very similar way. "The seat of the miracle rests in the religious interpretation, that is, in the understanding of the believer," p. 173. "The believer in real miracles does not feel the slightest need of going into the question of natural laws, and possesses, moreover, no physical or psychological knowledge of the natural course of events," p. 174. "Miracles will take place as long as there are men in existence for whom they can take place, no matter at what time they may live," p. 192. In general Teichmüller seems to hold that any so-called miraculous event which *works well*, as, for example, the resurrection of Christ (p. 189), or Paul's conversion, may be properly called miracles, whereas such stories as those of the raising of the young man and Lazarus "cannot be reckoned as miracles in the genuine and strict sense," p. 224.

additional one, that a much wider door is opened to the working of mere caprice in the definition and recognition of a miracle. Anything and everything may, on the Ritschl theory, be called a miracle; we cannot even define a miracle as something intrinsically *fitted* to produce a good impression; the only test is the fact that it *does* produce it. At the same time this theory recognizes the inherent strangeness and improbability of certain events which are called miraculous. It would relegate to scientific investigation all such facts or apparent facts. And if an event should be found to be both improbable in itself and also unedifying in a religious respect, then of course it would have to be pronounced no miracle, and probably also not a fact. In other words, the theory opens the door to unlimited license not only as regards the interpretation, but as regards the credibility, of the Biblical narratives of miracles. To be sure, Herrmann himself admits the fact of Christ's resurrection, and perhaps some of the other reported miracles. But in doing so he involves himself in the greatest confusion. At one moment (pp. 384, 385) he assumes that all events are mediated by natural causes; at another (p. 388) he calls the resurrection of Christ as inexplicable as the creation of the world. But if it is assumed once for all that no event takes place without the mediation of physical forces, then every event is practically just as much, and just as little, explicable as every other. Some events may be more familiar than others; but the causal connection which determines all that happens no one can see in any case. Only antecedents and consequents are seen. Therefore the resurrection of Christ ought, on this view of things, no more to be singled out and called inexplicable than any other, even the most trivial, occurrences. They are all alike inexplicable in that we cannot detect the secret forces which connect the antecedent with the consequent; they are all alike explicable in that natural forces are always assumed as in fact at work in producing the effects.

The problem before us is, how those who assume this negative or agnostic attitude respecting miracles become convinced of the uniqueness and authority of Jesus Christ. His extraordinary works do not constitute the ground of the conviction. It is

not known whether any of these works were strictly miraculous or not; but in any case, we are told, the alleged miracles of Christ "cannot be in themselves manifestations of God to us; for they gain for every one a religious significance only by the fact that they stand in connection with the person of Jesus."¹ But though there is unquestionably a certain truth in this, yet the assertion must hold equally of all the acts of Jesus, whether miraculous or not. And the question still remains, How do we come to a conviction of the uniqueness of Christ's person? Why do we ascribe to him a peculiar authority? The mode of proof, if such it may be called, which is resorted to by the class of theologians now under consideration, is, as might be inferred from the foregoing, purely subjective. While despising all metaphysical arguments, and while emphasizing the importance of the historical element in Christianity, they yet make one's personal experience the ultimate proof. Christ is called, with great emphasis, the Revelation of God. "But," says the same author above quoted,² "only that which delivers us from conflict with evil, that is, lifts us out of our previous lost estate, makes on us the impression of something overwhelmingly new, — of a veritable revelation." "To the Christian," he says again,³ "revelation is the self-revelation of God, that is, the fact that God has overpowered him by an indisputable proof of his almighty love, and has changed him from an unhappy man to a cheerful and confident one." But this revelation comes from "the historical appearance of Jesus, which belongs as much to our own reality as the coat which we put on, and the house which we inhabit."⁴ In our experience of trouble and of remorse "we can come to understand what there is wonderful and saving in the person of Jesus. That is, we perceive that he is the only part of the actual world which is not drawn down into this turbid confusion."⁵ This recognition of Jesus as sinless works, we are told, as a liberating force on us.⁶

¹ Herrmann, *Die Religion*, etc., p. 387.

² In an essay entitled *Der Begriff der Offenbarung*, read at a theological conference in Giessen, 1887, p. 6.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22. Cf. *Die Religion*, etc., p. 391, where a similar line of thought

There is altogether too much obscurity and confusion of thought here for a system which makes large claims to being the only one worthy of adoption in the present day. Revelation used to be regarded as a disclosure made concerning God,—his character and his purposes. According to the above-given statement, revelation is nothing but a new experience within ourselves,—another name, in fact, for conversion or regeneration. The old conception of Christ as having a supernatural nature and commission is abandoned; and the substitute for it is the obscure oracle, that the historical appearance of Jesus belongs as much to our own reality as the coat which we put on, or the house which we live in. Christ's uniqueness is affirmed. The more the old notion of his Deity is abandoned, the more diligently is the attribute of Deity ascribed to him. But when we ask what is meant by the attribute, we are told that it means that Jesus, in his life and teaching, so perfectly represented the divine character that he may be called divine. But it is added that, in whatever sense the appellation properly belongs to him, it belongs also to all men who, through faith in him, become the children of God.¹

But in all this there is no recognition of Christ's *authority*; or if there is, there is no explanation of it which can satisfy either the representations of the Bible or the plain common sense of the Christian. Christ's uniqueness is made to consist solely in the fact that he was the first and only one who has realized in his life the principle of the divine love. By virtue of his perfect obedience he came to feel that he was called to found a kingdom,—a community of men who should aim to

is found, only still more obscurely expressed. He there says, "The assurance of faith that his [Jesus'] willing and working is the willing and working of God, is permeated with the moral necessity from which the consciousness of our freedom is born. The moral necessity of recognizing what he willed as of the highest worth, and therefore as the substance of the divine will, makes the faith a free act. . . . Becoming conscious of one's own freedom, and understanding the end of Jesus' activity as the ultimate end to which we must conceive everything to be subject, — these two are one and the same thing."

¹ Ritschl, *Rechtfertigung*, etc., vol. iii. p. 351. He refers to Athanasius's expression (*De incarnatione verbi Dei*, § 54), "He was made man that we might be made God."

regulate their lives by the same principle. So far as appears, he received from God no clearly attested commission, and had no intrinsic right to exercise authority over others. The one peculiarity was his moral superiority over others, on the strength of which he found himself "called" to establish a kingdom of God on earth. But this leads us to consider more particularly another point.

3. The skeptical Christians, in their attempt to subordinate or eliminate the miraculous features of the Gospel histories, virtually admit the greater miracles, while they deny the lesser ones.

In acknowledging the fact of a special revelation, or of the sinlessness of Christ, one must acknowledge the fact of the miraculous. One may indeed ask: Cannot God make himself authoritatively known except by working a miracle? Can he not reveal himself through chosen prophets who need no credentials but the power and impressiveness of their own words? Can there not be a real revelation which does not involve such a strain on intelligent minds as comes from the assumption of the disturbance of natural law? Is the spiritual so dependent on the natural, or so indissolubly connected with it, that a revelation of spiritual truth need be accompanied by an interference with the order of nature?

We reply: The essential question is, whether there are *special* revelations or not. Let it be supposed that they are purely spiritual; yet if they are exceptional, that is, made at a particular time and to particular men as they are not to others, — made so as to be recognized by the recipients as something special to them, — made to be communicated by them as something authoritative to other men, — why, then all the difficulty which is urged against the ordinary view of revelation holds against this. If there is any sacredness or fixedness in physical law, the same tendency of mind which leads us to assume this must lead us also to assume an equal fixedness in the operation of mental and spiritual forces. If the supposed revelation infringes this fixed regularity of the mental world, then we have as real a miracle as when water is turned into wine by a word. The revelation would not be a *special* revelation without in some way disturb-

ing the ordinary operation of spiritual forces. It would otherwise simply be a revelation only in the loose sense, that all nature and all mind is a revelation of God. That is, the revelation, if such it could be called, would be something continuous and universal, such as every mind can perceive, and every mind may be an organ of. In other words, it would not be a revelation in any distinctive sense at all. If, however, the revelation is to be genuinely *special*, and yet purely spiritual, that is, if it is to consist in an extraordinary operation of the divine spirit on the human spirit, then that is simply to say that there is a miracle of inspiration. It implies an exceptional act of God, vesting in some one man an absolutely unique function. Even apart from the question how such a choice is attested, the selection itself of one man out of the millions around him as the medium of revealing to the rest of men the divine character and will, involves what is inexplicable by any of the known laws of the universe; it is a greater breach of the continuity of things than any merely physical miracle would be, by as much as the moral is higher than the physical. Whether the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit on men are called supernatural or not, such extraordinary influences as constitute a special and authoritative revelation of divine truth would be supernatural in the most emphatic sense. Here would be involved all that is difficult or obnoxious in the ordinary doctrine of miracles. The mere getting rid of physical and visible miracles would be a small gain; it would be rather a positive loss; for the addition of the physical and palpable miracle furnishes just the evidence which is needed of the genuineness of the alleged spiritual revelation. To take pains to ignore or deny the physical miracle, while admitting the spiritual one, would be like admitting the genuineness of a royal edict, while yet denying the genuineness or value of the royal seal which vouches for the genuineness of the document. True, the sealing-wax and the stamp on it are intrinsically of little worth, compared with the royal will expressed in the words sealed up. But it is yet of immense importance to have a voucher for the genuineness of the royal edict. Just so a spiritual revelation without any outward mark of it could not be verified as such.

We should have to depend simply on the word of the professed revealer. However great might be our confidence in him in general, the fact that he claims exceptional illumination would create a demand for exceptional attestation. To make war on the alleged attestations on the ground that they would be in conflict with natural law, and at the same time to defend the reality of the alleged revelation, which must equally have involved a departure from the order of nature, — this may be a rationalistic course, but it is not rational. He who can admit that Jesus Christ was chosen of God to communicate to men an authoritative revelation has yielded the whole ground as against the supernaturalist. After granting the greater miracle, he cuts but a sorry figure in trying to ignore or disbelieve the smaller ones which are grouped around the greater. He will gain nothing in the estimation of the common skeptic, so long as he sincerely retains what have always been regarded as the essential features of Christianity. And he will gain little more by using the traditional phraseology of supernatural Christianity, while yet virtually abandoning the supernatural conception of it. The only self-consistent course is either to deny the supernatural absolutely, and consequently to deny to Jesus Christ all authoritative relation to other men; or else to accept supernatural Christianity frankly according to the only trustworthy sources from which we derive a knowledge of it.

Similarly, the assumption of the sinless excellence of Jesus, which is admitted by many who question his alleged miracles, is exposed to all the objections which are urged against miracles in general, and to some peculiar difficulties besides. The *possibility* of perfect sinlessness must indeed be admitted. But none the less is the *possibility* of physical miracles admitted by all theists. But the theistic rationalist regards the improbability of miracles as so great as to make it practically impossible to believe in their occurrence. But there is no improbability of miracles in the sphere of nature greater than the improbability that any one man has ever yet lived a perfectly blameless life. All experience and observation and testimony discredit any such claim made by any one on his own behalf or on behalf of another. And if any one were perfect, the fact would

be peculiarly difficult to prove, since moral perfection is not something open to public view, and even *apparent* faultlessness would not generally be regarded as sufficient to outweigh the immense presumption there is that every man has in his heart thoughts and feelings which cannot meet the approval of the perfectly holy God. Men have sometimes professed to be perfect; even good men have made the claim. But the claim has been uniformly disallowed by others, and perhaps often for the very reason that the claim was made. No physical law is more uniform in its working than the recurrence of sin and imperfection in every human being. That any considerable number of men should have been willing to admit an exception in the case of Jesus is itself almost a miracle. It never could have happened, if he had been regarded as a mere man, possessed of no supernatural powers. He was accounted sinless *because the appearance and claim of sinlessness were accompanied by the appearance and claim of superhuman endowment*. The claim of superhuman endowment would have been disallowed but for the moral excellence; and the moral pre-eminence would have been disallowed but for the claim of supernatural endowment. Had he been a merely ordinary man, so far as his life was concerned, occupied with his trade, but laying claim to the distinction of sinlessness, the claim, even if not capable of positive disproof, would yet have made no great impression, and would have gained no wide acceptance, if any at all.¹ It was because he assumed the part of a divinely commissioned reformer and Redeemer, because he claimed not only uniqueness of character, but uniqueness of nature and uniqueness of intrinsic authority over men, that his claim of sinlessness was admitted. The two claims could not but stand or fall together. He who admits the sinlessness of Christ, unless he does so blindly, because others have done it before, can find no justifying reason for his belief, unless he assumes, together with the sinlessness, a uniqueness of nature or of relation which involves all the

¹ F. W. Newman, in his *What is Christianity without Christ?* in which he arraigns the moral character of Jesus as extremely defective and faulty, shows what is the tendency of a thorough abandonment of the belief in the supernatural.

essential marks of a miracle. When, therefore, one is troubled by the allegations of particular miracles wrought by Christ, but is ready to admit Christ himself to be the one sinless individual of the race, and the one man specially commissioned by God to communicate the divine counsels to man, we can only call this a conspicuous example of straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel.

4. The skeptical or agnostic attitude towards miracles leads to irrational caprice in the treatment of the historical sources of information respecting the origin of Christianity.

The miraculous is in fact so inextricably interwoven with the earliest extant narratives of Christ that it cannot be eliminated except by the most arbitrary and unreasonable process. The history of modern criticism of the Gospels has shown that, whatever liberty may have been taken and accorded in discussing the questions relating to the age, genuineness, composition, and authenticity of the New Testament books, the one thing that cannot be got rid of in them is the supernatural.¹ Paulus's attempt to explain the miracles as natural events not understood by the narrators to be supernatural, was long ago discarded as ridiculously arbitrary. The mythical theory has met an almost similar fate, though there are still many who cling to some of its assumptions. But the whole inspiration of the effort to expurgate the miraculous from the Gospels comes from the general notion that miracles are incredible, — from the miraculophobia of the present day. By no sifting process can the miraculous be eliminated from these books. No external or internal evidence goes to show that this element is a later addition. Mark's Gospel, widely reputed to present the most primitive extant form of the evangelic history, is, as full of it as any other, and perhaps even gives it greater prominence. John's Gospel, the latest of the four, exhibits no essential contrast with the others in its portraiture of the supernatural element in Christ's life. One may conjecture that there are late interpolations, or that all the Gospels

¹ *Vide* Prof. J. H. Thayer, *Criticism Confirmatory of the Gospels* (in *Boston Lectures for 1871*); Prof. G. P. Fisher, *Supernatural Origin of Christianity*; C. A. Row, *The Supernatural in the N. T.*; *The Jesus of the Evangelists*.

were written in the second century; but this is pure conjecture, contrary to all the evidence in the case. But if one choose to adopt such a hypothesis, the only result is to throw the whole history of the incipient church into an impenetrable cloud. The person of Christ, his character, his claims, his peculiar relation to his followers, — all this is left to be thought of as one pleases. The “critical feeling” which strikes out the miraculous stories must construct the true story of Jesus as best it can. Early traditions can count for only so much as the critic chooses to let them; and this is very little, for the early traditions are all saturated with the supernatural.

Whoever adopts the principle that the narratives of miracles are somehow to be got over or explained away cannot consistently stop short of a similar process with reference to all those passages which ascribe to Jesus a superhuman dignity and authority. These representations, however, run all through the Gospel histories. No critical suspicion belongs to the sections which portray Jesus’ unique claims; they belong to the warp and woof of the history. As above shown, the same reasons which can be urged against the authenticity of the stories of miracles bear with equal, if not with greater, weight against everything which pictures Christ as the only begotten Son of God. And the actual result is that, according to the degree of logical consistency with which the critical canon is applied, we find the miraculophobists now acknowledging almost the highest that has ever been held respecting the personal dignity of Christ; now recognizing him as unique in sinlessness, though merely human; now putting him at the head of the world’s sages and prophets; now making him merely a good man who somehow came to be regarded as fulfilling the Old Testament anticipations of the Messiah; now regarding him as a gifted enthusiast who made some impression on his contemporaries; now calling him a man of erratic impulses and of very defective virtue. Any theory of Jesus’ character and calling can be derived from the New Testament narratives, provided one exercises his critical feeling in such a way as to pronounce mythical or unauthentic what he happens not to like. There is something almost pitiable in the manner in which some critics treat the question of

Christ's miracles. Those passages¹ in which Jesus is reported to have refused to work miracles to gratify the curiosity of captious or superstitious men, or in which he seems to depreciate the value of supernatural manifestations, are pronounced undoubtedly authentic. But the more numerous ones,² in which Jesus is represented as appealing to his own miraculous works as evidence of his divine commission, are assumed to be the work of a legendary imagination. If there were anything like contradiction between the two classes of passages, there would be at least some plausibility in this method of explanation; but of contradiction there is not the faintest trace. The two representations are even found virtually combined in one verse (John iv. 11). That Jesus should refuse to make a thaumaturgic display of his power is precisely what we should expect of him, if he was the sort of miracle-worker that the Gospels picture him to be. That he should not have expected to convince the people of his Messiahship by the *mere* exercise of his miraculous gifts, but rather, and chiefly, by the impressiveness and authority of his character and teaching, — this, too, is quite in accordance with intrinsic probability and with the narrative itself. But Matthew Arnold says:³ "It is most remarkable, and the best proof of the simplicity, seriousness, and good faith which intercourse with Jesus Christ had inspired, that witnesses with a fixed prepossession, and having no doubt at all as to the interpretation to be put on Christ's acts and career, should yet admit so much of what makes against themselves and their own power of interpreting. For them, it was a thing beyond all doubt, that by miracles Jesus manifested

¹ As Matt. xii. 39 (xvi. 4; Mark viii. 12; Luke xi. 29); Luke xvi. 31; John iv. 48, vi. 30 *sqq.*

² As Matt. ix. 6 (Mark ii. 10; Luke v. 24); xi. 2-5 (Luke vii. 18-22); Mark iii. 20-30 (Luke xi. 20); Luke x. 13, xiii. 32; John x. 25, 38, xi. 42, xiv. 11. Yet in the face of this fact Schenkel (*Grundlehren des Christenthums* § 263) does not hesitate dogmatically to affirm that Jesus, "in order decisively to assert himself as Redeemer, never appealed to an external superiority, to miracles, or to the testimony of tradition. This was done by the Evangelists and Apostles after him, not by himself." How convenient it is to be omniscient!

³ *Literature and Dogma*, p. 158 (fifth edition, 1876).

forth his glory and induced the faithful to believe in him. Yet what checks to this paramount and all-governing belief of theirs do they report from Jesus himself!" And then he goes on to quote the passages above referred to, in which Jesus is described as blaming the people who were greedy for signs and wonders. Of course, now, the evangelists, if they had had less "simplicity," would not have stultified themselves by admitting such contradictory reports! If they had been intelligent enough to see that they were guilty of such self-contradiction, they would have omitted those passages in which Jesus is made to disclaim the character of a miracle-worker. We should not have been so fortunate as to have even these few clues to a correct knowledge of the fact. Even the author of the Fourth Gospel, although a man of "philosophical acquirements," is afflicted with the same simplicity. "He deals in miracles just as confidingly" as the other historians,¹ and, like them, he allows the reported language of Christ to contradict his own conception of Christ. How grateful we ought to be that the evangelists were so "simple" as not to know when they were guilty of the most flagrant self-contradiction! How fortunate for the world that the writing of the Gospel narrative fell into the hands of men who were so unintelligent and honest that they told the truth, as it were, in spite of themselves! Inasmuch as they were "men who saw thaumaturgy in all that Jesus did,"² their intention must have been to represent his whole life as a grand thaumaturgical exhibition, and to represent him as claiming the power to do wonders, and as appealing to the wonders in proof of his extraordinary commission. Jesus, to be sure, did nothing of the sort. He was, on the contrary, intensely opposed to the whole miracle mania. "To convey at all to such hearers of him that there was any objection to miracles, his own sense of the objection must have been profound; and to get them, who neither shared nor understood it, to repeat it a few times, he must have repeated it many times."³ The phenomenon, then, according to Mr. Arnold, was this: Jesus and John the Baptist were contemporary

¹ *Literature and Dogma*, p. 178 (fifth edition, 1876).

² *Ibid.*, p. 148.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

prophets.¹ But neither Jesus nor John wrought any miracles. Of John this is expressly recorded; ² and in none of the Gospels is there the faintest hint that he exercised or claimed any miraculous power. He was the greatest of all the prophets of the Jewish dispensation.³ He was a second Elijah.⁴ But although the original Elijah was universally esteemed a great miracle-worker; and although the second Elijah created a most powerful sensation by his preaching, — yet he never wrought and was never imagined to have wrought a single miracle. Not only his contemporaries, but his reporters, show not the slightest tendency to ascribe to him any thaumaturgic power whatever. He had no occasion to refuse to work miracles, for he was never asked to work them. He did not need to protest against the popular tendency to expect miraculous works from great prophets; for in *his* case the people seemed to be so wholly intent on the sermons which he preached, and to be so convinced by his preaching, that they never thought to ask for miracles as his credentials.⁵ Jesus, however, though he preached the same sermon of repentance, and also wrought no miracles, somehow found himself continually met by a demand that he should perform them. He had to refuse and keep refusing. He had to tell the people over and over, that miracles could not be performed, and would do no good if they could be. He had to din this teaching into the heads of the superstitious people, till at last, through sheer repetition, the words stuck, and were handed down amongst the other things that Jesus said, and even found their way into the records that have been preserved down to our time; although the narrators themselves could

¹ Mr. Arnold, indeed, does not thus speak of John in comparison with Jesus; but he cannot take exception to this representation of the Biblical description of him.

² John x. 41.

³ Matt. xi. 11.

⁴ Mark ix. 13.

⁵ This fact seems to have been overlooked by Strauss also, who (*Leben Jesu*, § 42) accounts for the ascription of miracles to Jesus by the following generations by saying that, as Moses and the principal prophets were reputed to have wrought miracles, “it was natural that miracles were likewise expected of every one who claimed to be a prophet.” Why, then, we must ask, did not the people ascribe miracles to John? For he certainly claimed to be a prophet, and his claim was admitted.

not understand how he could have failed to be all the time doing marvels, and were so persuaded of this that they have filled their story of him with accounts of his thaumaturgical doings, and represented him not only as doing miracles, but as appealing to them in attestation of his divine commission! We owe to nothing but to their incorrigible dullness — or “simplicity” — the fortunate chance that, in a few instances, this refusal of Jesus to have anything to do with miracles has crept into the writings of the very men who did not and could not conceive of him otherwise than as a great thaumaturgus.

Now, how does Mr. Arnold account for this marked difference between the description of Jesus and that of John the Baptist? ¹ How does he find out that his is the true explanation of the phenomena of the Gospel histories? How can he be so sure that the whole current of the narrative is false as regards miracles, and only these few straggling passages reveal to us the exact fact? How does he know, on the one hand, that Jesus did not, as Renan makes him, ² yield to the popular clamor for a startling sign, and actually pose as a thaumaturgus? How has he made himself sure that his own father was altogether mistaken, on the other, when he said that the absence of miracles in the Gospels would have been far more wonderful than their presence? The only answer to all this, and other questions that might be raised, is that the “literary and scientific criticism” of the present day has decided that the fact must be as Mr. Matthew Arnold states it. This kind of criticism, he tells us, ³ requires “the finest heads and the most sure tact.” The theologians who have undertaken to interpret the New Testament have all been devoid of these necessary qualifications, and therefore they have made “a pretty mess of it.” ⁴ Men who might have done better have devoted themselves to other departments of work. We are left to infer that Mr. Arnold is the critic with a fine head and a sure tact who has had the boldness to assail the popular superstitions, and to tell us what is genuine in the Gospels and what is the product of the legendary mania.

¹ Cf. on this point G. P. Fisher, *Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief*, p. 162.

² *Life of Jesus*, p. 193. ³ *Literature and Dogma*, p. 184. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 185

The sum of the matter is that, according to the theory in question, the supernatural must be ruled out at the outset; but, inasmuch as the supernatural permeates the whole evangelical history like an indwelling spirit, it becomes a difficult problem to discover how to eliminate it, and yet define what shall be allowed to remain as genuine and authentic. No wonder that for the task a very fine head and a most sure tact are essential. Mr. Arnold, indeed, himself, though he affirms that the literary and scientific criticism of the Bible is "very hard,"¹ yet discourses as if it were very easy to him. He pronounces oracularly that certain utterances bear unmistakable marks of having been really uttered by Jesus, and that certain others as clearly are spurious, though attributed to him just as positively. His criterion is simply and solely *his* conception of what Jesus was. What, according to his feeling, Jesus might have said or ought to have said, that he will accept as historic, — that, and nothing else. Having decided that miracles never were wrought, and that consequently Jesus did not work any, he must solve the problem how so many narratives of miracles got into the record. The gist of the explanation given is that the Jewish Christians had been led by their training to *expect* miracles as the mark of their Messiah, and that, having accepted Jesus as the Messiah, they felt, when they looked back, as if he *must* have wrought miracles. Well, no doubt the Jews had had great expectations of what the promised Messiah would do. He was to appear suddenly, and was to deliver Israel by irresistible power from the hand of oppressors. He was to be a great king, immeasurably greater than even David; and under his reign the Jews were to enjoy prosperity and peace such as they had never known before. These were the prominent and absorbing features of the Jewish Messianic idea. That the Messiah was to be a miracle-worker of *such* a sort as Jesus is represented in the Gospels to have been, is *not* one of the features of the Messianic idea. Now, if the characteristics of the evangelic records are to be explained as reflections of the Jewish expectations rather than as a simple account of facts, then the question arises, Why do not the Gospels represent

¹ *Literature and Dogma*, p. 155.

Jesus as a temporal king, and so as fulfilling the Jewish expectations? If the writers could not help seeing thaumaturgy in all that Jesus did, although neither the Jewish apocalyptic writers¹ nor the Old Testament writers had ever pictured him in that character, still more ought we to infer that they must have seen royalty and regal power in his whole life, since this is just what the prophets and apocryphal writers *had* emphasized as his leading characteristic. It is easy, of course, to reply that the facts were too manifestly opposed to such a legend. The Jews were not delivered from their oppressors, and were not enjoying the expected Messianic prosperity; and therefore they could not imagine that Jesus had done what, as was only too obvious, had not been done. Very well; then it appears that the Jewish ideal of the Messiah had not been realized in its most prominent feature; but *nevertheless* Jesus was regarded as having been the promised Messiah. What necessity, then, was there for a legendary ascription to him of miracles, which were *not* a prominent feature in the Jewish ideal of him? But more than this: the popular expectation respecting the Messiah must have been abandoned at the outset by all those who believed in Jesus as the Christ. If (as we are asked to believe) he wrought no miracles in fact, then he was accepted as the Messiah, although he did not fulfil the expectations either as regards royal power or as regards miraculous power. In short, the carnal Jewish notion had to be entirely given up. If still he was conceived as the one prophesied of in the Old Testament, it was by virtue of a different interpretation from that which had hitherto generally prevailed. The *Christian* conception of the Messiah (according to the theory of Mr. Arnold) must originally have been entirely defecated of all those Jewish fancies which invested the Messiah with political and thaumaturgic power, else Jesus could never have been acknowledged as Messiah at all. If so, how was it that twenty or thirty years later, or even still sooner, within the circle of those same Christians and their immediate successors, it became "a thing beyond all doubt that by

¹ On the ante-Christian Messianic conceptions, cf. Hilgenfeld, *Die jüdische Apokalyptik*, and *Messias Judaeorum*. Also James Drummond, *The Jewish Messiah*.

miracles Jesus manifested forth his glory and induced the faithful to believe in him?"¹ Originally, according to Mr. Arnold, it must have been beyond all doubt that Jesus did no miracles at all; now, only a little while afterwards, and among the people who had received the Christian faith most directly, just the opposite had come to be beyond all doubt! The fleshly Jewish conception, which had been finally and definitively overcome before the apostles publicly preached Christ to their countrymen, returned and took full possession of their minds as regards that one particular, although in all other respects the carnal Jewish conception was and continued to be entirely repudiated!

Take the case of the resurrection of Christ. How plain the whole thing is to Mr. Arnold: "The more the miraculousness of the story deepens, as after the death of Jesus, the more does the texture of the incidents become loose and floating, the more does the very air and aspect of things seem to tell us we are in wonderland. Jesus after his resurrection not known to Mary Magdalene, taken by her for the gardener; appearing *in another form*, and not known by the two disciples going with him to Emmaus and at supper with him there; not known by his most intimate apostles on the borders of the Sea of Galilee; and presently, out of these vague beginnings, the recognitions getting asserted, then the ocular demonstrations, the final commissions, the ascension; one hardly knows which of the two to call most evident here, the perfect simplicity and good faith of the narrators, or the plainness with which they themselves really say to us: *Behold a legend growing under your eyes!*"²

What a blessing it is to have a "fine head" and a "sure tact"! This legend which grows up under our eyes grew up in three days! Beyond all contradiction, within less than two months after the crucifixion the apostles were boldly preaching the resurrection as an undeniable fact, and rested their whole case on the truth of this allegation. What now were the apostles alleging at that time? That Jesus had appeared, but was "not known"? Were they preaching about Mary Magdalene's having seen somebody whom she took to be a gardener? Were they

¹ *Literature and Dogma*, p. 158.

² *Ibid.*, p. 151.

telling about some unknown person that had appeared to them on the shore of the Lake of Galilee? Were they urging the Jews to accept Jesus as their Messiah for the reason that two men had had an interesting talk with a mysterious stranger on the way to Emmaus? Of course not. The "legend" was already full-grown. So far as this story is concerned, it might have been recorded at once. In a few days or weeks after the crucifixion the disciples were telling confidently, not of an *unknown* Jesus who had appeared to them, but of an unmistakable reappearance of the Crucified One. In spite of Mr. Arnold's "fine head," it is palpable that there was no slow and gradual growth of a legendary story, but that the story was from the beginning unequivocal, well-defined, in all essential features precisely what the New Testament records present to us.

One thing is certain. The supernatural is so inwrought into the very substance of the New Testament, that unbelieving critics can eliminate it only by the most arbitrary and *uncritical* process, and can never come to any agreement among themselves as to what is to be accepted and what rejected in the evangelical portraiture of Jesus Christ and his work.¹

5. The agnostic or skeptical attitude towards the supernatural leads to the assumption of an unwarrantable distinction between the present Christian world and the original Christians in their relation to the evidences of Christianity.

Miracles, either as real or as apparent, are often acknowledged to have served a useful purpose in the original introduction of Christianity, but are declared to be now no longer serviceable. Christianity is said to be accepted now, not on account of the historical miracles, but on account of its intrinsic worth. The miracles are so far removed from us, so intrinsically difficult to substantiate, and so obnoxious to the scientific spirit of the times, that they seem to be a burden rather than a help. Even some strenuous defenders of the reality of the Christian miracles are ready to make this concession. Thus J. Hirzel² says:

¹ For a good exhibition of the arbitrariness of miraculophobists in their treatment of the Gospels, *vide* Henry Rogers's critique of Strauss and Renan, in his *Reason and Faith, and other Essays*, pp. 137 *sqq.*

² *Ueber das Wunder*, p. 3. Similarly L. I. Rückert (*Rationalismus*, p.

“We grant at the outset . . . that the bare historical narratives of miracles do not have the evidential force for us which the miracles themselves had for the eye-witnesses of them. We can let it pass as quite orthodox when one says, ‘I believed *at first*, not *because*, but *in spite*, of miracles.’ Yes, we believe *now*, not in Christ on account of the outward miracles, but in the miracles on account of Christ.”

Now that there is a difference between us and the first Christians in respect to the acceptance of the gospel may be freely admitted. We receive Christianity as a traditional impartation, whereas the first disciples had to be convinced by the direct evidence. We have not the advantage of an immediate perception of the miraculous signs; and we have the advantage of the history of the practical working of Christianity in the world. But when we narrowly examine the matter, we find that the evidential force of miracles is after all not essentially different now from what it was originally. If it is true that Christianity now is not for the sake of miracles, but miracles for the sake of Christianity, so was it equally true when Christ was living on the earth. If the miracles are by themselves now insufficient to convince all men of the truth of Christianity, so they were at the time they were performed; they were either disbelieved or at least were not accepted as establishing Jesus’ Messianic claims. The apostles appealed, it is true, to miracles; but they laid the chief stress on the message of salvation which Christ had come to bring. The great command was not, “Believe in miracles,” but, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” But the two things were not, and could not be, disjoined, as though the one could be accepted and the other doubted or rejected. The wonderful works were everywhere and always treated as the natural and appropriate badge of the wonderful person. Christ, as an altogether unique man, unique in his re-

136), while he admits the genuineness of some of Christ’s miracles, yet says of Christ, that, “since in his death his glory has been made manifest to the world, faith needs miracles no longer, but rather may begin and continue independently of them, so that, even if no record of any of his miracles had been preserved, his nature and the possibility of such a being would suffer no detriment.”

lation to God, unique in his relation to other men, was regarded as unique also in his relation to nature. Claiming to be the Son of God, the special messenger of God, the Mediator between God and man, he could not have been fully credited unless he had brought convincing proofs of the trustworthiness of his claims. His extraordinary claims needed to be matched and substantiated by extraordinary works.

And how is the case different now? We cannot, it is true, be eye-witnesses of Christ's miracles; but neither can we be ear-witnesses of his words. And if we had been contemporaries of Christ, and had been witnesses of the physical miracles, yet if we had received no impression of the moral and spiritual marvellousness of his person, we should still have been unconvinced, just as the Jews were, who in spite of all they saw and heard remained unbelievers. There is indeed this difference between the present and the past, that the claims of Christianity to be divine have been confirmed by the lapse of time, by the history of its progress and beneficent effects. But this history is not sufficient to convince all; many enemies of Christianity contend even that it has done more harm than good. The difference, therefore, between the present and the original relation of men to the claims of Christ, is practically null. Those who are ready to accept him in all his spiritual claims, but stumble at the miracles, simply fail to recognize the fact that the only Christ whom they know about is he who is brought to their knowledge by the Christian Church and the Christian Scriptures, and that this Christ is and always has been in the Christian Church regarded as a person of superhuman nature, and as possessing supernatural powers. The person and the works have been indissolubly connected. They have supplemented and illustrated each other. The spiritual claims, according to all the evidence before us, never were in the first place admitted, except as confirmed by the supernatural manifestations. And from the beginning the two have been handed down together inseparably intertwined. What convinced the apostles was used by them as a means of convincing others. It was the resurrection of Christ which overcame their last fears, and became the crowning evidence to them that Jesus was the real

Messiah. And this resurrection was used in their preaching as the argument which should persuade others than the direct witnesses of it. He, then, who accepts the Messianic claims, while rejecting or ignoring the supernatural proofs of those claims, is simply accepting the apostles' testimony as to Jesus' Messiahship, without accepting their testimony as to the facts which convinced them of his Messiahship. That is, he admits the truth, but does not admit the validity of that by which the truth has been established. This is obviously an untenable position. One may well believe that the sun is the body around which all the planets revolve, on the strength of astronomical testimony. He may accept that testimony without understanding or even knowing the reasons which have convinced astronomers of the truth of this proposition. So far one may well go. And indeed this fairly represents the state of mind of a large part of mankind who accept the Copernican system. But if a man rises up and says that he accepts the Copernican doctrine as to the centrality of the sun in our system, but doubts the validity of the reasons which have led to the adoption of this doctrine, we can only say that such a state of mind is irrational. What ground can a man have for adopting the theory, so long as he questions the correctness of the decisive reasons which have led men to propound it? Or suppose a man should say that he believes in the Copernican doctrine *in spite* of the reasons which have led astronomers to teach it, what should we think of him? Yet this is a fair parallel to the attitude of those who profess to believe in Christ without believing in his miracles, or to believe in him in spite of the alleged miracles. Whoever takes this ground must sooner or later, if honest with himself, come to see that it really implies that he does not believe that the supernatural manifestations ever took place at all. If they were facts; if God broke into the uniformity of the world's order by miraculous deeds, — it could not have been a matter of indifference whether the interruption was recognized as a reality; it could not have been done without some extraordinary reason.¹ And if on the strength of those supernatural

¹ It is hard to see into the state of mind which can have led Professor Seeley (*Natural Religion*, p. 260), after he has elaborately argued the needless-

demonstrations Christ became definitely accepted as the Redeemer of men and has ever since been preached as such, the reasons which were sufficient to form the *foundation* of the Christian church can never have lost their validity. If they have lost their validity for us, then they never *deserved* to have validity for the first believers. "To this complexion it must come at last." To believe in a Christ who wrought or perhaps wrought no miracles is to believe in a Christ whom nobody knows anything about. The Christ who has been made known to us is a supernatural and miracle-working being. He is one who verified his claims to be the Son of God by his mighty works. If those mighty works ever had evidential force, they have it now. Either Christianity is a delusion, or the supernatural is inseparable from it. But this leads us to another observation.

6. The agnostic or negative attitude towards miracles must necessarily lead to the assumption that Christianity rests on a fraud. The attempt, and the pretense, indeed, may be simply to leave it an open question whether miracles occurred or not. The intention is to take Christianity simply as an operative system of truths and influences, and let it be its own recommendation, irrespective of the disputed questions about the external accessories of its first introduction. But the historical fact is that Christianity has all along professed to stand on a supernatural foundation. Its Founder has all along been regarded as a supernatural being, proving his unique commission by miraculous deeds as well as by prophetic message. When it is said, as is done especially by the Ritschl school,¹ that the greatness and uniqueness of Jesus must be argued from the effect which he has produced, rather than from any supernatural signs that marked his life, it seems to be forgotten that this effect, the power of Christianity over men, has come just from this *supposed* divinity of its origin and authority, — a divinity attested by divine proofs in the form of miraculous works wrought by Christ and his apostles. The unbroken traditions of the church agree with its oldest historical records in insisting that this was

ness of a supernatural religion, to admit that, as "supplementing a natural one, it may be precious, nay, perhaps indispensable."

¹ Similarly Weisse, *Philosophische Dogmatik*, vol. iii. p. 306.

the fact; and on the ground of this fact a positive *authority* has been ascribed to Christianity over against all opposing doctrines and systems. The New Testament shows incontestably that a *belief* in Christ's superhuman nature and power pervaded all his early followers, and in connection with his unique purity and exaltedness of character and prophetic power of utterance was the condition of their accepting him as the Messiah and Saviour. Particularly his miraculous resurrection from the dead is everywhere represented as the vital fact without which the Christian Church would not have been planted, and without a belief in which Christianity is not genuine. Critics of the most opposite schools agree in holding that the establishment of Christianity originally depended on the *belief* in Christ's resurrection. So much seems to be certain. All the New Testament writers lay the greatest stress on it as the turning point in the incipient history of Christianity. The Evangelists are on this point exceptionally minute. The history of the first preaching of Christianity represents the resurrection of Christ as the central fact insisted on as vouching for his divine commission. The apostles in their writings agree in the same. Everything conspires to show that Paul used not too strong an expression, when he declared that, if Christ was not raised, the faith of the Christians was vain.

When, therefore, we are told that men nowadays believe in Christianity, if at all, not on account of miracles, but in spite of them, and when this statement is designed to mean that the reality of the New Testament miracles is at least to be seriously doubted, if not flatly denied, it behooves us to consider just what this position implies. Either the alleged miracles were genuine, or they were not. We may be in doubt which horn of the dilemma to seize; but our doubt does not alter the fact of the dilemma. It is indeed possible for a man to be a good Christian while beset by painful doubts respecting miracles. But an abnormal experience is no rule for men in general. Such a state of mind can, from the nature of the case, in any thinking and logical man, be only a transitional state. For the fact must be either that Jesus rose from the dead, or that he did not. He either did, or did not, work veritable miracles in con-

firmation of his Messianic claims. And the necessary consequences of admitting either side of the alternative must be accepted. Suppose, then, the fact to be that the alleged miracles were not real miracles. Be the explanation what it may be; let it be imagined that Jesus and the apostles conspired to deceive, or that they were all together fanatics and self-deceived, or that the stories of the miracles were a legendary growth. Suppose what one may, the fact remains, that the founding of the Christian Church depended on the *belief* in Christ's supernatural power and authority. If, then, the miracles were not genuine, the successful starting of the Christian religion on its career depended on a delusion. And not only the starting of it, but its continued growth has rested on that same delusion. For, though the spiritual elements of Christianity may be distinguished from the physical miracles which Christ is said to have wrought, yet the most vital truths of Christianity involve the ascription of supernaturalness to Christ's person and authority, — all that is essential, in short, in the doctrine of miracles. But even on the supposition that these conceptions of the uniqueness of Christ's nature and power are exaggerations; that Jesus' moral teachings constituted the essence of his religion, and that all else may be discarded, — still the same fact confronts us: that the successful establishment of the Christian Church, with whatever of good it has brought to the world, depended on the belief in Christ's supernatural endowments. Such a relation of things does not trouble one who, like Strauss,¹ regards Christianity in general as of little worth. But one who calls himself a Christian and really regards Christianity as embodying God's revealed will, if he rejects or doubts the reality of the miraculous attestation, has to face the difficulty, that a divine revelation, in order to gain credence and power in the world, had to be introduced by a deception. No matter how innocent the apostles may be imagined to have been; no matter how ingeniously the origin of the notion of the resurrection and the other miracles may be explained. The blame of deliberate deception may, by a violent treatment of the records, possibly be rolled off from the human agents; but in any case it

¹ *Leben Jesu für das deutsche Volk*, p. 601.

cannot be rolled off from the divine agent. For if Christianity is a real revelation; if that term is used, and no *present* deception is intended in the use of it. — then, on the assumption that the miracles were not facts, our only conclusion must be that God arranged that they should be *thought* to be facts, in order that he might accomplish what otherwise would have been impossible; that is, he had to arrange that the kingdom of divine *truth* should be indebted to a *lie* for its introduction and firm foundation in the world.¹

This is the inevitable conclusion, if we adopt the one side of the alternative. If one is not ready to take that, there is no legitimate escape from taking the other, and admitting heartily that the miracles were real facts. When one says that he believes in Christianity in spite of the miracles, not on account of them, meaning that he has no opinion about them, but would prefer it if there were no demand made on him to believe in them,

¹ "Revolution, then, even if it does not need the truth of miracles for the benefit of their proof, still requires it in order not to be crushed under the weight of their falsehood." — Mozley, *On Miracles*, 6th ed., p. 16. The only plausible escape from this conclusion is to say that God, in making the establishment of Christianity depend on the belief in the reality of miracles, was only *accommodating* himself to the weakness of man. God often overrules evil for good, but without thereby approving the evil. If the gospel could not gain a foothold in the world without being supposed to be accompanied by miracles, was it not better that it should gain a foothold through such a delusion than not at all?

The reply is obvious. The objection assumes that miracles not only *did* not, but *could* not, occur. For if they were possible, and if a belief in them was required in order to the introduction of the true religion, then God would surely have wrought real ones, rather than to have allowed his truth to rest on a delusive belief in unreal ones. But that God *could* work miracles is not denied by any genuine Christian theist. Consequently the dilemma remains: the miracles were either a fact or a fraud.

Moreover, the allegation that a delusive belief in miracles was necessary in order to the introduction of Christianity, is-self-destructive. The notion that the stories of the miracles were a legendary growth (the ordinary form of the skeptical theory at present) presupposes not only that Jesus himself wrought no miracles, but that in his day no one supposed him to have wrought them. Therefore it has to be assumed that Christianity, after all, did get a foothold without a belief in miracles, and that only its later propagation was promoted by the belief. But if the belief was not necessary in order to the establishment of Christianity, then it was not necessary in order to the propagation of it.

then we can only say that such an attitude towards the miracles differs from a downright denial of them only in so far as it is the offspring of an indolent or illogical mind. Since the *fact* cannot be equivocal, since the miracles must have been either realities or delusions, an intelligent mind, alert to see the necessary bearings of this alternative, cannot long remain in a state of indecision. No vague generalities about the difficulty of defining miracles, or of ascertaining the exact facts of the gospel histories, can get rid of this inexorable dilemma, that, so long as one accepts Christianity as a divinely revealed religion, he must hold that the miracles were either a fact or a fraud. But to regard the introduction of Christianity as accomplished by a fraud is of course inconsistent with any honest faith in it as a really divine and special revelation. If one nevertheless rebels against the acceptance of the miraculous history, it only remains for him to treat Christianity as nothing but a purely human growth, and the miracles as the offspring of a more or less unconscious imagination or exaggeration. In other words, there is no middle ground between the position of such a man as Strauss, and that of him who accepts Christianity as a genuine revelation, and the supernatural as an essential and indispensable part and proof of the revelation.

An agnostic or skeptical attitude towards the Christian miracles is, therefore, intrinsically at war with genuine acceptance of Christianity, and can be assumed by a professed Christian only inconsistently, or at the expense of rejecting, with the miracles, fundamental elements of the Christian system. The refutation of this negative attitude towards the supernatural has incidentally indicated what the positive attitude must be. Miracles must be regarded as having an important evidential value. If they were really performed, they could not have been without a purpose. To suppose them to have been useless, or to have served even as a hinderance in the way of men's accepting the salutary truths of the gospel, is to accuse God of pure wantonness.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF MIRACLES (*Continued*).

WE come, then, to the second of the above-mentioned views respecting the evidential value of miracles, and ask,

II. Does faith in Christianity depend on antecedent faith in the alleged miracles of Christ?

The assurance which we have reached, that miracles have a positive evidential worth, does not necessarily imply an affirmative answer to this question. On the contrary, there are weighty reasons for answering it in the negative.

If we take Christian faith in a wide and loose sense, meaning by it merely a general assent to the excellence of Christian morality, it is manifest that men can believe in it, while disbelieving or doubting the genuineness of the miracles. They *can*, for they *do*. But it may be said, and justly said, that this is not the whole of genuine Christian faith. It is not faith such as Jesus himself required, and such as the Christian Church has always regarded as necessary in order to constitute a man in the proper sense a Christian.

We may, however, observe further that even genuine faith in Jesus Christ as the Saviour of sinners may be exercised by those who do not first make a study of the apologetic value of miracles, and come to their faith by that road. It *may be*, for it *is*. The young who receive their knowledge of the way of salvation directly from the instruction of their elders do not need, and are not able, to examine the evidences of the genuineness of the Gospel miracles before they can surrender themselves to Christ in penitent trust. Doubtless they are taught also to believe the stories of the miraculous deeds. But this belief need not precede the other, so as to constitute the indispensable foundation of it.

Furthermore, if we look at the subject from the more directly apologetic point of view, there is an infelicity in making a con-

viction of the genuineness of the reported miracles serve as the indispensable antecedent of Christian faith. We meet at once this serious difficulty: that the argument for the genuineness of the miracles, however plausible and cogent it may seem to one favorably inclined to Christianity, cannot, when taken apart from the character and professions of the alleged miracle-worker, be made convincing to one who is predisposed against both Christianity and stories of miraculous events. Marvels are not necessarily miracles; and experience is so full of strange things and of plausible, though deceptive, pretensions to miraculous power, that one can frame, if he will, some explanation of any alleged miracle rather than admit its genuineness. The miraculous events alleged to have accompanied the introduction of Christianity are now, moreover, far distant. Even the oldest vouchers for their occurrence cannot be proved to have been eye-witnesses of the events; or even if they were, how is it to be demonstrated that the alleged miracles were not fraudulent performances of impostors? One may, with Paley,¹ show how much better attested the Christian miracles are than the Pagan or ecclesiastical ones. Still, at the best, the difference is only one of degree; and even if one find himself unable to explain away the apparent miracles and show just what the actual facts were, he can yet frame hypotheses. The immense presumption which all intelligent men admit to lie against the occurrence of all miracles, must be overcome before one can be expected to give a favorable attention to the evidence for the occurrence of any particular miracle. But even if that has been overcome, and one feels the need of a divine revelation and of a supernatural attestation of it, yet the question is not settled, *what* alleged revelation, and *what* pretended miraculous accompaniments of one, are to be accepted as genuine. Not only must the general presumption against miracles be overcome, but a presumption in favor of some particular medium of a revelation must be created, else his pretended miracles will be rejected as a specious delusion, even though they cannot be explained.

We cannot, therefore, fully assent to the position taken by Dr. W. M. Taylor in his contention against Archbishop Trench.

¹ *Evidences of Christianity*, part i., prop. ii. chap. ii.

In reply to the objection that "power cannot in the nature of things confirm truth," he says, "That all depends on whose power it is. Now, in this instance it is the power of God; and the moral perfection of Deity gives its own character to the forth-putting of that power in confirmation of the claims of him at whose word the miracle is wrought."¹ But this argument presupposes that the fact of a miracle wrought by divine power has been fully demonstrated, and is accepted as fact. If it be assumed that God has commissioned a prophet to work miracles in connection with the prophetic message, why, then of course this peculiar display of power must naturally be regarded as a divine confirmation of the spoken word. The difficulty, however, lies further back. How is one to be made indubitably certain that the alleged miracle *is* a display of divine power? When the enemies of Christ accuse him of being an agent of Beelzebub rather than of God, or if some one should affirm that his marvelous deeds were nothing but skilful acts of jugglery, how are such men to be persuaded that they are in the wrong? If the character of the pretended prophet, and the nature of his utterances, are not such as to create a presumption in his favor; if the miracles, apparently real, are the work of one whose demeanor is that of a mountebank or of a trifler; if he makes the impression of not being an honest, earnest, and God-fearing man, — shall this impression go for nothing in one's judgment on the question, whether his extraordinary deeds are the work of supernatural power? Would it be possible for one *not* to be influenced in his judgment respecting the apparent miracles by this antecedent judgment concerning the man?

If apparent miracles were always real; if the genuineness of them were always something self-evident and incontrovertible; and if all men, even the most depraved, were ready to accept, as of divine authority, whatever a miracle-worker says, — the case would be comparatively simple. But the problem is not so simple. It is true, as Dr. Taylor says,² that the depraved human conscience cannot be made "the standard by which all

¹ *The Gospel Miracles*, Lecture VI. p. 174.

² *Ibid.*, p. 192.

that claims to be truth coming from God is to be tried." But the human conscience, depraved though it is, is able to discern between knavery and honesty. The very argument under consideration presupposes, moreover, that the natural man has a belief in God, that he acknowledges a message from God to be true and authoritative, and that he recognizes a miracle to be a work of God. Unless all this is presupposed, miraculous demonstrations would be lost on him. A certain degree of religious and moral sense is essential, in order that a man may believe in a miracle at all, and in its power to authenticate the deliverances of those through or for whom it is wrought. Suppose now, for example, that a man should perform marvels apparently as great as those attributed to Christ, but should undertake on the strength of them to teach that murder, and theft, and malevolence are laudable, or that the true Deity is to be found in the chimpanzee, should we be bound to accept his doctrines because of his miracles? But, it may be replied, *such* a man's performances cannot be real miracles, but only a juggler's tricks. Very well; but why do we presume them to be mere tricks? These tricks may, as facts show, seem to the ordinary observer to be quite as marvelous, quite as much beyond human power, as any of the recorded miracles of Christ.¹ Why should those who witnessed the latter have been expected to accept them as veritable miracles, and as authenticating the word of the miracle-worker, while those of the other are regarded with suspicion, and, even though inexplicable, are yet *assumed* to be mere tricks of legerdemain? There is but one answer: The moral character of Jesus, his benevolence and sincerity, his general *trustworthiness*, is supposed to have been a guarantee that he would not deceive men by pretending to be possessed of supernatural power, when he was in reality only practising sleight of hand. This element is essential in any question concerning the genuineness of an apparent miracle.

¹ *Vide, e. g.*, an account of *Indian Juggling* in *Once a Week*, Jan. 1861, where it is narrated how a coin was apparently transformed into a snake, and a girl murdered and restored to life. Every one who has witnessed the exploits of prestidigitators can testify to the reality of things which *seem* to defy all explanation, except on the supposition of magical power.

If the ostensible miracle-worker teaches immorality, and adduces his miracles as evidence of his divine commission to teach it, in such a case we conclude at once that the claim of a divine commission is false, and that the miracles are tricks. Here the doctrine certainly is held to *disprove* the miracle. We do not deem it even necessary to expose the nature of the tricks; we may be unable to do so. We simply take it for granted that they are tricks.

What a man *is* and what he *says* must, therefore, go very far in determining our judgment as to the validity of his claim to be a supernaturally endowed messenger from God. It does not follow that men, especially irreligious men, can determine *a priori* just what doctrines a prophet may or must preach. But they may be very sure concerning certain doctrines, that a prophet of God will *not* preach them. And equally true is it that the character of a professed prophet's utterances may prepossess men in his favor before he has ever wrought any miracles, and predispose them to believe in the genuineness of the miracles when he does perform them. The "authority" with which Jesus taught (Matt. vii 29), and "the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" (Luke iv. 22), prepared the Jews to give credit to his mighty works.

Archbishop Trench says,¹ that "miracles cannot be appealed to absolutely and finally in proof of the doctrine which the worker of them proclaims; and God's word expressly declares the same (Deut. xiii. 1-5)." Dr. Taylor replies² that the signs or wonders spoken of in the passage referred to are not genuine miracles, and that Trench himself admits³ that, "while the works of Antichrist and his organs are not mere tricks and juggleries, neither are they miracles in the highest sense of the word." Hence it is concluded that the case supposed by Moses does not affect the position that works "possessing all the essential elements of the miracle do absolutely and simply prove a doctrine." Now, whatever may be said on the disputed question whether, according to the Bible, Satan and his minions do perform real miracles, the point of Trench's argument is that, in view of the striking and plausible character of these demon-

¹ *Notes on Miracles*, p. 27. ² *Gospel Miracles*, p. 193. ³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

strations, the decision of the question whether a pretended miracle *does* possess all the essential elements of the miracle depends, in part at least, on the nature of the doctrine which claims to be authenticated by it. Otherwise, unless those who witness the pretended miracles are able to detect the secret of the magic or legerdemain by which they are performed, they cannot be blamed for following after every one who *seems* to be invested with miraculous power. In reference to the case of Deut. xiii. 1-5, Dr. Taylor says¹ that "the appeal here is not to the moral nature of man at all, but to the consistency of God himself. The Hebrews had already received a revelation miraculously attested from God, and the argument is that, as God cannot deny or contradict himself, any wonders or signs wrought in opposition to the precepts of that revelation are to be regarded as impostures." But this reply proceeds on the supposition that the false prophet against whom the people are warned is going to represent his sign or wonder as wrought by *Jehovah*; otherwise there would be no question of *Jehovah's* consistency with himself. But this supposition is manifestly wrong. The false prophet who seeks to draw the people away from *Jehovah* and to "go after other gods" would be little better than a fool, if he should pretend that *Jehovah* enabled him to perform the miracles on the ground of which he invites them to *for-sake* *Jehovah*! No; the false prophet would of course represent the "other gods" as enabling him to work the wonders; and so the question before the people would be whether to believe the new prophet or the old one. There would be no question of God's consistency, but simply the question whether *Jehovah* is the God, or whether some other God is to be accepted instead of him. Of course the accepting of the new one would involve the forsaking of the old one; but the people might be led to think that not the new signs, but the old ones, were deceitful. Just because the pretended miracle was liable to be very specious and dazzling, while the recollection or tradition of the Mosaic miracles was liable to grow dim and unimpressive, therefore Moses enjoins that the test should not be the mere apparent miracles, but the *doctrine* of those who wrought them.

¹ *Gospel Miracles*, p. 198.

III. We conclude, therefore, that the evidential value of miracles cannot be detached from the personal character and the teachings of the miracle-worker, but that the two co-operate. The doctrine proves the miracle, and the miracle proves the doctrine.

By this is meant that the doctrine—the prophetic commission—is self-evidencing, but not in such a degree that the accompanying miracles are a superfluous accessory, to be believed in indeed because wrought by one whose word has proved him a prophet, but themselves unnecessary as a proof of the prophet's divine vocation. A useless miracle would be an abnormality. The more clearly it should be recognized as useless, the more doubtful would be the reality of it. God does not trifle with the laws of nature or with us.

Scarcely more satisfactory is the view of those who believe indeed in miracles, not, however, as having evidential value, but simply as being just what might have been expected from so wonderful a person as Jesus was. This view is now much in vogue. According to it Jesus wrought miracles, not for the purpose of substantiating his claims, but merely because such work was, as it were, the spontaneous and normal expression of his nature and character.¹

There is plausibility and force in this representation. Assuming the essentially supernatural character of Jesus' origin and person, we find it comparatively easy to believe that he could do supernatural deeds. We may say truly that in such a being miracles seem quite appropriate and normal, *provided there is occasion for performing them*. But this suggests the difficulty which besets the view in question. What is meant, when it is affirmed that "miracles were but the natural accompaniments of the Christian revelation," that they were "a constitu-

¹ See above (p. 127) the references to Trench, Coleridge, Thomas Arnold, Maurice. Similarly Professor Ladd (*Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 311), "The supernatural contents, inclusive of the miraculous, belong to the very essence of Christianity, and can no more be separated from it than can the principle of life from the living organism." And on p. 316 he speaks of miracles as "the natural result of his superhuman power." Page 315, the power of healing is regarded "as the normal product of his personality." Cf. also J. Stoughton, *Nature and Value of the Miraculous Testimony to Christianity*, p. 46.

tive element of the revelation of God in Christ," that their absence "would have been far more wonderful than their presence?" There seems to be here a want of clearness of conception. Is it meant that Jesus wrought miracles because he could not help it—because he was driven to it by a sort of natural necessity? Doubtless not. But if not, then the only alternative is that he wrought miracles freely, and for an ethical reason. What, then, was the reason why he wrought them? Probably the answer would be: For the purpose of doing good. But he could do good, he could give expression to his benevolent disposition, without resorting to supernatural power. No doubt he could do many acts of kindness through miraculous agency which he could not have done by ordinary means. But is it meant that he was bound to do, and did do, all that it was possible for supernatural power to do by way of beneficent action? Hardly this; for if so, then we should have to assume that God, being possessed of supernatural power, is bound to exercise it miraculously all the time and in all possible ways for the sake of alleviating the evils of the world. If ordinarily and in general God sees fit to manifest his benevolence, and to let men manifest their benevolence, only through the uniformly operating forces of nature, why did he make an exception in the case of Jesus Christ, and in him manifest his benevolence in a supernatural way? The question has all the more point, inasmuch as the miraculous deeds of Christ had to do almost exclusively with the relief of physical pain, whereas his mission was primarily and chiefly a purely spiritual one.

As a manifestation of benevolence, then, the exercise of miraculous power could not accomplish more than unmiraculous beneficence. The doing of the miracles did not prove that Christ had more *love* than other men; it only proved that he had more *power*. And so we are brought back to the position that the miracles had primarily an *evidential* value; they were an evidence of the superior power, or superior nature, of Christ, or at least of a superior divine commission. For we should bear in mind that ultimately the power to work miracles is ascribed, even by Christ himself, to God. It was "by the finger of God" (Luke xi. 20) that he professed to cast out demons;

the raising of Lazarus he represented as an answer to prayer, and as a manifestation of the glory of God (John xi. 40-42). And his resurrection, the crowning miracle of all, is almost uniformly declared to be the work of God.¹

Moreover, if the miracles of Jesus are to be regarded as a sort of outflow or efflorescence of his superhuman nature, what shall we say of the miracles wrought by his apostles? They are uniformly declared to have had power to work the same kind of miracles as Jesus wrought himself,² not excepting the raising of the dead.³ Are *these* miracles to be explained as simply the natural outworking of the unique character and endowments of the apostles? Plainly not; their miraculous power was a power conferred; they were the commissioned agents of a higher authority.⁴ Now, doubtless, Jesus' relation to miraculous works is pictured as somewhat different from that of his apostles. He himself it is who bestows on them the miraculous power. In his own working of miracles he often, perhaps most often, seems to speak as if the power inhered in himself,⁵ even the power to raise himself from the dead.⁶ But such representations find a natural explanation in the intimate union with the Father which Jesus always ascribed to himself, and which the apostles always ascribed to him. If he wrought miracles by his *own* power, then he did it by virtue of his being possessed of *divine* power. Mere eminence in intellectual or moral excellence constitutes no sufficient ground for ascribing to any mere man the power independently to work a miracle.

But this brings us back to the starting-point. The doctrine under consideration is, that in so wonderful a person wonderful deeds are to be expected and excite no surprise. The answer is: Yes; in a remarkable man remarkable deeds may be expected, but not necessarily *miraculous* deeds. Is it a general truth that the more gifted or spiritual a man is, the more nearly he comes to working miracles? But even if it were admitted that Jesus

¹ Acts iii. 15, 26, ii. 24, v. 30, xiii. 30; Rom. i. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 15, etc.

² Matt. x. 1; Mark iii. 15, vi. 7; Luke ix. 1, 2; Acts iii. 1-8, ix. 33, 34, xiv. 8-10. ³ Acts ix. 36-40. ⁴ See Note 2 and Acts iii. 16.

⁵ *E. g.*, Matt. ix. 5; Mark v. 30; Luke v. 23, 24, vi. 5-10, viii. 46.

⁶ John x. 18; cf. ii. 19.

was so unique that veritable miracles might be expected of him, the question must still be asked, How do we know that he *was* so unique? What does the conviction of this uniqueness rest on? Plainly, this cannot be quietly assumed without reason. And the reason can be nothing else than the evidence afforded by tradition and the New Testament. The uniqueness claimed for him has reference especially to two points: (1) his unique moral character, and (2) his unique relation to God and men. Now, one may indeed forcibly argue the sinless excellence of Jesus on grounds which are independent of his supernatural power.¹ Mere power would certainly be an inadequate proof. But, on the other hand, so stupendous an exception to all experience as absolute freedom from sin could hardly be made convincingly *certain*, if there were *only* the evidence of an exceptionally good life, and the absence of all self-accusation. He also, it is true, asserted his own perfection.² But many other even good men have done the same; and the few utterances of his which seem to affirm his absolute sinlessness might, if necessary, be understood to signify only a relative perfection. In like manner, it might be said that the absence, in the record, of all confession of sin and petition for pardon on his part is only a negative argument, and does not prove that in his solitary prayers no such confession was ever made. Undoubtedly Jesus must have been either an enthusiast with remarkable powers of persuasion, or else a man of wonderful purity and exaltedness of character. Undoubtedly the general impression produced by the records, and confirmed by tradition, is that he was no self-deluded fanatic, but a person of altogether exceptional virtue and moral power. Undoubtedly it seems most reasonable, when we consider his rare combination of excellences and the extraordinary claims and professions which he made, to conclude that his disciples were justified in declaring him to have been free from sin.³ But when we reach this conclusion, there meets us at once the

¹ As Ullmann, *Sinless Character of Jesus*; Dorner, *Jesu sündlose Vollkommenheit*; Schaff, *The Person of Christ*; Row, *The Jesus of the Evangelists*; Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural*.

² Johu viii. 29, 46; cf. iv. 34, v. 36, vi. 38.

³ Heb. iv. 15, vii. 26; 1 Pet. ii. 22, i. 19; 1 John iii. 5; 2 Cor. v. 21.

objection that there is an overwhelming presumption against the proposition that any mere man, enjoying ordinary privileges and subjected to ordinary temptations, has ever passed through life absolutely free from sinful emotions, desires, and actions. If any one has ever so departed himself as to make the impression of being such a unique exception to all the experience of the world, then the further impression cannot but force itself on the mind, that such a man is *not* an ordinary man in his antecedents, environments, and endowments.

And, accordingly, this is precisely what the records say of Jesus of Nazareth. He is pictured to us as a man not only unique in moral eminence, but unique also in his origin, endowments, and commission. He is called the only-begotten Son of God, miraculously conceived, a person who reflects in himself the divine character and glory, and is specially anointed and set apart by God as the one Redeemer of men. In other words, the proof of absolute uniqueness in respect of holiness is not complete and satisfactory until it is confirmed by the evidence of uniqueness in respect of nature, prerogative, and relation.

But how is this uniqueness of nature and office to be itself proved? Is it enough that Jesus himself declared that he was thus unique? He having by his irreproachable conduct established his reputation for uprightness and veracity, would his bare word have sufficed to produce conviction, when he laid claim to be the Son of God in an altogether exclusive sense, and demanded of all men that they should come to him for salvation? It might, indeed, be plausibly urged that, if Jesus had gained the confidence of men, or at least of his followers, to such an extent that they ascribed to him absolute faultlessness, then any affirmation which he made concerning himself must have been accepted as trustworthy. But we must remember that "confidence is a plant of slow growth." Jesus, in the short time during which he plied his vocation, could hardly have compelled universal and undoubting confidence in his absolute perfection. We know that the people in general had no such confidence in him. Many who followed him for a time fell away from him.¹ There is no evidence that even his most

¹ John vi. 66.

intimate disciples at first, or even up to his death, regarded him as absolutely sinless. A man's moral character is something which can reveal itself only by slow degrees. And though transcendent goodness and purity would doubtless anywhere soon make a deep impression, yet the general presumption that every man has faults and imperfections would in any case stubbornly assert itself against any claim or suggestion of perfect faultlessness. And therefore we are not surprised at finding that the apostles and friends of Christ did not hesitate to remonstrate with him, and to question the wisdom or propriety of his conduct.¹ Such indications are, indeed, not numerous; those who attached themselves to him undoubtedly felt more and more the peculiar power and sublimity of his character. But it was not until after his resurrection that they unqualifiedly asserted his perfect freedom from sin.

How, then, did the disciples of Jesus become fully convinced of his Messiahship and of his peculiar dignity and unique office? All the indications of the Gospels are to the effect that the conviction, however early the intimations and hopes may have been, was of gradual growth, and that it was not a full and unshakable assurance till after the resurrection. He was not *such* a Messiah as had been commonly expected; and though at his birth and baptism he was heralded as a Redeemer, and though some persons seem early to have attached themselves to him in the faith that he was really the expected one, yet the faith appears to have been a wavering one. Jesus' own claim was such as required to be verified by a continued experience of fellowship with him and observation of his deportment and work. And prominent among the evidences expected and received were miraculous manifestations. These manifestations could, it is true, not be implicitly trusted as divine, unless confirmed by a previous confidence in the trustworthiness of him in whose behalf they were made; but *in connection with* this confidence they served as an emphatic ratification of the Messianic claim. That the Jews generally looked for some miraculous demonstrations as accompaniments of the appearance of the Christ is evident from the question in John vii. 31, "When the Christ

¹ *E. g.*, Mark iv. 38, viii. 32; Luke x. 40; John xiii. 6.

shall come, will he do more signs than those which this man hath done?" and from the narrative of the effect of the raising of Lazarus (xi. 46-48), and of the miracle of the loaves and fishes (vi. 15). And that the disciples of Christ were influenced by the same expectation is evident from John ii. 11, where, after the miracle of the wine, it is said, "This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him." Had they not believed on him before? In the previous chapter we read that Andrew and another man had followed Jesus, trusting in the assurance of John the Baptist; that Andrew reported to Peter that he had found the Messiah (i. 41); and that Philip and Nathanael at once accepted him as such (i. 45, 49). Now it is said of these same disciples that in consequence of Jesus' first miracle they believed on him. Evidently the meaning is that the faith already existing was confirmed by this display of miraculous power. But even this faith, though continually strengthened by personal fellowship and by repeated miracles, was not so strong but that the crucifixion staggered it. The two disciples who walked to Emmaus had "*hoped* that it was he which should redeem Israel" (Luke xxiv. 21), but the hope had evidently turned into despair. The apostles were dismayed by the tragical end of their Master's life, and could hardly be persuaded that he had risen from the dead. Once persuaded of this, however, they regained their faith, and never again lost it.

Now it should be observed that this shock which had come to the apostles' faith in Jesus' Messiahship must have affected also their faith in his absolute trustworthiness. He had declared himself to be the Messiah, the Son of God, the Light of the world. If now there had come into their minds a doubt as to the fact of his being the Messiah, then there must necessarily have come a doubt as to his truthfulness in declaring himself to be the Messiah. The two things were indissolubly bound together. Christ's miracles and his life had worked together previously in producing and strengthening the disciples' confidence in his uniqueness both of character and of commission. And now the resurrection fully restores and finally seals their confidence in both these things. How the evidential function of

miracles can be questioned by one who credits the New Testament, it is difficult to see. The testimony is unanimous that the miracles wrought by Jesus and for him were efficacious and even indispensable in bringing about the final unwavering conviction that Jesus was the one sinless man and perfect Redeemer. John wrote: "These [signs] are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."¹ Paul wrote that Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead."² To the Athenians he said that God had ordained Jesus to be the one by whom he would judge the world, "whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he hath raised him from the dead."³ Peter on the day of Pentecost declared that Jesus had been "approved of God . . . by mighty works, and wonders, and signs,"⁴ foremost among which he put Jesus' resurrection.⁵ Jesus himself is represented as directly appealing to his miraculous power as a proof of his authority to forgive sins.⁶

Assuming the substantial authenticity of the New Testament we are, therefore, forced to conclude that the miracles, especially the resurrection of Christ, *did serve an evidential purpose*. It is consequently hard to see how such a man as Professor Bruce⁷ can argue as he does in opposition to Canon Mozley.⁸ The disciples of Christ, he says, "seem to have arrived at the conviction that Jesus was the Holy One through an intimate knowledge of his character made possible by habitual companionship," whereas "the conventional saints and sages of the time, giving heed to the miracles, . . . were not only not convinced thereby, but arrived at the opposite conclusion," namely, that he was in fellowship with Beelzebub.

But what a pitfall the Christian apologist is preparing for himself by such a conception! According to Dr. Bruce the miracles were real, but were not needed in order to the faith of the disciples, and exercised a positively baneful influence on the unbelievers. What good reason was there, then, for the miracles

¹ John xx. 31. ² Rom. i. 4. ³ Acts xvii. 31. ⁴ Acts ii. 22.

⁵ Acts ii. 24-36. Cf. iii. 15, iv. 10, x. 40-43; 1 Pet. i. 3.

⁶ Matt. ix. 6 (Mark ii. 10; Luke v. 24). Cf. also note 2 on p. 157.

⁷ *Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, pp. 288 sqq. ⁸ *On Miracles*, p. 11.

at all? Dr. Bruce says, to be sure, that the disciples "saw in all his acts, miraculous or otherwise, the self-manifestation of the Christ, the Son of the living God."¹ No doubt, if he wrought miracles, they were in harmony with his character. No doubt, in working them he followed holy impulses of benevolence, and was not impelled merely by a cold calculation as to their evidential effect. But the question is still unanswered, What sufficient reason was there for working them? According to the theory now before us they were not necessary to the full self-manifestation of Jesus; they accomplished nothing which could not have been accomplished without them in the way of making obvious his dignity, divine commission, love, and wisdom. If this is indeed the fact, then, in case the miracles are held to have been real, they appear to have accomplished no substantial end except to furnish a stumbling-block both to the philosopher and to the intelligent Christian, and to justify the affirmation that miracles are a burden rather than a help to the Christian apologist. And in this case the conclusion can hardly be avoided, that the alleged miracles were after all no miracles at all.

What, then, is the correct view as to the use of miracles? Manifestly this: that miracles have a positive and indispensable evidential worth, but not anterior to, and independent of, the evidence afforded by personal character and testimony. There must be a strong confidence in the general integrity and veracity of the professed messenger of God, before his alleged miracles can be accepted as genuine. But the more extraordinary his claims are, the more need is there of extraordinary attestation. Apparent sincerity, simplicity, and purity prepare the way for faith in whatever he may affirm; but if he professes to have a special divine commission, then he needs to be "approved of God by mighty works and wonders and signs." He who professes to be the bearer of an authoritative revelation from God needs a divine authentication. Whatever may be true respecting the power of prophets in general to work miracles,² when-

¹ *Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, p. 259.

² John the Baptist wrought no miracles; and of many of the O. T. prophets there is no record that they claimed or exercised this power. Yet they

ever one undertakes to introduce, as divine and authoritative, something *new* in doctrine, legislation, or redemption, some warrant must be produced over and above the prophet's own assertion that he represents the divine will. The introduction of a new dispensation, the making known of truths concerning God and the future life which neither nature nor past revelations have made clear and certain to men, — this requires some objective evidence that the professed prophet has been specially authorized to do this peculiar work. One who professes to be commissioned to make such disclosures must expect to be challenged to present his credentials. An ambassador of the Great King must bring some other token of a plenipotentary commission than a good personal character.

When, therefore, it is said that the doctrine must prove the miracle, the meaning is not that the doctrines are all self-attesting, so that the miracles, though attested by the doctrines, have no real use, and become, rather, a burden to the Christian apologist. The meaning is, that the character and teachings of the professed messenger of God must commend themselves to the moral judgment of men, else not even *apparent* miracles will be able to secure him recognition as an inspired prophet. The more pure, sincere, unselfish, and elevated he seems to be, the more readily will he be credited, when he lays claim to special authority and professes to prove it by supernatural power. A *part* of the proof of the genuineness of the miracles lies in the evident *trustworthiness* of the one who professes to work them. But another, and an essential, part of the proof is the *need* of

were acknowledged to be true prophets. Hence it is sometimes argued that a miraculous attestation can never be pronounced essential. (So, *e. g.*, in the anonymous pamphlet, *Positives Christenthum und orthodoxer Pietismus*, p. 47, one of the many productions connected with the controversy respecting Professor Bender of Bonn, 1853-54). As to this, however, it is to be considered that the prophets in general, in so far as they were feared and followed, owed their authority to a previous supernatural revelation, which they were inspired to expound and enforce. They rose up amongst a people who recognized the genuineness of this revelation. In so far as they were merely preachers, enforcing the obligation of a law already received as divinely given, they needed no miraculous power to enable them to make an impression on the consciences of their hearers.

miracles, which is felt when the prophet makes extraordinary claims. We would not believe in the genuineness of the miracles, unless the *general* tenor of the man's life and teachings were good; we would not credit his claims to *special* authority, unless we see evidence that God has given him a *special* authorization.

The advantage of this conception of the evidential character of miracles over the other is obvious. If the belief in the reality of a revelation is made to depend on an antecedent demonstration of the genuineness of the miracles wrought in attestation of it, the faith can only be as strong as the demonstration is irrefragable. Every defect in the evidence, every possibility of a natural explanation of the alleged miracle, every difficulty of distinguishing the evangelical miracles as more palpably and demonstrably genuine than other apparent ones, — all this would bear against Christianity as a whole. The ground of faith would depend on nice distinctions, and on minute investigations, such as only scientifically trained minds could adequately appreciate. And the result would at the best be dubious. The weight of evidence for the reality of the miracles, taken apart from the character and professions of those alleged to have performed them, would be insufficient to overcome in intelligent minds the distrust which is felt towards stories of miracles in general. There is a presumption against the truth of all such stories. The speculative presumption may be overcome by the general consideration that, if a revelation is to be made, it needs to be attested by supernatural signs. But the special presumption against the genuineness of particular alleged miracles can be overcome only by evidence that those for or by whom they are alleged to have been wrought are otherwise shown to have been trustworthy men, and the alleged revelation to be not repugnant to men's moral sense. The internal and the external evidence for the revelation can, therefore, not be separated. No apologist would, it is true, discard the internal evidence. But sometimes the two kinds are treated as if they had no vital connection with each other; they are added together in a mathematical way, as if one of them could be presented in its full force in isolation from the other.¹ The fact is, that such a sundering is

¹ Dr. W. M. Taylor, to whose treatment of the subject (in his *Gospel Mira-*

impossible. In judging of the reported miracles of Christ we cannot disregard the personal character of the miracle-worker. When we compare his miracles with the marvels wrought by other men, the difference is found largely in the difference between the persons operating. We believe in the one rather than in the other, not simply because the miraculous testimony

cles) we have been constrained to take exception, sometimes recognizes the inseparableness of the two kinds of evidence, and even seems to go over to the other extreme against which elsewhere he contends. In his Second Lecture he says there are two classes of minds, the reflective and the perceptive (p. 32), the former of which is most impressed by that which lays hold on the moral nature. And later (p. 34), he says that "the personality of Christ" has now become "the great solvent of his miracles. It enables us to understand, explain, and defend them." Still later (p. 57), he says that, after we have come to see the uniqueness of Christ's person, "the miracles of these narratives fall into their proper places, and are seen to be the natural accompaniments of the greater moral miracle in Christ himself." These statements, however, hardly seem to consist with some others. Thus (p. 32): "These two methods of arriving at virtually the same result are separate and independent processes." And (p. 182): "In the line of proof the miracles come first, introducing the messenger from heaven; then on the ground of that divine testimony which they bore to him we believe his teaching and receive himself; and after that, his teaching having been believed, experience begins to bear its witness." If Christ's personality is the solvent of the miracles, if it is that which enables us to understand and defend them, it is hard to see how the two methods of treating the Christian evidences can be declared to be separate and independent, and especially how it can be declared that in the line of proof the miracles come first. If it is on the ground of the miracles that Christ is believed and received, then the miracles would hardly seem to be in need of explanation and defense; they must, *ex hypothesi*, be understood before Christ is received; otherwise they furnish no satisfactory ground for receiving him. There is no way out of this self-contradiction, but to admit, together with the inseparableness of the two methods, the priority of the moral argument. As President Hopkins puts it (*Evidences of Christianity*, pp. 78 *sq.*): "Certainly, I think the historical evidence conclusive; and it is indispensable, because the Christian religion . . . has its foundation in facts. . . . But if the external evidences are thus indispensable and conclusive, so are also the internal. What would have been the effect and force of Christ's miracles without his spotless and transcendent character? If I am to say which would most deeply impress me with the fact that he was from God, the testimony respecting his miracles, or the exhibition of such a character, I think I should say the latter; and I think myself as well qualified to judge in the one case as in the other; and, as I have said, I think this is the evidence which now presents itself."

is more ample and unmistakable, but because we have more confidence in the agent, and discern an occasion for his miracles which we do not discern in the other cases.

The advantage of recognizing this organic connection between the internal and the external evidences appears also when we consider the differences in the minds addressed by them. There are those who have an almost invincible prejudice against all stories of miracles; till that prejudice is shaken, such stories can have little or no weight with them. On the other hand, there are those who easily believe in almost any alleged miracle; to them, therefore, a miracle really proves nothing. There are, however, still others, not so credulous, who disbelieve ordinary stories of miracles, but are ready to believe thoroughly well attested ones, and regard them as having evidential force. Even for these, however, as we have seen, the evidence of miracles to the truth of Christianity never has been and never can be detached from the impression produced by the person and the doctrines of Christ. Still more obvious is it that to the other two classes — to those who believe too hardly, and to those who believe too easily — the most convincing proof is, in the first instance, an exhibition of the intrinsic spiritual excellence of Christianity, of the unique grandeur of the character of Christ, and of the power of Christian faith to transform and elevate the human soul. This proof once admitted, the miraculous side of Christianity will be acknowledged afterwards, and will be seen to be a confirmation of the internal and the experimental evidence.

But, it may now be asked, is not just this *experimental* evidence after all the principal thing? If one has experienced Christianity as a reforming, inspiring, comforting, and saving power, what matters it whether the historical evidences of a supernatural revelation are made stringently conclusive to his mind? If he has got the substantial and ultimate good which the Christian religion professes to bring, has he not the most satisfactory proof of its divine origin? And is not the most convincing argument that can be addressed to an unbeliever the one which is derived from the manifestly beneficial effects of Christianity on the individual and the world? Do we not find this intimated

by Jesus himself, when he prays for his disciples, "that they may all be one, even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (John xvii. 21)? That is, he prays that the world may be led to believe in his divine commission by the unifying spiritual effects of his gospel.

Now all this may be freely conceded. If Christianity should fail to accomplish what it undertakes and promises, that failure would neutralize all arguments, however forcible, in favor of its supernatural origin. If, on the other hand, that spiritual renovation and purification which is professedly its chief aim should be everywhere and perfectly accomplished, this would be the most conclusive, though still not the only, proof that it is indeed of God. In reality, however, neither of these suppositions represents the exact fact. Christianity thus far is neither a perfect failure, nor a perfect success. In numberless instances it has effected remarkable transformations of character; it has elevated whole tribes and nations; it has counteracted vicious and downward tendencies of men, even when it has not been able wholly to out-root them.¹ But on the other hand the Christian church must be held responsible for many evils and wrongs. Large portions of it are found to be more devoted to outward forms than to inward purity. It has often given its sanction to cruelty and even crime. According to one's prepossession stress can be laid on the brighter or the darker side of the history of Christianity. Only, fairness requires that Christianity as such should not be held responsible for all that has been done and said by nominal Christians. Precept or practice which plainly conflicts with the fundamental principles of the Christian religion, as laid down in the New Testament, is not Christian, even though bearing a Christian name. Conduct or feeling that is loveless can only be a perversion, not a true product, of a religion whose great and comprehensive injunction is universal love. The failure of Christianity wholly to renovate the world is due simply to its not being true

¹ On the elevating effect of Christianity in general, *vide* C. L. Brace, *Gesta Christi*; W. E. H. Lecky, *History of European Morals*; Uhlhorn, *Christian Charity in the Ancient Church*; R. S. Storrs, *The Divine Origin of Christianity*, New York, 1885.

to itself. If it had done *nothing* in the work of moral improvement, or if some opposing system had done *more*, then this might be fairly urged as a reason for discrediting its claim to a divine origin. But no one, unless ignorant or biased, can make either of these assertions.

Still it may be contended that what is good and beneficent in Christianity is purely natural and not revealed, that the notion of the duty of general benevolence, though adopted by Christianity, is a product of the process of evolution, and that what is peculiar in Christian morality is a hinderance rather than a help to ethical progress. What are the *peculiar* features of Christian morality? They concern the *motives* and the *sanctions* of the moral life. On the one hand, the originating impulse to a Christian life is found in the sense of sin as an offense against a righteous God, accompanied by the assurance that God, out of his fatherly love, will freely forgive those who repent of sin and seek to forsake it. This love is revealed and exemplified in Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, who passed through the extreme of humiliation, temptation, and suffering, in order that he might become a sympathetic and perfect Redeemer of men. Faith in him as such a divinely commissioned Redeemer, love to him as a self-sacrificing Friend, imitation of him as a model of all human virtue, — this is made the motive power in the Christian's striving after moral perfection. On the other hand, a future life is held out to men, in which unhappiness is to be the consequence of persistence in wickedness, and the reward of a holy life is to be eternal fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the spirits of the just made perfect.

Over against this a non-Christian, or natural, morality holds that there is and can be no such thing as the forgiveness of sin,¹ that the sole motive of a moral life is a sense of obligation to promote the happiness of men, and that the reward of a good life is in the good life itself. Now the question might be raised, how far this so-called natural morality is after all indebted to Christianity for its moral ideal. According to the evolution doctrine, all ideas are the product of heredity; and men in Chris-

¹ See W. K. Clifford, *The Ethics of Religion* (in *Lectures and Essays*, vol. ii. p. 241). Cf. J. C. Morison, *The Service of Man*, chap. v.

tian lands who have inherited the lessons of Christian ethics, even though they may abandon the Christian faith in many of its distinctive features, yet cannot claim that they have evolved, independently of Christian traditions, a moral sense and a moral code. But not to insist on this, the Christian position is that Christianity recognizes and enforces all the truth that natural morality contains, and adds to it a revelation which tends to intensify and accelerate the moral development of men. It deepens the sense of guilt, making sin to be not a mere natural and necessary disposition of the soul, but culpable impiety and disloyalty towards a loving Father and Sovereign. It provides a powerful motive to repentance and radical conversion in that it reveals God as loving the sinner while he abhors sin, and as urging him to accept a free salvation. It presents in Jesus Christ the love of God incarnate, and makes the ideal of holiness not an abstract and vague thing, but an ideal realized in the person of Christ. It gives warmth and stimulus to the cultivation of personal holiness by thus identifying, as it were, the motives to virtue with grateful devotion to a personal Friend. This common allegiance to one Head, moreover, leads to an organized union of believers through which, by mutual fellowship and aid, the work of sanctification in the Church and in the world is promoted.

Now this, in brief outline, is what is *peculiar* to Christianity as a moral force in the world. And the question now before us is this: If Christianity proves to be successful in regenerating mankind, will not this success be the best and most convincing proof that the Christian scheme is indeed from God? And will not, therefore, miracles be needless, and belief in them a matter of indifference?

We reply: The Christian religion may be accepted by one man because others have seemed to be the better for it; *but no one can be the better for it without faith in the truth of it; and this faith has always depended on a belief in its supernatural attestation.* Declarations concerning God's feelings towards men and his willingness to forgive sin; concerning a plan of redemption and an incarnation of the Son of God; concerning the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit;

concerning a future life, a resurrection, and a state of final award, — these, and such like statements, respecting realms of truth and fact beyond the cognizance of men, must forever be regarded as uncertain speculations, unless they are ratified and confirmed by something that can be recognized as a divine attestation. So long as they are *regarded* as nothing but uncertain speculations, they *cannot more and mould the inner life*. If they have had this effect in the world, it is because they have been *believed* to rest on the foundation of a testimony sealed and certified by signs from heaven. This faith must be a conscious or latent one, in every man who adopts these doctrines of Christianity and makes them a controlling power in his life.

So far we have considered the relation of miracles to a divine revelation without having undertaken to prove the fact of their occurrence. And the reason for pursuing this course is obvious. The proof of the necessity of supernatural signs as attestations of a divine revelation prepares the way for a proof of their actuality. If miracles are useless, this uselessness itself is a valid argument against their reality. If, on the other hand, there is antecedent reason to expect miracles, the proof of their occurrence is easy. The only difficulty is that of deciding which of the religions professing to be of supernatural origin brings the most satisfactory credentials. And this difficulty is not very great. Even the most radical skeptics hardly question that the Christian miracles are more plausibly attested than any others connected with an alleged revelation. Having considered the definition and the evidential value of miracles, we come now to the question, What is the proof of the genuineness of the Christian miracles?

CHAPTER VII.

PROOF OF THE CHRISTIAN MIRACLES.

THIS topic has been so often and largely treated that only a brief summary will here be attempted. Moreover, the foregoing discussion has largely anticipated, in an indirect way, many of the positive arguments.

I. First and foremost in the line of proof must always be the evidence concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ. On this point the following propositions may be laid down:—

1. The apostles and the other immediate disciples of Christ *believed* that he rose from the dead on the Sunday after the crucifixion. This is now admitted by scholars and critics of all classes,—by the extreme negative as well as by the extreme positive school, and by all between. The Christian Church was founded, and developed its first fresh ardent life, on the strength of this belief. So much may be regarded as an established fact. The divergence of opinion begins when this belief of the disciples is to be accounted for.

2. The Christian Church spread rapidly, and was firmly established in Palestine in a very few years after the crucifixion. The undisputed testimony of Paul, confirmed by the narrative in the book of Acts, shows that the Church which he persecuted with so much fury had in that short time become a formidable power.¹ There was evidently no time for a myth to grow up respecting the resurrection. All the evidence and all the indications show conclusively that the belief in it originated within a few days after the crucifixion, and must have sprung from an actual sight of the risen Christ or from some kind of delusion.

3. This energetic belief in Christ's resurrection is satisfactorily explained only by the hypothesis that the resurrection was a

¹ *Vide* Rev. K. Twining on the *Evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (in *Boston Lectures*, 1872).

fact. This hypothesis explains everything, — the sudden transformation of the depression of the disciples into renewed cheerfulness and courage; the unanimity of the historical records and the traditional belief; the admitted absence of the body of Jesus from the grave. In short, all that we know about the circumstances is intelligible on the supposition of the fact of the resurrection, while every other supposition involves the most arbitrary and improbable conjectures.

If the fact of the resurrection is questioned or denied, then there remain only such conjectures as these :

(1) That Jesus did not really die on the cross, but only swooned, and afterwards revived. This hypothesis, favored by so eminent a man as Schleiermacher,¹ may adduce for itself that Jesus is said to have died sooner than the crucified robbers, and was sooner taken down from the cross. Now, if the death was only apparent, it is supposed that he was after a while revived by the cool air of the sepulchre and by the effect of the spices, and, when able, rose, walked out, and showed himself. This hypothesis, however, hardly needs refutation. Not only does it plainly contradict the whole narrative, as we have it, but, as Strauss observes,² “it does not solve the problem which needs to be solved, namely, the founding of the Christian Church through the belief in a miraculous revivification of Jesus the Messiah. A man crawling half-dead out of the grave, stealing around infirmly, in need of medical care, of bandages, of strengthening, and of tender care, and after all succumbing to his suffering, could not possibly have made on his disciples the impression of being the Conqueror of death and the grave, the Prince of Life, — the impression which underlies their subsequent deportment.”

(2) That the whole story of the resurrection was a deliberate fiction of the disciples. This is, if possible, still more inconceivable than the foregoing, though in part involved in it. For a revival from a swoon could not have been *regarded* as a resur-

¹ *Leben Jesu*, pp. 449 *sqq.*

² *Leben Jesu für das deutsche Volk*, § 47. See further C. A. Row, *Historical Evidence of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, pp. 29 *sq.* (*Present Day Tracts*, vol. i.).

rection from death; yet it was certainly so *represented*. The present supposition is that, without any reappearance of Jesus in life, the disciples agreed to pretend that they had seen him. This theory breaks down with its own weight. Whatever weaknesses may be attributed to the apostles, they cannot be supposed to have been men capable of such a depth of dishonesty; and most certainly men never endure privation, suffering, and death in defense of a known falsehood, as the apostles did on this supposition. We need not dwell on this theory, as scarcely any one can be found ready to maintain it.

(3) That the disciples mistakenly supposed Jesus really to have risen from the dead. This theory, the only one that with any plausibility can be held as against the common one, may take various forms: as (*a*) that the disciples *inferred* the resurrection from the Old Testament, or from intimations made by Jesus before the crucifixion, but did not see him. In this case, the stories of his appearances must be regarded as a later legendary growth. (*b*) Mary Magdalene and the women with her *imagined* that they saw an angel, or two angels, who said that Jesus was risen, or even saw some one whom they took to be Jesus, and that in the excitement of a full belief they reported to the apostles what they had seen, and these believed the report, but still without having any vision themselves. (*c*) The disciples themselves *imagined* that they saw Jesus in bodily form alive after the crucifixion. These different views may be to some extent united, as they are by Strauss.¹

It is obvious that the hypothesis of honest delusion, however ingeniously it may be defended, is from beginning to end a mere hypothesis, unsupported by a single scrap of positive evidence. It is, moreover, opposed to all the intrinsic probabilities of the case. The whole burden of the narrative shows that the disciples were disheartened by the crucifixion, and were not expecting a resurrection. The women who first went to the grave went expecting to embalm Jesus' body, not to see him alive. The apostles, when they were told of his reappearance, were at first skeptical. Moreover, when they did see him, or thought they saw him, he appeared not merely to a single one at a time,

¹ *Leben Jesu*, § 49.

but to groups of persons, — at one time to more than five hundred at once. This is not the manner of ecstatic visions, or of subjective fancies which clothe themselves in objective form. The operation of pure imagination in this matter can be certainly proved to have taken place only in the invention of this hypothesis itself. Here imagination runs riot.

The testimony of Paul is naturally regarded as of prime importance, since it is the earliest that we have, and the only one whose genuineness is as good as absolutely uncontested. What is the purport of it? Two things are most certainly made clear by it: first, that the fact of Christ's resurrection was commonly assumed by Christians at that time; secondly, that Paul represents his own seeing of the risen Messiah as homogeneous with that of the other witnesses whom he mentions (1 Cor. xv. 1–11).

It is not strange that those who will not believe in miracles should try to find in Paul's testimony evidence that all the supposed appearances of the risen Jesus were mere *visions*, that is, subjective experiences having the vividness of an actual perception of outward fact. Paul, they say, not only was given to having such visions (2 Cor. xii. 1, Acts xvi. 9, xviii. 9), but in this case also evidently saw Jesus only in a vision. In the three accounts of his conversion in Acts, he is not even said to have *seen* Jesus at all, but only to have *heard* him. This event took place, moreover, probably at least a year¹ after the other reputed appearances of Jesus, and when a literal bodily manifestation of himself, even if such ever took place, could hardly have been made. Now, if Paul's seeing of the Risen One was only a vision, then by parity of reasoning those experiences of the other disciples which he makes parallel with his own, must be supposed to have been also purely subjective.

What shall we say to this? We must say that, if Paul's testimony, as being the most direct and unimpeachable, is to be used as the key by which to unlock the mystery of the resurrection stories, we must take his testimony as it stands. And what is it? He is endeavoring to establish the fact of a

¹ Vide Keim, *Geschichte Jesu von Nazara*, vol. i. p. 631.

bodily resurrection. And he argues it from the admitted fact that Jesus is already risen. Unless this resurrection had been a bodily resurrection, the argument would have no meaning. The argument is preceded by an account of the fact that Jesus rose three days after the crucifixion, and was seen by Peter, the twelve, more than five hundred disciples, James, and finally by himself. His statement furnishes the basis of the following argument. Such, he says, being the truth that has been preached, "how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither hath Christ been raised." Now nothing can be plainer than that Paul here makes everything rest on the fact of Jesus' *bodily* resurrection. A mere continued existence of the spirit, apart from the body, cannot possibly be meant when he tells of Jesus rising *three days* after his crucifixion. And it is no less plain that the appearances to Peter and the others are understood by Paul to be appearances of Jesus' resurrection-body. The language used is not that which describes a mere vision. Nor do visions occur simultaneously to men in groups. Moreover, these appearances are adduced as *proofs* of the fact of the *bodily* resurrection having *really* taken place. If anything is certain, it is certain that Paul does *not* here mean to describe the experience of the disciples as an ecstasy, but as a literal fact. Consequently, in that he makes his own experience parallel with theirs, he is to be understood as *not* describing Jesus' appearance to him as a visionary, but as a bodily, one.

Even if Paul's experience is to be called a vision, it is still an open question what is meant by a vision. Was it a morbid impression, a hallucination due to an excited nervous state? Or was the cause of it something really objective?¹ The world, both Christian and heathen, has abounded in alleged visions, the most of which we may presume to have been merely subjective, caused by an excited state of the subjects of the vision. But the fact that such experiences are possible does not prove that no other kind of visions is possible. Even if we should concede that the appearances of Jesus after the crucifixion were

¹ Cf. Professor Fisher, *Supernatural Origin of Christianity*, p. 463.

visions, we should still have to maintain that according to the narrative the appearances were not subjective fancies simply, but objective revelations. This is the character ascribed in the Bible to the visions of prophets and apostles. When Peter had a trance (Acts x. 9-16), and saw the vision of the beasts, and heard the command to eat, this was, according to the mind of the narrator, clearly not an experience growing out of mental or nervous excitement, causing his own thoughts and feelings to objectify themselves in the form of apparently visible and audible outward objects. Peter took it as a divine communication *correcting*, not springing out of, his previous notions. Of course a skeptic can still say that the whole thing may have been a diseased fancy; or that the narrative itself is wholly or in part fictitious. But our point now is that the *Biblical representation* of these ecstatic experiences is that they are *not* purely subjective states, but are states produced by divine power for the purpose of special illumination and instruction. Consequently it follows that, when Paul speaks of these appearances of the risen Christ, *he* means to describe a real objective fact, even though we should still call it a *vision*. In the light of this reflection it is obvious how much weight is to be attached to such an assertion as that of Mr. Greg, when he says,¹ "Now we know that his appearance to Paul was *in a vision*,—a vision visible to Paul alone of all the bystanders, and therefore *subjective* or mental merely." The reply is: If we *know* this, we do not know it because Luke or Paul has told it, but because we are unwilling to believe what they say. The phrase used by Paul ($\omega\phi\theta\eta$ $\text{Κηφ}\hat{\alpha}$, "he was seen to Cephas," etc.) is the same that is used in the account of the appearance of the angel to Zacharias (Luke i. 11), of Moses and Elijah on the mount (Matt. xvii. 3, etc.), of the cloven tongues (Acts ii. 3), of God to Abraham (Acts vii. 2), of the angel in the bush (vii. 30). Once it is used in connection with an experience called a "vision" ($\acute{\omicron}\rho\alpha\mu\alpha$), namely, in Acts xvi. 9, where it is said that "a vision appeared to Paul in the night." On the other hand it is also used (Acts vii. 26) of so matter-of-fact a thing as Moses' "appearing" to the quarrelling Hebrews in Egypt. Now in each of these cases the writer

¹ *Creeks of Christendom*, vol. ii. p. 147.

obviously understands these appearances as not "subjective or mental merely." Mr. Greg's statement, moreover, is not true even on his own ground; for the other bystanders *are* represented as sharing, in part at least, in the vision. They saw the light (which is all that Paul is said to have *seen*); and the only difference relates to the hearing, respecting which two of the accounts (Acts xxii. 9, ix. 7) *seem* not to give the same representation.¹

The theory of Schenkel,² Keim,³ and others, that the reappearance of Jesus was a fact, but not the appearance of a risen body, is nearer the truth than the notion that the appearance was a mere fancy growing out of extraordinary excitement. If not in words, yet in fact, this hypothesis admits the supernatural character of the phenomenon. The glorified Christ is conceived to have really manifested himself in some special manner those few times, in order to impart the needed courage and assurance to the down-cast disciples. But the stories of Jesus as appearing in a bodily form, now semi-ghostly and now literal flesh and blood, they discard as unintelligible, self-contradictory, and manifestly legendary. Paul is with them, as with the others, the witness whose testimony is depended on. But Paul's language refuses to accommodate itself to this theory, even though the contradiction is less sharp than with the other. As has been above said, he is arguing for a *bodily resurrection*; and his use of the facts following the crucifixion is without meaning, unless they go to show that Jesus had risen in bodily form. The distinct specification that Jesus rose *the third day* cannot be tortured into harmony with this effort to sublimate the Christophanies into merely spiritual manifestations. Keim has no

¹ As both the accounts are recorded by the same man, it is no more than reasonable to suppose that he meant no contradiction, and that the positive statement, that the men did hear, should be made to explain the negative one that they did not hear. Moreover, though not in the historical narrative, yet in 1 Cor. ix. 1, and xv. 8, Paul declares himself to have *seen* the Lord Jesus himself.

² *Charakterbild Jesu*, pp. 231, 232, 3d ed.

³ *Gesch. Jesu v. Nazara*, vol. iii. pp. 600 *sqq.* Similarly Weizsäcker, *Untersuchungen über die evang. Geschichte*, pp. 573 *sq.*; E. A. Abbott, *The Kernel and the Husk*, Letters 20-23.

better explanation of this notion about the third day than that it was one which grew, not out of any palpable appearance, but out of Jewish notions concerning the length of time intervening between death and entrance into Hades, and out of a misinterpretation of Hos. vi. 2, and of certain utterances of Jesus himself.¹

The real reason for rejecting the traditional notion respecting the resurrection is the difficulty of conceiving such a body as that described in the Gospels. Just so the Corinthian doubters asked, "How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come?" (1 Cor. xv. 35.) If one is unwilling to accept Paul's reply, and believe that, whatever mystery there may be about it, it is yet a veritable body, he cannot with any plausibility or consistency deny the bodily resurrection of Christ on the ground of Paul's testimony.

Paul's testimony respecting the other disciples is of course only testimony at second hand. But it is at any rate that of a trustworthy man who got his account from the original witnesses, and got it within a few years,² at the most, of the time of the alleged resurrection. And it follows from this that a short time after the death of Jesus the apostles and many others all affirmed that Jesus had been seen by them in bodily form after the crucifixion. And the firm assurance of this fact had emboldened them to preach the gospel. Paul's testimony, then, establishes the fact that the original disciples of Jesus *believed* that they had seen him alive in bodily form after the crucifixion, and that these appearances had not been to single individuals only, who might possibly have been deluded through mental or nervous excitement, but simultaneously to groups of persons.

Now it would seem to be difficult to evade the conclusion that the evidence in the case establishes the fact of the resurrection. And when we add to the testimony of Paul that of the four Gospels and the book of Acts, all of which unite in emphatically bearing the same testimony, one might suppose that the assurance would be made doubly sure. But the skeptical critics, having started with the predetermination not to believe in a

¹ *Gesch. Jesu v. Nazara*, vol. iii., pp. 600, *sqq.* He even questions the story about the empty grave.

² Cf. Acts ix. 26, 27; Gal. i. 18.

miracle, and having decided (in plain opposition to Paul himself) that Paul at his conversion had only a subjective experience, — a mere illusion growing out of mental excitement and conscientious qualms (of which also the only proof is the skeptic's imagination¹), — it is of course a foregone conclusion that the historical books must somehow be discredited. Now an unbiased reader of these books would naturally be inclined to say that in the matter of Christ's resurrection their testimony is especially strong. Whereas most other incidents in the life of Christ are narrated by only one, two, or three of the Evangelists, this event is narrated by all of them, and with exceptional emphasis. It lies on the surface of the narratives that the resurrection, or supposed resurrection, had made a most profound impression. And it is anything but a mark of candor, when critics dwell on the variations and discrepancies in the details of these several narratives, and then draw the inference that the story as a whole is unworthy of belief. It requires little acumen to see that, if the four stories, instead of disagreeing with one another in this or that particular, were minutely harmonious, this very exactness of harmony would itself be taken as a suspicious circumstance, indicating collusion among the authors, or else the work of a harmonizing redactor.²

It is a fact that there are disagreements in these several narratives. Some are slight; many of them may be explained by conjectural suppositions; others can be removed only by hypotheses which at the best seem somewhat violent and arbitrary. When Luke confines the Christophanies to Jerusalem and vicinity, and even reports Jesus as forbidding the apostles to depart from the city till after Pentecost (xxiv. 49; Acts i. 4), while Matthew records no Christophany as occurring in Judea, but only in Galilee, and reports Jesus as directing the apostles to go at once to Galilee (xxviii. 10), the natural im-

¹ *Vide*, Fisher, *Supernatural Origin of Christianity*, pp. 464 *sq.*

² This is illustrated by the case of Mark xvi. 9–20, which, according to both internal and external evidence, seems hardly to be an integral part of the Gospel, but an editorial appendix, giving a compendious account culled from John, Matthew, and especially Luke. And so Strauss (*Leben Jesu*, § 97), Keim (*Gesch. Jesu v. Nazara*, vol. iii. pp. 566 *sqq.*), and others, treat it.

pression made is that the two authors did not have the same conception concerning the facts. We need not assume an absolute contradiction. We may suppose¹ that the command to remain in Jerusalem was uttered after the return from Galilee, so that then the difference remaining is only the negative one, that the one Gospel records only the Judean appearances, while the other records only the Galilean; and the reconciliation consists in assuming that the two narratives give accounts of distinct events, and must be united in order to make a complete history. We find also numerous other apparent discrepancies,—respecting the women who first went to the grave, the angelic appearances, etc. There is nothing in the Synoptical Gospels which corresponds naturally with John's story about Mary Magdalene, John, and Peter visiting the tomb. Luke makes Mary go with several other women; John makes her go quite alone. So, while Mark (xvi. 8) describes the women as too much afraid to report what they had seen, Matthew and Luke relate that they carried the information to the apostles.

Now, by piling together such variations one can, if he please, make a considerable show of inexplicable disagreement. It is, we must confess, impossible to determine just how this diverseness in the histories is to be explained. But we may say precisely the same respecting the rest of the gospel history.² If, wherever two accounts of the same event vary in their details, or one Evangelist omits what another one records, we are to question the authenticity of the whole, then we shall annihilate almost the whole of the gospel history. No two Evangelists give the same account of Jesus' birth and early life. John's account of the Baptist coincides in almost no point exactly with that of the Synoptists. Luke's narrative of the temptation of Jesus differs from Matthew's, while Mark only mentions it summarily, and John not at all. John also makes

¹ With Alford on Luke xxiv. 49, and others. Yet this explanation does not remove the difficulty, that Luke seems to represent the command not to depart from Jerusalem as having been given on the very day of the resurrection.

² Lessing (*Eine Duplik*), while stoutly maintaining the impossibility of harmonizing the several narratives of the resurrection, was candid enough to affirm that in spite of the contradictions the fact of the resurrection might be credited.

no mention of the baptism of Jesus. There are noticeable variations in the accounts of the first calling of the apostles. Luke makes the Sermon on the Mount rather a Sermon on the Plain (vi. 17), and makes it shorter and in many points other than Matthew does. There is disagreement as to the very names of the apostles. As to the order of events, the three Synoptists diverge from one another; and John greatly diverges from them all, dwelling on Christ's activity in Jerusalem, about which the others are almost wholly silent. As to Jesus' intimate friends in Bethany, Matthew and Mark do not seem to know about them; Luke (x. 38-42) mentions the names of Mary and Martha, but gives no hint of special intimacy, and does not mention the name of the village. And so we might go on. If, in order to the authentication of the evangelical history, we must insist on exact agreement between the four Gospels, we shall end in having as good as no history at all. When, therefore, Strauss and his followers parade the variations in the narratives of the Christophanies, and infer that no credit is to be given to any of them, consistency would require that the same principle should be applied to the history of Jesus all the way from his birth to his death. Mr. Greg¹ says that the different narratives of the resurrection "agree in everything that is natural and probable, and disagree in everything that is supernatural and difficult of credence. All the accounts agree that the women, on their matutinal visit to the Sepulchre, found the body gone, and saw some one in white raiment who spoke to them. *They agree in nothing else.*" And Mr. Greg appears to be much confounded by this fact. He says² that, if the case rested only on the testimony of Paul and the fact that the resurrection was believed by the whole original Christian Church, "our grounds for accepting the resurrection as an historical fact would be far stronger than they actually are. In truth, they would appear to be nearly unassailable and irresistible." But it is the "vague, various, and self-contradictory" narratives in the Gospels which trouble him.

Now it is manifest that these discrepancies would seriously trouble nobody who is predisposed to believe in supernatural

¹ *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. ii. p. 148.

² In his Preface, p. xxviii.

manifestations as the accompaniments of a chosen Revealer of divine truth. Such a one finds the evangelical histories a strong confirmation of Paul's testimony. Such a one would say: "True, the several accounts vary in details, as we might expect. But they agree in the important fact of the resurrection, the visible and tangible reappearance, of Jesus. They agree that he rose before the dawn of the first day of the week. They agree that Mary Magdalene was the foremost of those who visited the sepulchre. They agree that Jesus appeared to his apostles assembled together. They agree in representing his resurrection-body as the same as the crucified one, while yet they agree in ascribing to it a peculiar, semi-spiritual character. They agree in describing the disciples as all fully convinced of the reality of the resurrection, and as confirmed thereby in their faith in him as the Messiah of God. The disagreements concern unimportant details; and even if some of them could be shown to be irreconcilable contradictions, they would not invalidate the main drift of the stories of the resurrection."

But this is not the whole of the testimony. The book of Acts records that the apostles made the resurrection of Jesus the central fact of their preaching, and made thousands of converts in the very place where he had just been ignominiously put to death. The Church made such progress within a year that persecution was resorted to as a means of checking its dangerous growth. But we are not confined to the testimony of Paul, the book of Acts, and the Gospels. Even if we do not insist that John wrote the Fourth Gospel, or that Matthew wrote the First, we still have direct apostolic testimony. We have John's testimony in the Apocalypse, which the skeptical critics generally concede to be a genuine work of the apostle. He there calls Christ "the first-born of the dead" (i. 5), and represents Christ as saying, "I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore" (i. 18); and again he says, "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and lived again" (ii. 8).¹

¹ While not doubting that John the Apostle is the author of the Fourth Gospel (the proof of which has been given by so many, especially by Dr. Ezra Abbot in his *Authorship of the Fourth Gospel*), we take the evidence which the skeptics themselves do not impugn.

These passages are, indeed, not explicit, as from the connection we could not expect them to be; but they manifestly imply the belief in Jesus' bodily resurrection. In what other sense could he be called the "*first-born* of the dead"? As Christlieb¹ well remarks, in reply to Strauss, who says that the book of Revelation only affirms in general that Jesus had been killed, and was now alive again, "This certainly cannot mean the first of those who lived immortal after death, for there were enough such before Christ." But we have Peter's testimony in his First Epistle, the genuineness of which is almost as well established as that of Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians. In this epistle Peter mentions Jesus' resurrection at the very opening of it (i. 3) as the event which had begotten the Christians unto a living hope; and again, in i. 21, he speaks of God "which raised him [Jesus] from the dead;" and still again, in iii. 21, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is spoken of as a means of salvation.

But, it may be said, it is conceded that the immediate disciples of Christ *thought* they had seen him alive after the crucifixion. May they not, however, have been mistaken, honestly mistaken? Well, if it is a question of bare possibility, yes, it is *possible* that, while in the deepest despondency of grief, the apostles suddenly swung themselves up into the mental attitude of assured expectation of seeing the Messiah again in bodily form. It is *possible* that the nerves of Mary Magdalene and of Peter became suddenly disordered on that Sunday morning, and that they consequently imagined that the risen Saviour appeared to them visibly. It is *possible* that a similar disorder seized all the eleven, when they were together, and affected them to such an extent that they not only seemed to see Jesus, but heard him speak and saw him eat. It is *possible* that five hundred persons might simultaneously be afflicted with such a nervous affection that they should imagine that they had a vision of Jesus in bodily form. "All things are possible to" the critic "that believeth." But ordinary men of plain common sense can hardly be so credulous.

The conflict of opinions is very easily explained. It does not

¹ *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief*, p. 467.

come from paucity of evidence, but simply from a conflict of prepossessions. The critical doubts respecting the resurrection are primarily dogmatic doubts. They spring from a predetermination not to believe in alleged miracles, — a fixed conviction that miracles are incredible or impossible. Those who believe in the resurrection of Christ, on the other hand, not only believe in the general possibility of the miraculous, but in the special need of a self-manifestation of God, and the need of special attestation of him who professes to be the instrument of such a manifestation. This prepossession makes it comparatively easy to believe in the occurrence of supernatural events which are alleged to have served the purpose of such attestation. The scientific presumption against miracles is more than outweighed by the religious presumption in favor of miracles wrought for such a purpose. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead seems intrinsically probable and fit, when he is regarded as a divinely appointed and furnished Mediator between God and men. Consequently to such minds evidence of the fact of the resurrection, such as the New Testament furnishes, is ample and even overwhelming.

It is a remarkable fact that the evidence for the resurrection of Christ is so strong as to be almost or quite convincing to many men who refuse to believe in any other recorded miracle of the Gospels. While this illustrates the strength of the argument for the reality of this particular event, it illustrates also the illogicalness of those who occupy this position. For surely if the greater is proved, it must be easy to prove the less. We need therefore to dwell at less length on —

II. The proof of the miracles wrought by Christ. If he was a being of altogether unique character; if he sustained an altogether peculiar relation to God and to men; and if this uniqueness was effectually authenticated by his miraculous resurrection, — all *a priori* and scientific objections to miracles wrought by *him* are at once swept away. We not only *can* believe that he performed miracles, but we naturally *expect* miracles from such a being. Their absence would surprise us more than their presence. At all events, granted the greater miracle, the one by which most emphatically God set his seal on the

ministry of Christ, other miracles can be easily proved, if the evidence is sufficiently ample. What, then, is the evidence?

Speaking generally, we may say that the proof of miraculous events as characteristic of the life of Christ is almost co-extensive with the proof that he lived at all. The earliest records of his life are saturated with the supernatural.¹ Not only are specific miracles reported in great numbers and often with great minuteness of detail, but all the incidental features of the Gospel history indicate the presence of an altogether peculiar element in his character and works. The tone of authority which he assumed; the fear and deference which he inspired in those who saw and heard him; the general statements about him,—all this indicates not only that the writers believed him to be a great miracle-worker, but that he was such.

The manner in which the stories of miracles are interwoven with the general sketch of Jesus' character and life harmonizes perfectly with the extraordinary claims which he made for himself. These claims themselves, though they are unparalleled in their extravagance, unless he was indeed *the* Son of God and Son of man in an altogether unique sense, yet constitute an element in the gospel history that cannot by any possibility be eliminated. He announced himself at the outset as the introducer of the kingdom of God (Matt. iv. 17). In the Sermon on the Mount he assumed authority to interpret and modify the Mosaic law (v. 21–48); he represented obedience to his words as that on which the destiny of men was to turn (vii 21–27). He made no confession of sin and challenged his enemies to convict him of sin (John viii. 29, 46). He required an allegiance to himself transcending the closest earthly ties (Matt. x. 34–39). He called himself the Light of the World (John viii. 12). He invited all men to come to him for rest (Matt. xi. 28). He promised his followers eternal life (Luke

¹ Holtzmann, who certainly cannot be called too credulous a critic, says (*Die synoptischen Evangelien*, p. 509), "The narratives of miracles constitute so truly the substance of the Synoptical account that, as soon as one tears them out, the whole mosaic-work loses all perceptible plan, all intelligible characteristics."

xviii. 30). He assumed the prerogative of universal and final Judge, before whom all nations are to be gathered (Matt. xxv. 31-46). He claimed the power to forgive sin (Matt. ix. 2-6; Luke vii. 48). He bade men pray to the Father in his name (John xv. 16, xvi. 24), and represented himself as the dispenser of spiritual life (John vi. 35, 47-58). These are only specimens of the general attitude of extraordinary authority and dignity to which he is said to have laid claim. And that these representations correctly picture the attitude which he really assumed, is confirmed by the conception of Christ which runs all through the Epistles of Paul, who calls Christ the Son of God (Rom. i. 4); sinless, yet set forth by God to be a propitiation for the sins of men (Rom. iii. 25; 2 Cor. v. 21); the sole Mediator between God and man (1 Tim. ii. 5); the Head of the church, from whom all the members derive their life (Rom. xii. 4, 5; 1 Cor. xii. 27; Eph. v. 30; Col. ii. 19).

That such a person, charged with so peculiar a mission, should have been able to authenticate his claims by means of extraordinary works, is so natural that the narratives of the miracles excite no surprise, but everywhere seem to be perfectly in keeping with the general style of the description. The right of criticism to sift the narratives and eliminate, if possible, unauthentic portions, cannot be denied. But what must be denied is the right to make the presence of the supernatural the invariable touchstone by which narratives are to be pronounced "unhistorical." Yet this is substantially the principle of modern negative criticism. That Christ healed many sick people the critics are willing to admit, in so far as the healing can be accounted for as caused by medical skill and the influence of a sympathetic nature on Christ's part, and the influence of "faith," that is, strong confidence in Christ's healing power, on the part of the patients. But whenever the disease assumes a serious form, the alleged miracle is at once pronounced incredible, and some other explanation of the story is resorted to. Thus, Scholten¹ says of the story of the leprous man (Mark i. 40-45), "This narrative seems not to be historical, since it is inconceivable that *physical* leprosy should have yielded to a mere

¹ *Das älteste Evangelium*, p. 202.

command of Jesus." Armed with this sweeping principle, the critics construct elaborate hypotheses to account for the numerous stories of miraculous events with which the life of Christ is filled.

Disagreement among the critics cannot be fairly adduced as a proof that none of them can be in the right. But the disagreement may serve to show how little they can all lay claim to having offered a scientific and historical solution of the problem presented by the miracles. Let us take a single specimen. The miracle of the loaves is the best attested of all the miracles, except the resurrection of Christ. It is the only one narrated by all the four Evangelists.¹ No serious objection on the score of discrepancy between the several accounts can be made out. The narrative is full, explicit, unequivocal. Now, how shall the story be explained "critically?" Strauss² finds in it a myth growing out of certain Old Testament passages like Ps. cvii. 4-9; 1 Kings xvii. 7 *sqq.*; and out of the importance attached by Christ and the early Christians to the breaking of bread in common. Keim³ finds the explanation of the story in Christ's parable of the sower, which (in Matthew) is given in the preceding chapter. Scholten⁴ refers to Jesus' language in Mark vi. 34 ("sheep not having a shepherd"), and says that this refers to spiritual want, — a want which was supplied by the sermon mentioned in the same verse. He gave the people the "bread of life," — a phrase which, though it occurs only in the Fourth Gospel, "Jesus may really have used." And "hence arose the symbolic notion of the miraculous feeding of thousands." Paulus⁵ finds in the story nothing but the simple fact that Jesus persuaded those of the multitude who had food

¹ By the exercise of a violent imagination two or three others also are found in all the four. *E. g.*, Keim identifies the story of the paralytic in Matt. ix. 2 *sqq.*, Mark ii. 3 *sqq.*, Luke v. 18 *sqq.*, with the story of the lame man in John v. 5 *sqq.*, though the locality, the disease, the cure, and the accompanying conversation are totally different!

² *Leben Jesu*, § 79. ³ *Gesch. Jesu v. Nazara*, vol. ii. p. 133.

⁴ *L. c.*, p. 210. Similarly Ewald, *Geschichte Christus' und seiner Zeit*, p. 443, but with less positiveness. Also E. A. Abbott, *Philochristus*, pp. 214 *sq.*; *The Kernel and the Husk*, Letter 19.

⁵ *Leben Jesu*, vol. i. pp. 349 *sq.*

to impart it to those who had none. Weisse¹ discovers the key to the mysterious narrative in the conversation between Christ and his disciples respecting the leaven of the Pharisees (Matt. xvi. 5-12; Mark viii. 14-21). There Christ makes direct reference to the two miraculous feedings, and yet explicitly says that he does not refer to bread, but to the doctrine of the Pharisees. Consequently, Weisse infers, that the reference to the miraculous feedings is nothing but an allusion to a discourse in which Jesus had used figurative language respecting bread which the disciples had understood literally. Weisse is so sure of the correctness of this explanation that he thinks it must be perfectly convincing "to every one whose eyes are not as dull, or whose mind is not as hardened, as were the eyes and mind of those disciples" themselves. Weizsäcker² conjectures that in some way not narrated Jesus had impressed upon his hearers the lesson of the Sermon on the Mount, that they should not be anxious about food and clothing, and had impressed it so powerfully that they somehow got the impression of a miracle of feeding, though it was in fact only a miracle of faith.

Now, without a special examination and refutation of these and other such would-be scientific explanations of this miracle, we may be content with simply putting them side by side, remembering that each author lays down his explanation as the only correct one. If it were certain that the narrative, as it stands, must be regarded as false, and if therefore it follows that it must have originated from some misconception, why, then, of course, we should have to say that, though not all of these explanations can be correct, yet perhaps some one of them is correct. But if we assume that the miracle really happened as related, we are relieved of the necessity of choosing between these various conjectures as to what the underlying fact was.

What, then, is the reason why this miracle,³ so strongly at-

¹ *Die evangelische Geschichte*, vol. i. pp. 510 *sqq.*

² *Untersuchungen über die evang. Gesch.*, p. 449.

³ As we do not undertake a minute examination of the several miracles, we refrain from discussing the question, whether the second miracle of feeding, recorded by Matthew (xv. 32-39) and Mark (viii. 1-9), but not by Luke and

tested, is so reluctantly admitted, as compared with the narratives of miraculous healings? The only explanation is that the latter, though called miraculous, are not really regarded as such. The power of one person over another, both in mental and physical respects, has been so often illustrated in actual life; the phenomena of remarkable cures wrought apparently by direct physical contact, or even by an exertion of will without physical contact, are so numerous and well attested,¹ that it is easy to believe that Jesus may have been one of those exceptionally gifted persons who possess this magnetic healing power. Moreover, the miracles of healing, according to the Evangelists themselves, far outnumbered all others, and are often mentioned in a general way as continually performed by Jesus; whereas the miracles wrought on irrational nature are more manifestly rare and exceptional. When in addition to this we consider how little accurate scientific knowledge there could have been in those days, and how easily such cures might have been magnified, we can understand the plausibility and fascination of a theory which sharply distinguishes between effects wrought on the human body under the co-operating influence of a lively hope and faith on the part of the invalid, and effects said to have been wrought on inanimate nature. In the former case no real miracle is assumed at all. The effects, though perhaps startling, are yet such as have always had their counterparts. And even if one holds² that Jesus' healing power was proportioned to his spiritual pre-eminence, and was

John, is not really the same as the first in a somewhat different form. Even if we should assume that it was, the assumption would not invalidate the evidence of the reality of the one miracle, but, if possible, would strengthen it.

¹ Vide Carpenter, *Mental Physiology*, §§ 500, 569-571; Tuke, *Influence of the Mind upon the Body*, vol. ii. pp. 269 *sqq.*; Braid, *Neurypnology*, pp. 161 *sqq.*

² As Weisse, *Die evangelische Geschichte*, vol. i. pp. 366 *sqq.* Weisse, while strenuously contending against the reality of miracles in the ordinary sense, yet retains the term as appropriately designating the unique works of Jesus. Lange (*Leben Jesu*, vol. ii. p. 265) expresses a notion somewhat like this of Weisse's. The miracles, he says, "constitute the twigs of a tall, strong tree, and appear quite simply as its natural expression, its works. . . . Should not the tree of life of this new *æon* be able to wear this crown which it wears without breaking down, — to put forth these blossoms which deck it out of its own wealth of inward life?"

a sort of physical consequence of his spiritual gifts, still one can avoid admitting any miracle in the proper sense. We admit, in such a case, at the most only a higher degree, not another kind, of power than that possessed by many men in all ages.

What shall we say to this? We must say, in the first place, that the hypothesis, just mentioned, that a physical power of healing is co-ordinate with spiritual eminence, is a pure fiction without the shadow of foundation. Neither eminence in intellectual power nor eminence in piety has any special connection with that peculiar power over disease which some men seem to possess. Else we should find Goethe, the intellectual giant, and Richard Baxter, the eminent saint, each remarkable for his power to heal the sick. But, in the second place, if Christ's healing power was not a sort of natural and necessary product of spiritual pre-eminence, but merely a faculty in which he happened to surpass the most, or all, of those who have had a like talent, the fact loses absolutely all significance for us, except as being an interesting phenomenon in the history of medical science. We cannot, from his supereminent success as a healer, infer his supereminence as a teacher, still less his divine appointment to bring salvation. The healing power, on this theory, only *happens* to be associated with a high degree of moral worth, but in itself serves no religious purpose to the world whatsoever. The fact of it is believed in simply because it is well attested and is not intrinsically difficult to believe. That Jesus by his cures created a great sensation and got the name of a miracle-worker, may also readily be admitted; for such cures naturally seem to the ignorant and uninitiated to be real miracles; but the fact still remains, on the hypothesis before us, that the cures were not miraculous, but were really nothing but "mind-cures" on a somewhat grand scale.¹

¹ This is substantially the view of Bishop Temple (*Relations between Religion and Science*, p. 201): "It is quite conceivable that many of his miracles of healing may have been the result of this power of mind over body. . . . Some can influence other men's bodies more, some less. Possibly he may have possessed this power absolutely where others possessed it conditionally. . . . If

But by taking this view of Jesus as a healer we not only deny to the cures all supernatural character and all religious significance, but we even imperil faith in his superior morality. For the same narratives which record the wonderful cures also give us to understand that the healing power was a divine gift of a supernatural sort.¹ Christ appealed to his works as proofs of his divine calling.² In case now his cures were not miraculous, but were only the result of a fortunate natural endowment, then he can hardly be acquitted of a dishonest use of his power, if he himself appealed to it as proof of his Messiahship, or if he even allowed others to derive such an inference. The wonderful healings thus become a positively embarrassing element in his history. If they did not really authenticate him as a supernaturally endowed messenger of God, but were only *thought* to do so, then their only religious use was a *deceptive* one. At the best, in this case, we can only ascribe to him the merit of having used his power benevolently. But far better would it have been for him to refrain from exercising the power at all than to gain by it the reputation of having an authority to which it did not really entitle him. Curing diseases is not the only way in which philanthropy can manifest itself. He could have shown himself to be full of love and compassion, to be a comforter and helper, in many ways besides by a sudden banishment of sickness and physical suffering. If the essential thing was to make himself known as a spiritual benefactor, he could have accomplished the end without making use of a talent which he himself represented, or at least allowed to be understood, as a proof of a supernatural commission. Unless his healing power really was such a proof, unless it was a supernatural power, the physical relief which it rendered to a few hundreds of his contemporaries would but feebly compensate for the moral injury done by gaining a reputation under false pretenses.

this were so, these acts of healing would not be miracles in the strictly scientific sense."

¹ *E. g.*, Luke xi. 20; Mark ii. 9, 10; Matt. xi. 5; John iii. 2; Acts ii. 22.

² Matt. xi. 5.

Unless, therefore, the would-be philosophical critic means to make Jesus a mere mesmerizer, magician, or false prophet, hardly equal to the wonderful Apollonius of Tyana;¹ if he really means to set him forth as a unique reformer and benefactor, or even as an inspired Head of the Kingdom of God, then no worse means to attain the end could be adopted than to reduce his miracles to nothing but effects of a peculiar nervous temperament, or of a secret art, such as many another has possessed before and after him. Christ is by such a process degraded to the rank of an impostor, rather than honored as a chosen Revealer of the divine character and counsels. It is, therefore, a suicidal criticism which, while professing to be Christian, yet whittles down the stories of miracles till nothing but the cures is left, and whittles down the cures till nothing is left but what can be "comprehended," that is, conceived to be accomplished by natural means. Thus Weizsäcker² says: "It is not the use of medical means, or treatment according to medical knowledge, by which the wonderful successes of this healing can be brought within the law of nature. It is rather the peculiar phenomenon of a great storm-like excitement of men's minds, which is reflected in these effects wrought on

¹ On whom cf. F. C. Baur, *Apollonius von Tyana und Christus*; J. H. Newman, *Life of Apollonius Tyaneus*, in the *Encyclopedia Metropolitana*, vol. x.

² *Untersuchungen über die evang. Gesch.*, p. 369. The case with which a theory can be deduced is well illustrated by Weizsäcker. The theory is that the work of healing was a sort of accidental consequence of the excitement which Jesus' preaching had produced. He refers to the narrative in Mark i. 21 *sqq.*, and finds in it an indication that a general commotion had been produced by the preaching, and that the excitement manifested itself especially in the demoniac. The thought of acting the part of a healer, Weizsäcker thinks, did not occur to Jesus till after the demoniac addressed him. Then "as if himself carried away with the experience, he takes without hesitation the hand of the woman sick of a fever, in order to raise her up; and when the others bring him their sick he cannot do otherwise than heal them" (p. 365). The Evangelist, he further says, has "involuntarily shown," in the following narrative, "how Jesus entered upon this new career because of an inward and outward compulsion rather than intentionally" (p. 366). We shall next be informed, perhaps, that the whole work of salvation was the result of some fortunate accident, so that Jesus will seem to have blundered into it rather than to have had any deliberate and conscious plan about it.

physical life and its diseases. If one will have a natural explanation of these signs, they belong to the realm of what faith — a state of the feelings stirred up to the highest pitch — is able to do in such respects. Even if this effect may have surpassed in intensity and extent everything else known of a similar sort, yet it is not absolutely incomprehensible, but falls into the category of phenomena which repeat themselves in accordance with a law.”

Now such speculations may seem to the authors of them very profound and satisfactory; but in reality they explain nothing, and create greater difficulties than they remove. A wonderful cure is “explained” just as truly when it is said to have been effected by a direct intervention of supernatural power, as when it is said to have been effected by the use of so-called natural means. In neither case can we follow out the connection between causes and effects; in both cases we assume an adequate cause, — in the one a natural cause, in the other a supernatural. It is true that a phenomenon is said to be scientifically “explained” when it is associated with others which have similar antecedents and consequents, that is, when it is found to have been produced by a force which acts uniformly and regularly under like circumstances. But just so a miraculous event is “explained,” when it is assumed to have been produced by a force which does *not* act uniformly and regularly, but exceptionally and for an extraordinary reason. As to the *modus operandi*, we understand, in the last analysis, neither the one nor the other. It is a simple question of fact, to be decided according to the evidence, whether the cures wrought by Jesus belong to the one or to the other of these categories. Those who are determined to make them “comprehensible” by making them natural can of course do so by a sufficient number of hypotheses and by a sufficient manipulation of the records. One can discover the “original” documents by judiciously sifting out all the stories of marvels that cannot be made to square with the “natural” explanation of the events. Not only miracles wrought on inanimate nature, but also the cures which seem too difficult to be effected by any known natural means, — such as the healing of lepers, the sudden gift

of sight to one born blind, or of soundness to one lame from birth, and, especially, the raising of the dead to life,—are “scientifically” transferred into the category of later legendary accretions. And so, as genuine history, we have nothing left which may not find its parallel, in kind at least, if not in degree, in events which take place in all ages.

But, as we have seen, all this is arbitrary criticism, and plays into the hands of the downright disbeliever in Christianity. It leads almost inevitably to the frivolous Renan’s doctrine, that Jesus became a party to a deception, in that he allowed himself to be urged on, almost in spite of himself, into the assumption of powers which he knew to be natural, but which he allowed the people to regard as supernatural and as therefore an attestation of his divine calling. But this is as irreconcilable with the lofty simplicity of Christ as it is with the uniform assertions and implications of the Gospel narratives. The works of healing, like the other mighty works, were outward credentials of Jesus’ supernatural commission. All alike were included by Peter on the day of Pentecost when he spoke (Acts ii. 22) of Jesus Christ as “a man approved of God by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him.” And what Peter claimed for him, Christ claimed for himself, when, in affirmation and proof of his Messiahship, he sent back the messengers of the doubting Baptist with the reply (Matt. xi. 5.), “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them.”

In general, therefore, the miracles ascribed to Christ must be regarded as real miracles. The general presumption that a special revelation must be authenticated by supernatural manifestations; the particular fact of Christ’s resurrection; the impossibility of eliminating the accounts of miracles from the Gospels by any fair principles of criticism,—all this makes the fact of Christ’s miraculous works practically as certain as that of his existence. But the question still remains,

III. May not the miraculous stories of the New Testament be critically examined? Must we accept every miraculous story just as it is found in the Gospels, without regard to its partic-

ular character, use, and meaning? Alleged miracles may be, apparently at least, useless or grotesque or even hurtful. If any of the reputed miracles of Christ seem to be of this sort, may we not, for any such reason, question their genuineness? Or if the narrative of the miracle appears, according to internal or external indications, to be of doubtful authenticity, may we not at least hold our judgment in suspense as to the fact of its literal occurrence?

In general our answer must be an affirmative one. For we can as yet make no assumptions respecting any exceptional inspiration and infallibility of the Biblical records. As Professor Ladd well says,¹ "The record cannot of itself give an un-failing guaranty to the miracle it records without being itself a kind of universal miracle." Our argument simply assumes that the Biblical history shall be treated with the same fairness as other histories. Criticism cannot be denied the right of questioning the origin and authenticity of the New Testament. The results of criticism must be reckoned with, in coming to any legitimate theory of inspiration. We only insist now that, the general fact of the occurrence of miracles and their purpose as signs of a supernatural commission being sufficiently established, all intrinsic objections to the miraculous as such are to be dismissed. But it does not follow that every alleged miracle is therefore a real one. And among the grounds for believing in the genuineness of some rather than in that of others are the character and apparent object of the miracle itself. Albert Barnes says:² "It is a striking proof of his [Jesus'] benevolence that his miracles tended directly to the comfort of mankind. It was a proof of goodness *added* to the direct purpose for which his miracles were wrought. That purpose was to confirm his divine mission; and it might have been as fully done by splitting rocks, or removing mountains, or causing water to run up steep hills, as by any other display of power. He chose to exhibit the proof of his divine power, however, in such a way as to benefit mankind." Pressensé, on the other hand, says:³

¹ *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 328.

² Comm. on Matt. viii. 33.

³ *Jesus Christ, his Times, Life, and Work*, 3d ed. p. 279.

“ Let us, first of all, make a distinction between a miracle and a prodigy. A prodigy is only a manifestation of power, an astonishing fact, which arrests the attention, and elicits admiration and amazement quite apart from its moral character. Clearly it has no religious value ; it appeals to the eye, and not to the heart and conscience ; it cannot serve to establish either a divine mission or a new truth ; for evil itself may have extraordinary manifestations, and we read in Scripture of prodigies aiding and abetting error.”

Now in judging between these opposing views, each held by a firm believer in the reality and evidential value of the Christian miracles, we cannot do better than to ascertain what were Christ's own claims and representations respecting his miracles. In John x. 32, Jesus says to the Jews, “ Many good works have I shewed you from the Father.” And in the answer returned to John the Baptist concerning his Messiahship he enumerates nothing but works of mercy, the climax being the preaching of good tidings to the poor. Similarly Peter (Acts x. 38) says of him that he “ went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil ; for God was with him.” In other cases (as, for example, Luke x. 13) Christ speaks more generally of his “ mighty works ” as evidencing his commission. But those works were confessedly almost or quite all benevolent works ; and a general appeal to them would therefore be practically an appeal to “ good works.” Manifestly, stories of miracles of malevolence or of revenge, such as abound in some of the apocryphal Gospels,¹ would be regarded as intrinsically incredible in one who was what Jesus is represented as being. But might not mere prodigies be consistent with his character ? And would they not serve as proofs of his claims ? What we have urged above would indicate a negative answer. Mere prodigies, unless proceeding from one already well authenticated as a messenger from God, might be regarded as works of legerdemain or of the devil. But in the case of one whose divine commission is already established by miraculous works of benevolence,

¹ Cf. Cowper, *The Apocryphal Gospels* ; especially the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, which describes the child Jesus as killing his playmates by a word when they were naughty.

works of *mere* miraculous power, expressive of no character and no important truth, would be needless, and because needless, suspicious. They would seem to be mere ostentatious displays, not in consonance with the character of the alleged miracle-worker. Accordingly in the few instances in which the reported miracles of Christ seem to partake of the character of prodigies no one can be content to regard them as being a mere display of power. For example, the miraculous draught of fishes (Luke v. 1-11), or, still more, the finding of a coin in a fish's mouth (Matt. xvii. 24-27), is usually regarded as having some other object than a mere exhibition of miraculous power.¹ If no other, no worthy, use or meaning could be found in them, that would of itself lead one to wonder whether the narrative could be fully trusted. If Jesus came in order to reveal the grace and truth of God, it was to be expected that his works, as well as his words, should be full of grace and truth.² The miracles, in order to prove the teachings, must be cognate and consistent with the teachings.

While, therefore, we deny that it is possible for criticism to do away with the miraculous, and must leave the Gospel narratives substantially as they are, we cannot deny one's right to question the accuracy of certain particular narratives of miracles, provided there are especial reasons for doubt. If to any one who accepts the general description of Jesus, his character, and his works, as truthful, any particular narrative seems to be irreconcilable with the general account, and seems, besides, to be feebly attested or inconsistent with other certain facts, such a one cannot be charged with inexcusable temerity, if he hesitates to give unqualified credence to the narrative. So long as the *particular doubts* are grounded in the *general faith* itself, they cannot be called unchristian doubts, even though others may deem them without sufficient warrant. To take a particular instance: may one doubt the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ, and yet retain a belief in the New Testament narratives of miracles in general? It is certain that many do take

¹ Cf. Trench, *Notes on the Miracles*.

² Cf. Bruce, *Chief End of Revelation*, pp. 157 sq. *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, pp. 301-314.

this position. The account of the birth is given in two narratives difficult to reconcile with one another. The strict Davidic descent of Jesus, everywhere assumed in the New Testament, seems to be inconsistent with the narratives. John, who ought to have known as well as any one else about the facts, and whose general representation of Jesus as the divine Logos made flesh would incline him to lay stress on such an origin, nowhere asserts or implies it. The same may be said of Paul. The reasons which may seem to tell in favor of an incarnation taking place without the agency of a human father may equally be urged against the agency of a human mother. Accordingly such a scholar as Meyer, who finds no difficulty in accepting the miracles in general, regards the stories found in Matthew and Luke as legendary.¹ Dorner,² on the other hand, while contending that the historic record is presumptively genuine and authentic, yet does not depend simply on the *ipse dixit* of the historian for the proof of the miracle, but brings forward reasons for thinking it *a priori* probable that the birth was miraculous. There is a *possibility* of an early admixture of legendary matter in the evangelical narratives. On the other hand, no one can ever prove that these particular narratives are legendary. To the most the narrative of the miraculous conception will always appear to be in excellent harmony with the general description of the life, character, and work of the Messiah. It will doubtless continue to be believed by the most of those who hold to supernatural Christianity at all. But there will always be some Christian minds to whom this account of the miraculous conception will seem inherently improbable. A still greater number probably will stumble at the story of the demonized swine (Matt. viii. 28-33), and of the cursing of the barren fig-tree (Matt. xxi. 18-20), and for the reason that they do not seem to be in harmony with the general character and ordinary miracles of Christ. In like manner the story of the rising of the saints after the crucifixion of Christ, told only by Matthew (xxvii. 52, 53), seems to many, who are not anti-supernaturalists, intrinsically so improbable that they hesitate to believe in

¹ Comm. on Matt. i. 18, and Luke i. 54-56.

² *System of Christian Doctrine*, § 105.

its literal truth.¹ Now with regard to these and a few other narratives we can only say that they are to be judged like the Biblical history in general, that is, are to be condemned, if condemned at all, not because they narrate *miracles*, but because they tell of *such* miracles, or because for other reasons the narratives appear to be of doubtful authenticity.

But it cannot be too carefully borne in mind that one may easily be led to set up a canon which is not warranted by the facts. Thus one may lay it down as a fixed rule that, because the most of the miracles of Christ are acts of kindness to the suffering, therefore no acts of his shall be conceded to be miracles which have not that character. What right, however, has one to adopt any such criterion? Why may not a miracle serve some other purpose than merely to render physical relief? Why may it not embody a spiritual lesson? So, when it is assumed that the miracles cannot operate directly upon inanimate nature, but must be confined to the realm of rational beings, we must ask, What warrant is there for any such limitation? There is no ground for such an assumption which would not in the end do away with miracles entirely. It is more plausible when it is declared that no alleged miracle can be credited, if it involves the doing of positive injury rather than benefit. Yet even here great caution is needed. All that we can assuredly affirm is that Jesus could not have belied himself in doing his mighty works. A miracle which *apparently* indicates malevolence or injustice in the worker of it may *really* indicate no such thing. The same may be said of miracles which seem to have no worthy end, or no recognizable end at all. To be sure, it may be said, with Mr. Barnes, that splitting rocks or making water run up hill, even if it had no other purpose, would serve the purpose of authenticating the spoken message as divine. But, as we have seen, such prodigies *alone* would never have answered the end of effectually authenticating his divine commission. While it is true that the miracles of Christ did serve to authenticate his mission, the whole drift and tone of the history, as well as the words of Christ himself, warrant us

¹ Cf. on this, Prof. J. H. Thayer, article "*Saints*" in Am. edition of Smith's *Bible Dictionary*.

in asserting that the miracles had also a meaning and an end apart from the mere purpose of authenticating a revelation. Gathering from the history itself the general characteristics of his miracles, we may properly be suspicious of a particular alleged miracle, if it *plainly* conflicts with those general characteristics. But it may be difficult or impossible to prove such a conflict in the case of any of the New Testament miracles.

IV. General conclusion. The burden of the foregoing pages has been to the effect that the supernatural is an indispensable and irremovable part and proof of the divinity of the Christian religion. It has not been claimed that miracles as such are the most important thing in Christianity. Men are not saved by belief in miracles, but by belief in Christ. The great thing in the Christian life is not a correct view of God's relation to the physical laws of the universe, but a correct moral relation of man towards God. The vital thing is a readiness to welcome the gift of salvation. But *whom* shall one welcome as the bearer of the gift? Not every one who comes forward with an offer of help or advice. He who would be accepted as the world's Redeemer must bring with him credentials which are able to convince men that he is able to do what no one else can do, — that *he* is sent by God to accomplish the unique work of bringing light and deliverance to a world lying in darkness and bondage. Such an exceptional commission requires exceptional attestation. It can be established only by the exhibition of extraordinary credentials. What the contemporaries of Jesus chiefly needed was indeed spiritual deliverance and light. But that *Jesus* was the one appointed of God to bring the needed help required to be demonstrated, as it was demonstrated, by his manifestation of supernatural power and supernatural gifts.

And what was true at the outset is true still. Of course there is a certain difference between the impression which Jesus made on those with whom he walked and talked, and the impression which those receive who learn about him through the medium of oral and written tradition. Still the picture which we receive in this way is essentially the same as the original.

though seen, as it were, in a mirror. The same proofs which persuaded the first disciples are valid also for us, though they come mediately. There are, it is true, subjective proofs, coming from the personal experience of Christians, — the witness of the Spirit; but these proofs were accorded also to the original believers. Our assurance that these experiences are not subjective illusions comes largely from the confirmatory experience of the apostles and of the succession of Christians from their day to ours. What we lose in the directness and vividness of perception we gain in this accumulation of Christian experience. But still the general fact remains unchanged: What convinces us must be the same as what convinced Jesus' immediate followers. If they were deceived as to the substance of their belief, then that deception runs necessarily all through the Christian church. If they were rightly convinced, then the grounds of their conviction are of permanent validity. And there is hardly a proposition in the world of moral and historical truth more indisputable than that the first Christians became fully convinced of Jesus' Messiahship only as they recognized him as possessed of supernatural qualities and supernatural powers, and as supernaturally accredited by miraculous works, and especially by his miraculous resurrection from the dead.

If, now, the rationalist pleads for the rights of reason, and insists that nothing can be believed which does not stand the test of a rational investigation, the reply is that the Christian's reason is convinced that Jesus Christ was supernaturally commissioned and accredited, and that faith is therefore in agreement with reason and not opposed to it. If, on the other hand, the mystic claims that he has an immediate spiritual intuition of the divinity of Christ and of his work, and therefore needs no argument from miracles, the reply is that a historical revelation cannot be detached from the historical evidence of it. If each individual has, or thinks he has, a direct revelation of religious truth, then the local and historical appearance and work of Christ on the earth are dwarfed into insignificance, and revelation becomes practically the private privilege of each individual.

Every attempt — whether of the rationalist or of the mystic — to attain to a state of religious assurance thus ends in a sort of assurance which, just because it rests primarily on a merely individual judgment or impression, is necessarily affected with insecurity. Just so surely as religion is not merely a matter of individual preference or caprice, but is a matter which produces a social life, and is conditioned by it, so surely must the grounds on which it rests be such as can satisfy a community, and not merely an individual. The evidences of Christianity, then, are the evidences which produced the conviction of Jesus' Messiahship in John, Peter, and Paul, and all the original disciples, — evidences handed down from one generation to another in the Christian church, but confirmed by its self-perpetuating power, and by its salutary influence on the world.

But it may be said that there is this important difference between us and the first Christians, that they were Jews, and came to their Christian belief through the medium of their Jewish notions and expectations; whereas Gentiles come to an acceptance of Christianity by an entirely different process. The Jews were looking for a Messiah who should give them national independence. They had a ceremonial law which gave a peculiar shape to their religious conceptions. Their minds, therefore, must have come to the consideration of Jesus' character and claims otherwise than ours do; they must have been moved by different arguments from those which are decisive with us.

What shall be said to this? It is certainly true that the ordinary Christian now does not have to go through the process of substituting Christianity for Judaism. It is true that the first Gentile Christians also came into the Christian faith from a different environment from that of the Jews; they came out from a different group of prepossessions; they were moved by a somewhat different kind of persuasion. And accordingly the two classes of Christians were at the outset characterized by different phases. The work of amalgamating them into one homogeneous Christian church was a difficult one. Even among the apostles there was at first a diversity of view and feeling. So much must be conceded. But what then? Our main propo-

sition remains still unaffected. The Gentiles were converted through the preaching of the Jewish Christians. Great as may have been the difference between Gentile and Jew, the Gentile was somehow persuaded by the Jew. And therefore he must have been persuaded by considerations which were persuasive to the Jew. Moreover, the Jewish Christians did not come to their faith by seeing all their old Jewish prejudices and expectations confirmed in Jesus. On the contrary, they had to surrender many of their hopes and alter many of their conceptions, before they came fully to recognize in him the real Messiah. That which was one-sidedly and narrowly national in their expectations; that which was crass and outward in their religious notions,—this had to be abandoned. With the acceptance of Jesus as their Redeemer, they were led to revise and spiritualize their views of themselves and of others. That which decisively convinced them of Jesus' Messiahship was not his fulfilment of exactly what they had understood the Old Testament to promise them; it was rather the extraordinary character of Jesus himself, and the extraordinary attestations that accompanied his person and work,—attestations which convinced them of his divine commission and authority. Accordingly Peter at Jerusalem, and Paul at Athens, while they adapted their discourses to their respective audiences, yet both preached Jesus' resurrection from the dead as the decisive proof of his being God's messenger of salvation.

It remains, then, an evident fact that the Christian world has become Christian through the preaching of the original Jewish converts. But this brings us to a consideration of Judaism as the precursor of Christianity.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO JUDAISM.

IF the first disciples found it necessary to reconstruct their religious conceptions when they received Jesus as their Redeemer, does it not follow that Christianity is substantially independent of Judaism,—no more an offshoot from it than it is from the nobler forms of heathenism? Christianity being designed for all, professing to be the fulfilment of all true religious prophecies and hopes, must not all preceding religions be regarded as in their way preparatory to it? The heathen were not without much true light; and in their philosophy, morality, and religion, as well as in their civilization, they produced much that is of abiding value.¹ Accordingly the early Christians who were converted from among the Gentiles were fond of finding the *λόγος σπερματικός* among the heathen of the ante-Christian world.²

When, however, one attempts to make out that Christianity is essentially of Aryan, as distinguished from Jewish, origin, as is done by Emile Burnouf, it is manifest that the attempt must be a failure. The hypothesis, itself contradictory to all the presumptions and traditions, is fortified by another equally baseless one, namely, that the most essential features of Christianity ex-

¹ Cf. Dorner, *Christian Doctrine*, § 65.

² Cf. Justin Martyr, *Apol.* I. c. 46, "Those who lived according to reason are Christians, even though accounted atheists. Such among the Greeks were Socrates and Heraclitus, and those who resembled them." So, *Apol.* II. c. 10, he speaks of Christ as "known even to Socrates in part." Similar sentiments are found in Clemens Alexandrinus; *e. g.*, *Stromata*, Book I. chap. xix.; Book VI. chap. v., "The same God that furnished both the Covenants was the giver of Greek philosophy to the Greeks, by which the Almighty is glorified among the Greeks." So chap. viii. Cf. also Tertullian, *De testimonio animae*, and *Ad nationes*, chap. iv. For parallels between the writings of the N. T. and those of the heathen, see E. Spiess, *Logos Spermaticos*.

isted at first only as a "secret doctrine," communicated by Jesus to Peter, James, and John, and by them to a select few, and so on, till after the conversion of Constantine, when the secrecy was fully removed.¹ This esoteric doctrine, it is maintained with a great array of learning, came from the *Veda*, through the *Zendavesta*, the prophet Daniel, a select few among the Jews after the Babylonish captivity, the Essenes, and the Therapeutics, and finally was taught in its completeness by Jesus to his disciples, but only secretly. The religion being essentially Aryan, it was not acceptable to most of the Jews, and accordingly found most favor among the Gentiles. The proof of all this is found in certain striking resemblances existing between the sacred books and symbols of the Indians and Persians, on the one hand, and those of the Christian church on the other. And all through the discussion there runs the assumption that religion is a metaphysical conception culminating in the institution of symbolic rites.²

Now that Greek philosophy was an important agent in moulding the form of early Christian theology need not be denied.³ And all through the Middle Ages and up to the present time, doubtless, may be traced the influence of that same philosophy. But the assertion that Christianity not only is, in its real essence, nothing but a metaphysical speculation, but, as such, was handed down secretly by a society of the

¹ *Science of Religions*, chap. iv. There is a sublime audacity in Burnouf's assertions which would be almost enough to carry conviction, were it not that one is soon puzzled and perplexed by his obscurity and self-contradictions. Thus at one time he gives us to understand that this esoteric doctrine was kept among the initiated until the time of Constantine (p. 51); immediately afterwards we are informed that Paul, having got possession of the secret science, "preached it in the streets and on the housetops" (p. 54). Still later (p. 55) we are told that the rise of heretical doctrines in the church made it necessary to "divulge altogether the last concealed formulas," and this was done by the publication of the Gospel of John, which appeared between 160 and 170 A. D. (p. 66). After this, it is said, the secret teaching had no longer a *raison d'être*.

² *Ibid.*, p. 168.

³ A truth emphasized, but overworked, by Harnack in his *Dogmengeschichte*. Harnack's fundamental point of view is quite the opposite of Burnouf's; it is, that dogma is not only not the vital thing in Christianity, but, properly speaking, is an excrescence.

initiated, coming directly through Jesus, not from the Old Testament but from the Zendavesta, — this sounds almost more like a joke than like a serious proposition. The striking resemblances which may be found between the Buddhistic and the Roman Catholic ritual, even if it were demonstrated that the latter was borrowed from the former, cannot prove the essential dependence of Christianity on Buddhism, except to a mind which can find in Christianity nothing more than a metaphysical theory and a complicated system of rites.

Jesus Christ was a Jew; his apostles were all Jews. He declared himself to be the fulfilment of the Jewish prophecies and of the hopes of pious Jews. The Gentiles, indeed, were also to be evangelized, but they were expected to accept Jesus as the Messiah promised to Israel, and to acknowledge the Mosaic dispensation as the chief revelation previously made. The Fourth Gospel, which Burnouf¹ pronounces to be “filled with Aryan ideas,” no less than the others represents Jesus as the Messiah of the Jews, and his gospel as the fulfilment of Jewish types and prophecies.² The Christian Scriptures recognize indeed not only the self-manifestation of God in nature (Rom. i. 19, 20) and in the human conscience (ii. 14, 15), but also the reality of earlier revelations than the Mosaic and the Abrahamic, — which in men like Melchizedek and Job are represented as bearing noble fruit among the Gentiles. But nowhere do Christ and his apostles put the heathen nations on a par with the Jewish race as the recipients of divine revelations. It would be superfluous to refer to the numerous passages in which both the Evangelists, and Christ as reported by them, represent the Christian revelation as the completion of the Mosaic, and recognize the Jews as God’s chosen people, and the Old Testament as of peculiar divine authority. And if we undertake to break the force of these representations by assuming that the Evangelists have misreported Christ under the influence of their Jewish predilections, then we must

¹ *Science of Religions*, chap. iv. p. 55.

² John i. 45, 49; iv. 25, 26; v. 39, 45-47; xii. 13, 41; xiii. 18; xix. 24; xx. 9, 31.

conclude that we know nothing certainly about him at all. For the Evangelists are unanimous in giving us this representation, and there is absolutely no counter-evidence by which it can be rectified.

Stress is indeed sometimes laid upon the difference between the Evangelists and the Apostle Paul, he being regarded as less under the control of Jewish conceptions and as representing Christianity in its more universal application.¹ But the truth is that Paul also, while he does emphasize the universality of the Christian revelation, and teaches more distinctly than others that the Mosaic law was superseded by the Christian dispensation, yet recognizes Christianity as an offshoot from Judaism, and as a fulfilment of Jewish prophecy. Jesus is to him the son of David promised by the prophets (Rom. i. 2, 3; ix. 4, 5). He speaks of the Jews as especially entrusted with the oracles of God (iii. 2; ix. 4), and of Abraham the Hebrew as the father of the faithful (iv. 1-18; Gal. iii. 7). To the Gentile Christians he speaks of the Jews as the good olive tree, and of the Gentile converts as wild olive branches grafted in contrary to nature (Rom. xi. 17-24). To the Corinthians he speaks of the Mosaic history as prefiguring Christ (1 Cor. x. 1-4). The death and resurrection of Christ are declared by him to be a fulfilment of the Jewish Scriptures (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4). The Christian dispensation is represented as taking the place of the Mosaic (2 Cor. iii. 7-11). The Mosaic law is recognized by him as a tutor to bring men to Christ (Gal. iii. 24), and the Abrahamic covenant as fulfilled in Christ (iii. 14 *sqq.*). However true, now, it may be that Paul, more clearly than the other apostles, recognized the universality of Christianity, and that he was more prompt than they to give up the outward forms of Judaism when he saw the inward spirit of it fulfilled in Christ, yet none the less true is it that he, like the others, regarded the Hebrew dispensation as a supernatural revelation, and Christianity as organically connected with it in a sense which could not be affirmed of any other religion. There is essential agreement among them all. Jesus and all his apostles looked on the Christian dispensation

¹ Thus Pfeiderer, *Religionsphilosophie*, vol. ii. p. 197, represents it as Paul's great work to detach Christianity from Judaism.

as the fruitage and fulfilment of the Jewish, while they also all looked on it as a gospel for all men.

Christianity, therefore, is inextricably blended with Judaism. An assault on the divine authority of the one involves an assault on that of the other, — from the Christian point of view at least. The Jew may doubt whether Judaism points forward to Jesus of Nazareth and the religion which he preached. But the Christian cannot doubt that Jesus of Nazareth points backward to Isaiah, David, and Moses.

Or may it be thought that possibly Jesus was to be trusted as a teacher of morality and religion, but fallible in his conception of God's relation to the Jewish people? May he not be implicitly believed in what he says about himself and about general spiritual truth, while yet he shared the erroneous notions of his countrymen about God's special choice and supernatural guidance of them? But this is a futile shift. For the question is not concerning certain incidental and external features of a revealed religion; not about the correctness of transcription, the age and genuineness of certain Biblical books, the formation of the canon, the accuracy of subordinate and unimportant stories in the older records; not even about the theory of types or of inspiration. The question is whether Jesus could have been what he claimed to be as the Light of the world, and yet be radically mistaken when he represented his revelation as the fulfilment of the Mosaic economy, when he represented the Old Testament dispensation as possessing a divine sanction, the Jews as in a peculiar sense God's chosen people, and himself as the Messiah prophesied and looked for by the Old Testament saints. And the answer to such a question cannot be doubtful. It is simply impossible to believe that a man could erroneously suppose God to have supernaturally revealed himself to Moses and the prophets, and yet be himself chosen by God as the one authoritative Revealer of the divine will and love. Moral superiority may indeed co-exist with intellectual imperfection; but whoever is to be an authoritative revealer of divine truth needs some other qualification than mere innocence of heart. If Jesus was wrong in calling Judaism a divine revelation preparatory to his own, then he was in error in respect to the very

question concerning which he professed to be able to speak with infallible authority. He who calls that a revelation which is not one, is not the man to communicate a true one.

This is the general fact. Every one who recognizes the religious authority of Jesus must acknowledge the Mosaic economy to be in some emphatic sense a divine revelation, and the prophets of the Old Covenant as divinely inspired. But this general proposition leaves still some particular questions open.

1. How far and in what sense did Christ regard himself and his work as prophesied by Moses, and by the Hebrew prophets and psalmists? That he represented himself as foretold or prefigured in some sense and to some extent, we have already seen; and this lies so obviously on the surface of the New Testament record as to need no argument. But it does not follow that he understood the Jewish statesmen, seers, and poets as all predicting the Christian dispensation with minuteness, or with distinct consciousness of the time and exact nature of the things that were to be in the future. There is another course possible, namely, that of holding that in many, if not in most, cases the alleged prophecy is not direct, but indirect; that the Old Testament passage is not so much a *foretelling* as a *fore-shadowing* of the Christian dispensation; that the institutions, events, and prominent personages of the older economy, and likewise, in many cases, the language of the Old Testament writers, were predictive of Christianity in the sense that they were *typical* of it, but not necessarily in the sense that the authors of the Old Testament consciously *intended* any direct reference to an antitype, or to a fulfilment, in a higher sense, of their utterances.¹

That much in the Old Testament was typical of the Christian dispensation is admitted by all who accept the New Testament itself as authoritative. The Epistle to the Hebrews sets forth

¹ So such writers as Tholuck, *Das alte Testament im neuen Testament*; Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Psalms; Messianic Prophecies*; P. Fairbairn, *Typology of Scripture*; Ladd, *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. pp 63 *sqq.*; C. A. Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, § 19; Richm, *Messianic Prophecy*; Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*.

this view with such particularity and emphasis that no one can mistake it. But this does not answer the question, how far the typical interpretation of the Old Testament is to be carried. Shall we, with Origen and his followers, find an allegorical or spiritual meaning, or even numerous such meanings, in every part of the Old Testament? Shall there be unlimited license given to the imagination in searching out occult analogies between Old Testament history and the facts and truths of Christianity? Or, if we recoil from the lawless extravagances of such interpreters, shall we go to the opposite extreme, and deny that there is any such thing as a type in the Old Testament, more than in profane history? Or, if we do not go so far as this, shall we say that nothing is to be called typical which is not in the New Testament thus designated? The latter view, advocated with great ability by such men as Bishop Marsh¹ and Moses Stuart,² seems to be the simplest and most free from danger of abuse. The principle they lay down is very plausible, namely, that Biblical language, like all other language, must be interpreted according to the laws of language; that what a man says or writes means but one thing, and that that thing is what the author meant, not what any one else may arbitrarily make it mean; that if we admit a "double sense" as characterizing Scriptural language, we may as well admit a hundred senses, and are amenable to no law of interpretation but our own will and caprice. These writers, moreover, exclude absolutely all *language* from the domain of typology. "Type," says Professor Stuart, "means a resemblance of two things, not an occult sense of words."³ Consequently, every utterance of the Old Testament writers is declared to be either wholly and exclusively prophetic, or not prophetic in any proper sense at all. When the New Testament writers quote, as if referring to Christian truths, language from the Old Testament, which evidently was not meant by the writer as prophetic of Christianity, then this is called a mere accommodation or illustration. The Old Testament is supposed to be used in

¹ *Lectures on the Criticism and Interpretation of the Bible*, Cambridge, 1828.

² *Hints on the Interpretation of Prophecy*, 2d ed., New York, 1851.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

such a case merely as an object or event in nature or secular history might be used.

It is just here that the weakness of this view, otherwise so simple and plausible, begins to appear. The New Testament refers in precisely the same way to different parts of the Old Testament as being fulfilled. For example, Christ is said in John xix. 28, to have said, "I thirst," in order "that the Scripture might be fulfilled." The passage referred to is Ps. lxxix. 21. On the other hand, Paul says (Acts xiii. 33) that in Christ's resurrection "God hath fulfilled" Ps. ii. 7. Now any one reading these two New Testament passages finds no distinction indicated as to the sense in which *fulfilment* is used in the two cases. Or if there is any, it would seem to be that greater emphasis lies on it in the first case; for there the event narrated is said to have taken place *for the purpose* of fulfilling the prophetic passage, whereas in the second case it is simply said that the prophecy was fulfilled. Nevertheless, Professor Stuart will have it that Ps. ii. is a purely prophetic psalm, meant by the writer to refer to Christ and nothing else; whereas Ps. lxxix. he declares to be not prophetic in any sense and not meant to be such by the author. Why so sharp a distinction? Simply because in Ps. lxxix. 5 the author confesses his sins, whereas Christ was sinless; consequently, that verse being inapplicable to Christ, none of the psalm can refer to him. On the other hand, Psalms ii., xvi., xxii., xlv., and cx. are pronounced to be directly Messianic, because of certain things in them which are regarded as not applicable to the author or subject of the psalm. But what becomes now of the great hermeneutical principle with which he starts out? That principle is that the Bible must be interpreted according to the usual laws of language. Now no application of that principle can be more obvious than that when a man says, "*I* do, feel, think, hope," etc., he means *himself*, unless he clearly indicates that he is putting the language into the mouth of another. But Ps. xvi. gives no such indication whatever. It is throughout, to all appearance, an utterance of David's personal feelings towards God: "In thee do *I* put *my* trust. . . . The lines are fallen unto *me* in pleasant places. . . . Therefore

my heart is glad. . . . For thou wilt not leave *my* soul to Sheol, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption." Now by what authority does Professor Stuart, in defiance of all the laws of language, declare that David here is not giving utterance to his own feelings at all, but is writing prophetically what a thousand years later is going to be the fit expression of the feelings of Jesus Christ? It is true, Peter (Acts ii, 25-32) and Paul (Acts xiii. 34-37) speak of a part of this psalm as fulfilled in Christ's resurrection.¹ But so they speak of other passages as fulfilled which Professor Stuart will not allow to be prophetic at all. If the New Testament, assumed to be infallibly inspired, gave us some criterion by which we could infallibly tell when it is quoting a strict prophecy, and when, on the other hand, it is only quoting illustratively, the case would be comparatively clear. But no rule is laid down or even suggested. The reader is obliged to exercise his own judgment.

Now that there is a distinction to be made between passages that are directly prophetic of the Messiah and those which are only indirectly prophetic of him, cannot be denied. In interpreting the Old Testament we must use our common sense, and do no violence to the laws of language. So far we go with Marsh and Stuart. But just because we do so, we insist that when the New Testament writers speak about *fulfilment*, they *mean* fulfilment, if not always in precisely the same sense, yet in a

¹ It is chiefly on the ground of these passages, that Stuart, in a special *Interpretation of Ps. xxi.* (*Biblical Repository*, vol. i.), declares that the whole psalm must be treated as referring exclusively to Christ; for Peter and Paul not only speak of the psalm as fulfilled in Christ, but seem to affirm that it does not hold true of David, because he had died and seen corruption. This sounds plausible; but Paul (1 Cor. ix. 9, 10), in quoting Deut. xxv. 4, even more emphatically denies the primary and obvious sense of the command, not to muzzle the ox when he is threshing: "Is it for the oxen that God careth, or saith he it altogether for our sake? Yea, for our sake it was written." But must we really conclude that God does not care for oxen? or that the Mosaic command had no reference to oxen? The truth is that Ps. xvi., rising above the ordinary O. T. conceptions, pictures the author as being delivered from death, as not being given over to Sheol, but as enjoying in God's presence pleasures forever. This deliverance from the power of death in the strictest sense is fulfilled in Jesus, but was true of the Psalmist in the same sense that Jesus' declaration in John xi. 26 is true of the believer.

real and honest sense. If they treat as Messianic Ps. xl., which seems to refer directly only to the writer, so also do they treat as Messianic Ps. xvi., which also seems to refer only to the writer. According to the laws of language, we naturally should treat the two cases alike, and declare that in either case the primary reference was really to the author. No one would think of any other reference but for the use which the New Testament makes of these psalms.

If now, in deference to this New Testament application of such Old Testament passages, we modify what would be otherwise our understanding of these passages, then our only rule of interpretation must be one which, while not conflicting with a sensible view of the Old Testament, is in harmony with the general drift of the New Testament. A blind and narrow following of the New Testament might lead to the extreme of calling only such Old Testament passages Messianic as are quoted as Messianic in the New Testament, even though the immediate context of the quoted passages is manifestly not Messianic. To this extreme William Whiston had the hardihood to go, when¹ he said respecting Hos. xi. 1 as used by Matthew (ii. 15) that this passage "is not only most exactly suitable in every word and expression to the Messiah in particular, more properly than to the people of Israel in general of old time, but is also a prediction by itself, having no visible connection or coherence either with what went before, or what follows after in that book, and so was, I believe, a distinct prophecy concerning the Messiah inserted into this coherence of the prophet, though it did not properly belong at all to it." But to this extreme no one can go without abandoning all common sense; and Stuart well observes that "but little danger to the churches

¹ In his *Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies*, p. 52 (1705). So Whiston regards Ps. lxxviii. 2, quoted in Matt. xiii. 35, as out of place in the psalm, and as directly applicable to Christ. In other cases, however, he loses courage, and resorts to the view that the Old Testament passage is no prophecy at all, but is *fulfilled* as any poetic description may be said to be fulfilled when something analogous occurs. So he treats Jer. xxxi. 15, as referred to in Matt. ii. 17, 18. Dean Burgon (*Inspiration and Interpretation*, pp. 191 *sq.*) almost rivals Whiston, in what he says of Paul's use (Rom. x. 6-9) of Deut. xxx. 11-14.

can ever arise from such an error.”¹ But it is only one step short of this extreme when Stuart himself lays down the principle that only just those passages which are quoted as typical or prophetic of Christ must be treated as such, and even with regard to these exercises the right of making a broad distinction between the different Old Testament passages such as the New Testament neither warrants nor hints at.

What then are the decisive objections to this hermeneutical principle of Marsh and Stuart? They are these: (1) It requires us to adopt a most mechanical rule in deciding what is typical in the Old Testament. It assumes that the New Testament authors have given an exhaustive catalogue of the types, when nothing can be clearer than that they undertook to do no such thing. Incidentally Christ and his apostles have referred to certain persons and events as signs or foretokens of the Messiah or of the Messianic dispensation. Jonah, David, Melchizedek, Sarah, and Hagar; the exodus from Egypt and the passover, the serpent lifted up in the wilderness, the preservation of Noah, — these² and a few other events and persons are spoken of as if they in some way foreshadowed corresponding events and persons in the Messianic dispensation. No man can understand why just these and no other objects should be pronounced typical, — why Jonah, Sarah, and Hagar should be found so much more significant than Joseph, Joshua, Gideon, and Samuel.³ We might indeed, if necessary, be content to accept the types specified in the New Testament as absolutely the only ones; but why is it necessary? In speaking of certain things as typical, do the New Testament writers affirm that other things not spoken of are not typical? Do they profess to give an exact and complete list of the types and symbols of the Mosaic economy? Certainly not. Well then, the natural inference would seem to be that there *are* other types than those that are mentioned, rather than that there are not. But more than this, (2) there are certain *general statements* respecting the Old Testament

¹ *Hints*, etc., p. 13.

² Cf. Matt. xii. 40; Luke i. 32; Heb. vii.; Gal. iv. 22-25; Matt. ii 15; 1 Cor. v. 7; John iii. 14.

³ Cf. Fairbairn, *Typology*, etc., p. 42.

which directly assert that its typical significance is not limited to some few isolated things. They are such as these: Christ says (John v. 39) of the Old Testament Scriptures, "These are they which bear witness of me." And to the two disciples at Emmaus he "expounded in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself;" and to the apostles he said: "These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms concerning me" (Luke xxiv. 27, 44).¹ When we compare with this his statement in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v. 17): "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil," it is obvious that he conceived of the Old Testament in general as prophetic of him,—as something which it was his mission to fulfil. In perfect accordance with this are general statements like these: In Col. ii. 16, Paul speaks of the ceremonial ordinances in general as "a shadow of the things to come." So in Heb. x. 1, the law in general is said to have "a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things." In viii. 5, the priests are said to "serve that which is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things." Now these general and sweeping declarations not only allow, but require, us to understand more of the Old Testament as prophetic of Christ than the comparatively few passages which happen to be referred to by the New Testament writers. Moreover, these declarations show that Christ and his apostles regard the Mosaic dispensation as having a real and designed reference to the Christian dispensation, so that the former is "fulfilled" in no such loose sense as may be applied to any observed resemblance between any event and any preceding one; but that the connection is organic and divinely constituted. Not otherwise can we understand the frequent statements respecting the necessity of the fulfilment.²

But still it may be urged that all this can properly be applied only to institutions, to things, or at the most to persons,

¹ Cf. Acts iii. 24.

² Matt. xxvi. 54-56; Mark xiv. 49; Luke xxi. 22; John xix. 28; Acts i. 16, xvii. 3.

but cannot be applied to language. But why not? Certain persons are unquestionably treated as types. Adam (Rom. v. 14), Melchizedek (Heb. vii.), Jonah (Matt. xii. 40), and David (Acts xiii. 34-36) are certainly called types of Christ. Elijah (Mark ix. 13) is called a type of John the Baptist. But what is a person? Not the material body merely. If David prefigured Christ, it must have been by virtue of his mind and character. The type consisted in part, no doubt, in the resemblance as to office. King David typified the Head of the Kingdom of heaven. But *David*, rather than another king, was a type of Christ because he was *such* a king, — a man after God's own heart. If so, if David prefigured Christ by virtue of what was ideal in his kingly character, then it follows necessarily that David's *utterances* are typical also; for words are the expression of the inmost nature.

We need, therefore, not be troubled by the bugbear of a "double sense." What David wrote about himself, he wrote about himself; and he had no second sense in mind, as an occult meaning different from the primary and obvious meaning. But in so far as he himself foreshadowed his "greater Son," those psalms which were the outgush of his deepest thoughts and feelings were also a shadow of the inward experiences of Jesus Christ. When the psalmist¹ uttered the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he gave utterance, doubtless, to his own feelings alone. There was no double sense in which he palter with us. But when Christ used the same language on the cross, he appropriated it to the expression of *his* own feeling. There is no double sense in the words any more than when any pious Christian appropriates to himself the language of a hymn which may in like manner have served as the medium for the outpouring of the sentiments of ten thousand others before him.² The shades of

¹ Ps. xxii. 1. We do not need to assume the correctness of the ascription of the psalm to David, in order to the validity of our argument. It is equally valid, if some other pious sufferer was a type of Christ, even though unknown by name.

² Not that we mean that in the latter case there is a *typical* relation, as in the other.

experience and conception may be extremely various which are yet voiced by the one product of a poet's inspiration.

We do not need here to consider in detail the question, how far divine inspiration may in some cases have carried the writer beyond himself, as it were, so that his language most appropriately describes something higher than himself. This would give us what Delitzsch¹ calls a typico-prophetic utterance. Nor is it necessary to decide the cases in which it is disputed whether the psalmist or prophet is uttering a directly Messianic prophecy. In general, this is a question of exegesis, to be decided according to the preponderance of evidence.

When we have once found that the typical interpretation of many passages is allowable, and that such passages are quoted as genuinely prophetic of the Messiah, we are relieved of all temptation to strain the natural and obvious meaning of the original. Many passages are *directly* prophetic of the Messiah to come, as, for example, Isa. ix. 1-7, Joel ii. 28-32, Micah v. 2-5, Zech. ix. 9, 10, and probably such Psalms as Ps. ii., lxxii., cx.² But with reference to these it may be a question how far the writers in their conception of the Messianic times and persons were influenced by local and Jewish prepossessions, which have left their trace on the form of the prophetic forecast. These and other kindred questions must be left to the exegete, who has to judge, according to the best light he can gain from all sources, what was in the mind of the writer.

The general truth then remains, with which we set out, that, according to Christ (and in this we may fairly regard his disciples as substantially at one with him), the Old Testament in general is prophetic of him and his work. Whether prophets were moved to anticipate and describe a future King who should bring deliverance, peace, prosperity, and piety to his people; or whether the pious, unconsciously to themselves, but

¹ *Comm. on the Psalms*, Clark's Foreign Theol. Library, p. 69.

² In the looser sense of "Messianic" those Psalms may also be so designated which picture a future triumph of God's kingdom. So, *e. g.*, Ps. xviii., xxiv., lxvii., lxxviii., lxxvi., lxxxiii. The case of Ps. lxxii. is particularly instructive. Scarcely any of the Psalms bears more decided internal marks of being genuinely Messianic, and has been more uniformly treated as such; yet it is nowhere quoted in the New Testament at all.

really in the divine intention, prefigured in their lives and utterances the person and experience of the Messiah to come,—in either case the Old Testament has upon it the seal of divinity; it is authoritatively declared to be a divine revelation.

2. Another question is: How far can Old Testament prophecy be used as an argument for the divinity of the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations? By many this argument is regarded as of the first importance. The Old Testament prophecies may be divided into three general classes: those which indirectly or typically prophesy the Messiah; those which directly pre-announce the coming of the Messiah; and those which relate to other topics. The latter are of various sorts. A large number of them consist of predictions respecting the heathen nations. Others concern individuals among the Jews, or relate to the Jews in general.

Now it is manifest that the first class, the typical prophecies, can of themselves furnish little or no proof of a divine revelation. A type is something having a designed resemblance to something else; but resemblances real or imaginary are so numerous and so easy to find in the world that they prove no supernatural agency. It is only as we assume the fact of the New Testament revelation that we come to believe in the typology of the Old Testament. We believe that such and such institutions or features of the Mosaic economy typify something corresponding in the Christian economy, simply because we *already* regard Christianity as a divine revelation, and therefore believe the Christian Scriptures when they affirm the typical character of certain things. The types and typical prophecies can at the best serve an apologetic purpose only by confirming what is already regarded as established.

But when we come to consider the other two classes of prophecies, the case is different. If future events have been minutely foretold hundreds or even thousands of years before they took place, then such a fact seems to be a demonstration of divine inspiration such as cannot be gainsaid. No one but God can surely predict the future. Men may sometimes shrewdly conjecture, from what is and has been, what is about

to be. Where a known series of causes is in operation, one can to some extent anticipate future developments. As an astronomer can foretell eclipses, assuming the continuance of astronomic forces, so an acute observer of social and political life, in so far as he perceives the forces that are operating among men, may make forecasts concerning the future which may often have almost the appearance of supernatural knowledge. There are also instances of clairvoyance — a faculty quite unlike the reflective judgment just spoken of — by which some persons appear to be able to foresee, by a sort of direct vision, things that are yet future and quite beyond the apprehension of others.¹ But anything like an accurate and detailed portraiture of historical events and personages given centuries before their appearance would universally be regarded as beyond the power of man, and, if correct, would be held by all to be a supernatural feat. Accordingly, the prophecies of Scripture are by many regarded as a more effective weapon than miracles to use against unbelief. And undoubtedly they would be such, were they really so minute and accurate a history of the future as they are sometimes represented. A miracle is an event the evidence of which grows weaker according to the distance of time and the number of witnesses through whom the report of it comes. A prophecy is a standing miracle, whose voice grows more distinct and expressive with the lapse of time. It proves nothing at the time of its utterance, but its fulfilment stamps it as divine.

But when we come to examine the Hebrew prophecies, we find that the argument is not so clear and cogent as might seem desirable, and as has often been asserted. If many prophecies of future events appear to have been wonderfully fulfilled, many others, it may be objected, have not been fulfilled at all. One man,² speaking of the Messianic prophecies, uses this strong language: “We sometimes hear preachers cry out, ‘Let one show us a single prophecy not fulfilled, and we will descend from this pulpit.’ I should be tempted to say to them, ‘I will mount up into your place, if you will show me a single pre-

¹ For illustrations see G. C. Horst, *Deuteroskopie*.

² Pecauc, *Le Christ et la Conscience*, p. 42

diction accomplished.” And Kuenen, in a book¹ replete with learning, elaborately argues that the larger part of the Jewish prophecies were never fulfilled, and that those which seem to have been fulfilled exhibit no marks of supernatural inspiration. The fact that such a position can be taken and maintained with ability and plausibility, shows that at the best the argument from prophecy cannot be relied on as irresistible.

What shall we say then? If by means of the prophecies we cannot convince the skeptic; if even professed Christians (like Kuenen) find the argument fallacious, shall we drop it altogether? And since, nevertheless, the Hebrew prophets did utter manifold predictions concerning the course of future events, and professed to speak under the inspiration of Jehovah, shall we even have to conclude that the non-fulfilment of their prophecies becomes a proof not only that they were not inspired, but that they were arrant deceivers? For in the most authoritative declaration respecting prophets and their credentials (Deut. xviii. 22) we are told, “When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously; thou shalt not be afraid of him.”

These apparent drawbacks in the argument from prophecy are, when the matter is rightly considered, transformed into confirmations of the genuineness of prophecy. Minute exactness in foretelling the future ought not to be looked for in the Old Testament prophecies. For —

a. The direct and main work of the prophets was preaching, not prediction. This is a truth which has become more and more recognized by men of all shades of theological belief.²

¹ *The Prophets and Prophecy in Israel.*

² See, *e. g.*, G. F. Oehler, *Theologie des alten Testaments* (also in English, *Theology of the Old Testament*), § 213; Riehm, *Messianic Prophecy*, p. 26; P. Fairbairn, *Prophecy*, pp. 6 *sq.*; Davison, *Discourses on Prophecy*, p. 42; Ewald, *Die Propheten des alten Bundes*, vol. i. p. 25; Hitzig, *Biblische Theologie*, § 22; Orelli, *Die alttestamentliche Weissagung*, p. 10; W. R. Smith, *The Prophets of Israel*, p. 82; Ladd, *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 139; Briggs, *Messianic Prophecy*, § 14; R. P. Smith, *Prophecy a Preparation for Christ*, Lect. I.; H. Schultz, *Alttestamentliche Theologie*, vol. i. p. 171; Küper, *Das Prophetenthum des alten Bundes*, p. 32; Kleinert, Art. *Prophet*,

The office of the prophets was to enforce the commands of the law, to warn the perverse, to comfort the afflicted, and in general to awaken the national conscience. They dwelt on the power, omnipresence, and holiness of Jehovah. They emphasized the doctrine of his intimate relation to his people. They aimed to keep before their hearers the obligations which, as a nation and as individuals, they owed to Jehovah. In short, they were preachers of righteousness, — not, however, as an abstract duty evolved out of their consciousness, but as a duty to an ever present personal God. The larger part of the prophecies is of this purely ethical sort, without any predictive element. But where they introduce intimations concerning the future, it is still for the purpose of warning or of encouragement. Threats of national or individual punishment were uttered, but not for the purpose of serving to later generations as a monument of their powers of vaticination; they were uttered for the purpose of producing an immediate wholesome moral impression. Even the denunciation of judgment on the surrounding heathen nations was for the same purpose. The idolatries and vices of those nations were pictured, and the necessary punishment was set forth; but all this, in order to impress on the Jews the superiority of Jehovah to the false gods of the heathen, and the iniquity and danger of yielding, as they were only too ready to yield, to the seductive influences of their neighbors. When, on the contrary, they foretold a future period of prosperity and peace, this was still designed to have a present effect, namely, to impress on the people the truth of the Divine guardianship, and the certainty that sooner or later faith in Jehovah and patient waiting for him would be rewarded. The Messianic prophecies occur almost uniformly in immediate connection with appeals or reproaches concerning the national sins, or else as a consolation to the people when suffering under distress and captivity.¹ The office of the prophet is expressly declared to be that of conveying to the

in Riehm's *Handwörterbuch des biblischen Alterthums*; Tholuck, *Die Propheten und ihre Weissagungen*, § 5.

¹ Cf. Isa. viii. 16–ix. 7, x. 24–xi. 16, li. 17–liii. 12; Jer. iii. 1–18; Ezek. xxxvi. 16–36; Joel ii. 15–32; Amos ix. 7–15; Micah iii. 1–iv. 5, etc.

people Jehovah's messages of instruction and warning.¹ The accounts, in the historical books, of the appearance and intervention of prophets is to the same effect. They came, not for the purpose of predicting some distant future event, but for the purpose of producing a present effect on the conduct of rulers or people.² They were raised up in order to check the tendency to formalism, and to keep alive the sense of the presence of the living God.

Now for the accomplishment of this purpose minute predictions of what was to take place centuries after their time would manifestly have been of no use. It being impossible to verify the correctness of the predictions till long after the prophet and all those to whom he was sent were dead, the utterance of them would have been to the prophet's contemporaries no proof of his divine commission. If they believed the predictions, it must have been for other reasons than the evidence contained in the predictions themselves.

Nevertheless the prophets did utter predictions. And we live at a time when it can for the most part be determined whether the predictions have been fulfilled or not. But in examining the question, we are to keep in mind what the main and direct mission of the prophets was. We must remember that their prophecies had, before all things else, a moral and religious end. We must also consider the oriental style in which the prophecies are clothed, and not press figurative and graphic language, as if the substantial truth of the prophetic utterance depended on an exact and literal fulfilment of such incidental features of the description.³ Take such a prophecy as that of Joel ii. 28-32. It is quoted by Peter (Acts ii. 14-21) as being fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Nor does Peter hesitate to include in the quotation all that Joel has to say about the wonders in heaven, and signs on the earth, — blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke, the sun darkened, and the moon turned into blood; although

¹ Cf. Jer. vii. 25, 26, xxv. 4-7, xxix. 19, xxxv. 15; Ezek. ii. 3-5; Dan. ix. 6; Mic. iii. 8; Zech. vii. 12.

² See Judg. iv. 4 *sqq.*, vi. 7-10; 2 Sam. vii. 2 *sqq.*, xii. 1-15, xxiv. 11-14, and notably the history of Elijah and Elisha.

³ *Vide* Tholuck, *Die Propheten*, etc., p. 134.

there is not the slightest intimation that any of these signs had come to pass. The rushing mighty wind and the cloven tongues of fire certainly correspond very imperfectly to the prophet's description. It is manifest that Peter regarded these signs as figuratively meant, and laid all the stress on the essential thing, — the outpouring of the Spirit. Or, if he understood that the prophecy was to be fulfilled also in this more external way, he must have regarded the fulfilment as still to come. So when the prophets portray the destruction of heathen cities, specifying the kinds of birds and beasts that shall eventually dwell in their ruins,¹ the object is to picture, in this graphic way, the thoroughness of the destruction; and it would be a petty triumph of the skeptic to be able to show that in some of these details, which are only the dress of the description, the event has failed to correspond exactly to the prediction. Accordingly even in instances in which the prophecy seems to have been remarkably fulfilled in just these very non-essential particulars, we cannot regard this outward correspondence as the vital thing. When, for example, Christ's riding into Jerusalem on an ass is declared to be the fulfilment of Zech. ix. 9,² if one looks merely on this circumstance, one misses the real substance of the prophecy. It is manifest that Zechariah, in this specification of the animal on which the Messianic King would ride, meant to indicate the *peaceful* character of his reign. He is therefore pictured as riding on an ass, the beast used in the peaceful pursuits of a nation, whereas the horse was then associated with war; and accordingly in the next verse (ix. 10) we read, "I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the nations." Similarly Micah (v. 2-10) and Isaiah (ix. 1-7) portray the Messiah as the Prince of Peace, whose reign is to be signalized by the destruction of warlike weapons, chariots and horses, fortified cities and strongholds. Now suppose that at the time of Christ asses had ceased to be used, and horses had taken their place as the beasts of burden and of labor. Suppose then that Jesus had ridden into Jerusalem on

¹ *E. g.*, Isa xxxiv. 11-16; Zeph. ii. 14.

² See Matt. xxi. 4, 5; John xii. 14, 15.

a horse; would the prophecy for that reason have been unfulfilled? Or even if he had not *ridden* in at all, the essence of the prophecy would still none the less have been accomplished. We cannot limit the fulfilment to that one occasion even. The whole ministry of Christ was a fulfilment of the prophecy; and the Evangelist merely calls attention to this one occasion on which not merely the prediction in its more vital features, but even the pictorial clothing of it, had been fulfilled.

But, it may be said, just these prophecies which most directly, and not in a merely typical sense, foretell the coming of a Messiah contain elements which make it certain that the prophets themselves could not have had such a person in mind as Jesus of Nazareth was. The prophets evidently regarded him as one who was to deliver the Jews from the hostile Assyrians (Mic. v. 5), and to conquer the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites (Isa. xi. 14). He was expected to sit on the throne of David and restore the glory of the Davidic reign (Isa. ix. 7; Jer. xxiii. 5, xxx. 9, xxxiii. 15, 17; Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24; Hos. iii. 5; Amos ix. 11). It was assumed that Jerusalem and the temple would be the centre of the Messianic kingdom, and that the Mosaic law, with its ritual, would be perpetually observed (Jer. xxxiii. 18-22; Isa. ii. 2-4, lxvi. 20-23; Zech. xiv. 16-21). In short, the prophets, even in their loftiest anticipations of the Messianic period, seem to have been unable to divest themselves of their national, local, and religious associations, and fail to give an accurate description of him who professed to fulfil those prophecies.

Now, one might say that all this too belonged to the mere drapery of the prophetic delineation; that the Messianic reign was really not conceived by the prophets as a mere continuation, on a grander scale, of the Jewish monarchy and law. And other passages in the same prophets may be referred to as evidence that they had a more correct conception of what the real Messiah was to be and to do. Thus Jeremiah (iii. 16) represents it as a feature of the Messianic time that the ark of the covenant would be forgotten, and (xxx. 31-34) that the old covenant would be replaced by a new and more spiritual one. Still the fact is that the Messianic prophecies have pre-

dominantly the Jewish cast; and if one is essaying to convince a doubter that the prophecies have been literally fulfilled, and are therefore proved to be of supernatural origin, he must first *prove* that the prophets did not mean what they seem to mean. The appearance and the presumption are that the Messiah was expected to come sooner and to be another sort of man than Jesus of Nazareth. If, however, one argues from the New Testament itself, that the prophets really conceived the Messiah and his kingdom correctly, and only used the Jewish coloring in a consciously symbolic way, then we must reply that in the same way we can prove with equal cogency that Hosea really had the infant Jesus in mind when he wrote, "Out of Egypt have I called my son;" or that Jeremiah, when he wrote about the lamentation in Ramah, distinctly and consciously referred to Herod's massacre of the innocents.¹ If in the case of the indirect or typical prophecies we assume that the prophet had no double sense in mind, but referred only to what seems to be meant by his language, then equally may we assume that in the case of the direct prophecies he meant what he seems to have meant. At all events, whoever doubts the divinity of Jesus' person and commission cannot be convinced by the argument from prophecy, *if its cogency depends upon an exact and literal fulfilment of all the predictions concerning him* found in the Old Testament; for such a literal fulfilment cannot be made out.

The same may be said respecting the prophecies concerning the future of the Jewish people. As compared with the predictions respecting other nations, there is this difference: that, whereas in both cases desolation and destruction were denounced as a punishment for national ungodliness, yet in the case of the Jews these denunciations are accompanied with promises of ultimate restoration. They were to be scattered among all nations,² but not to be annihilated as a people.³ But besides this, they were finally to be restored to their own land, and there to enjoy

¹ Matt. ii. 15, cf. Hos. xi. 1; Matt. ii. 17, 18, cf. Jerem. xxxi. 15.

² Deut. iv. 27, xxviii. 25; Jer. ix. 16, xv. 4, xxiv. 9, xxix. 18; Ezek. v. 10, xiii. 15, xx. 23; Hos. ix. 17.

³ Ezek. xi. 16; Amos ix. 8, 9; Zech. xiii. 8, 9.

the favor of Jehovah.¹ Some of these prophecies may indeed be regarded as fulfilled in the return from the Babylonish captivity; but others of them certainly refer to something else, and describe a final and abiding condition of peace and righteousness in the land of Judea. Now this certainly has not yet been fulfilled; and although, on account of the remarkable fulfilment of the others, many have the confident expectation that the Jews, as a distinct race, are at some time to reoccupy Palestine, yet the *expectation* of a fulfilment cannot be made to serve as a fulfilment, especially to one who doubts the reality of any strictly supernatural prophecy.

b. This leads us to a second consideration. Minute particularity of detail in a prophecy is liable to excite suspicions concerning its genuineness. A prediction may indeed appear to be most remarkable, when it gives minute particulars of time, place, names, and accidental circumstances. But the Old Testament prophecies do not abound in such details; and when we find them, they do not prove to be the most effective evidence of the prophet's miraculous foreknowledge. For just because the prophetic descriptions are usually of an ideal sort, consisting of general pictures rather than of a delineation of incidental features, such minute features, when they are found, excite suspicion, and are conjectured to be a later interpolation. Thus, when a prophet (1 Kings xiii. 2) is said to have predicted the birth of King Josiah, even so conservative scholars as Tholuck² regard the name as here interpolated. When Micah (iv. 10) predicts that the Jews shall go to Babylon, this also is thought by many to be an interpolation;³ or if not, it is maintained that, as Micah elsewhere threatens an Assyrian, not a Babylonian, captivity, he can here think of Babylon only as a province of Assyria, and not as the capital of the conquering kingdom. So Micah's specification of Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah is regarded as being only another way of indicating that the Messiah

¹ Ezek. xi. 17; Jer. iii. 18, xxxi. 10-14, xlvi. 27; Hos. xi. 11; Zech. x. 10; Isa. xi. 10-16, xiv. 1-3, xxvii. 12, 13; Mic. iv. 10, v. 2-9; Joel iii. 1-8; Obad. vers. 17-21; Zeph. iii. 8-20; Amos ix. 14, 15.

² *Die Propheten*, etc., p. 111.

³ Kuenen, *The Prophets*, etc., p. 164.

was to come from the house of David.¹ And the particularity of many of Daniel's prophecies is thought to be one reason for regarding them as written after the event. Now whatever judgment one may have on these points, it is very certain that the more curiously exact and detailed a prophecy should be, as compared with the event predicted, the more strongly would every one be tempted to conjecture that the prophecy, in whole or in part, had been composed after the alleged fulfilment. Suppose a prophecy should be produced, foretelling all the details of Jesus' life, — the date and circumstances of his birth, the names of his parents, his going to the temple at the age of twelve, his baptism in the Jordan, his temptation, the number and names of his twelve apostles, the course and order of his journeys, his miracles, his place of abode, etc., — would not every one be instinctively inclined to doubt its genuineness? Why? Not because it is impossible for God to inspire a man to write such a prophecy, but because it would be out of harmony with the divine method and wisdom to do such a thing. Since the prophet's vocation is an ethical one, it would be inconsistent with its serious and practical character for him to tickle the curiosity of his hearers with such a multitude of minute outward details respecting the future. It is, in great part, the presence of such details in the Sibylline Oracles which has led to the assurance that they are largely spurious.² Such predictions can

¹ Schultz, *Attestamentliche Theologie*, vol. ii. p. 250.

² The Eighth Book of these Oracles (Friedlieb's edition) gives, among other things, a prophecy of the incarnation of the Son of God, and of his works. Such descriptions are found as the following: —

“By his word he will still the winds, and quiet the billows
 When they are raging, and walk on their surface, peaceful and trustful.
 With five loaves and a fish from the Lake of Gennearet's waters
 He will appease the hunger of five thousand men in the desert;
 And when he takes up all of the fragments that are left over,
 He will fill twelve baskets therewith, a hope of the nations. (vers. 223–278)

And at last to the faithless and godless he will be delivered,
 Who with unhallowed hands will blows inflict on the Godhead,
 And from polluted mouths will cast on him poisonous spittle.
 But he will simply yield his sacred back to the scourges,
 And will be silent when smitten, in order that none may discover
 Who and whence he is, that he may speak to the dead ones.

be of no use to the prophet's contemporaries, who have no means of verifying the accuracy of the predictions, and would serve to dissipate, rather than intensify, any moral impression that he might be aiming to produce.

But would not such minuteness in the prophecy be of great value to those who live when or after the prophecy is fulfilled? Hardly; for such preternatural foreseeing of the accidental details of future history would resemble rather the mysterious phenomena of clairvoyance than the product of a divine inspiration, even if proved to be genuine. It would be exposed to the suspicion, however, of not being genuine, for the very reason that it is intrinsically unlikely that God would supernaturally communicate such details. But there is another objection.

c. Such minuteness of prediction would interfere with the free and natural course of things. It would tempt some to try to fulfil it, and tempt others to try to frustrate it. As Nietzsche¹ says, such predictions must be "rare and moderate, in order not to destroy all human relation to history." It is sometimes said that predictions often fulfil themselves; that is, men set themselves to the work of doing something for the very purpose of making a known prediction come true. If the terms of the prediction are very specific and unambiguous, and if one has any special reason for desiring to have it come to pass, one can often gain this end by directly working to bring about the accomplishment of the thing predicted. Or the opposite may be the case. The Bible furnishes some illustrations of this. When Ahijah met Jeroboam and predicted that he would become king of Israel (1 Kings xi. 29-35), while he may not have

And he will wear a crown of thorns, . . . (vers. 287-294.)

But he will spread out his hands, and the whole world's breadth he will measure.

Gall they gave him to eat, and vinegar when he was thirsty.

Such unkindness shall bring upon them merited vengeance.

And the veil of the temple was rent in twain, and at midday

Three hours long will night prevail with terrible darkness." (vers. 302-306.)

The translation we have given is as close as adherence to the meter would allow. Only in one particular is the description made more minute than in the original Greek: instead of "Lake of Gennesaret's waters" it reads simply "water of the lake."

¹ *System der christlichen Lehre*, § 35.

suggested an altogether new thought to Jeroboam's mind, yet it is natural to assume that the encouragement afforded by the prophecy must have strengthened, if it did not produce, Jeroboam's resolution to make the prediction good, — just as Macbeth was fired by what the witches foretold him to bring about the fulfilment of his predicted elevation. On the other hand, Solomon tried to frustrate Ahijah's prophecy by seeking to put Jeroboam to death. So Herod, after he had learned that it had been prophesied that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem, attempted to frustrate the prophecy by killing all the children in the place. On the other hand, the fact of Messianic prophecies in general, although they are wanting in details of time and place and circumstance, undoubtedly furnished a stimulus to Theudas and Bar-cochebas, and the other pretended Messiahs. Unless all prophecies are to be as vague and ambiguous as the Delphic oracles often were, it could hardly be otherwise than that there should be efforts made to fulfil them of set purpose. But if they were all perfectly unambiguous and specific, it is manifest that they would tend to interfere with the natural operation of motives. The prophecies would become something else than prophecies; they would become a power directly operating to produce the result predicted. Prophets would be, to a great extent, what the more superstitious among the Jews, as well as other peoples, regarded them as being, namely, the efficient causes of the events foretold by them. This was evidently Ahab's conception of a prophet's power, when he entreated Micaiah to utter a favorable prophecy respecting his proposed expedition against Ramoth-gilead (1 Kings xxii. 13), and when, after the three years' drought predicted by Elijah, he met the prophet, and said, "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" (1 Kings xviii. 17).

d. But we have not only these reasons for not expecting in prophecies a detailed and exact forecasting of future events. It being the prophet's function to preach to his own contemporaries, his language, and the whole cast of his address, need to be intelligible to his hearers. But this would not be the case, if he dealt with themes entirely unfamiliar to them, and if his picture of the future had a coloring which they could not under-

stand. Of what use could it have been to the Jews of Isaiah's time to be told in detail about the history of the Roman Empire, a power as yet hardly in its infancy? Why should the prophet have been inspired to specify how many years would elapse before the Messiah would be born, and to tell particularly under what kind of government the Jews then would be? Even if he could himself have had a complete vision of that future, all strange to him in its outward features, it would have been almost impossible for him to make the vision mean anything to his hearers. It was, we may say, practically necessary that the promises of Messianic help should wear the color of the prophet's own time. This may involve an inaccuracy in outward circumstance, but that is nothing else than what we should look for, so long as we regard the prophet's direct aim to have been to produce a religious impression on those around him. The Jews at that time could not have been made to apprehend the idea of a purely spiritual kingdom. Surrounded as they were by mighty heathen nations by which they were in imminent danger of being overpowered, their hope of a great King able to give them security and salvation could not well have been dissociated from protection against these threatening powers. Nor do we need to suppose that the prophets themselves were wholly lifted above these associations. It is therefore quite what might be expected when the earlier prophets, especially Isaiah and his contemporaries, seem to connect the Messianic deliverance with the Assyrian invasions, while the following ones are more occupied with the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires, and only the latest make mention of Greece,¹ and none of them distinctly of Rome. The prophetic

¹ The references to Greece (Javan), however, occur mostly in books the date of which is disputed. They are found in Joel iii. 6; Dan. viii. 21, x. 20, xi. 2; Ezek. xxvii. 13, 19 (where the second is supposed to be an Arabian country, not Greece); Isa. lxvi. 19, and Zech. ix. 13. Only the passages in Daniel and Zechariah speak of Greece as a formidable military power. Our general purpose does not require a discussion of the critical questions here involved. As to Isa. xl.-lxvi., whatever one's judgment may be, there can be no question that the weightiest argument — one may say almost the only weighty argument — for the exilic date is the obvious fact that the writer all through the book writes as if the captivity were present, not future.

descriptions of the future bear the impress of the time in which they are written. As Fairbairn¹ well expresses it, "the prophets necessarily thought and spoke of the future under the conditions of their own historical position; so that it was not the image of the future which threw itself back upon the past, but rather the image of the past which threw itself forward into the future, — the things which were, and had been, gave their form to the things which were yet to be."

The foregoing considerations, while they imply that there are in the prophecies what may be called inaccuracies, yet indicate that the argument from prophecy is for that very reason of peculiar weight. There is so much prediction of a Messianic kingdom, and such a wonderful anticipation of many of its features, that the theory of supernatural illumination is the only satisfactory one; while yet the prophetic conception remains on that plane on which alone it could have been instructive and helpful to the prophet's own contemporaries. The significance of the Messianic prophecies in particular does not consist so much in the exact correspondence of any one of them with the details of the historic fulfilment, as in the very fact of the existence of so great a variety of Messianic prophecies, differing sometimes almost irreconcilably from one another, yet each suggesting or directly foretelling some one or more of the characteristics of the actual Messiah and his work. It is this convergence of so many different prophecies towards Christ and the Christian Church which constitutes the real strength of the argument from prophecy. The so-called Prot-evangelium (Gen. iii. 15) would, by itself, amount to very little as an evidence of a prophetic anticipation of Jesus Christ. The same may be said of Jacob's oracle (Gen. xlix. 10) respecting Judah, and of Balaam's vision (Num. xxiv. 17) of the star and the sceptre, and indeed of any *one* of the later more specific predictions that are found in the Old Testament. But it is just because there runs all through the Hebrew history this remarkable anticipation, growing more and more definite and decided with the lapse of time, assuming many forms and pictured in most diverse ways, and because these various prophecies are so remark-

¹ *Prophecy*, p. 155.

ably fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, that one becomes impressed with the conviction that a more than human intelligence governed the utterances of the prophets when they predicted the Messianic kingdom. The more probable it can be made to appear that the prophets themselves did not expect just such a Messiah as Jesus proved to be, the more indubitable does it become that the hand of Jehovah was upon them, and that they were inspired to utter words which foreshadowed more than the prophets were conscious of meaning. When one and the same person is seen to unite in himself, and to fulfil, the diverse prophecies which have pictured the expected Messiah now as Prophet,¹ now as King,² now as Priest,³ now as a sufferer⁴ in

¹ Deut. xviii. 15, 18; Isa. xlii. 1-7, xlix. 1-6, lii. 13-14. 12.

² Isa. ix. 1-7, xi. 1-9; Micah v. 1-5; Zeck. ix. 9, etc.

³ Ps. ex. 4; Zeck. iii. 8, vi. 13.

⁴ Zeck. xii. 10, xiii. 7; Dan. ix. 26; Isa. liii. As to this last-mentioned chapter, it is Messianic, whatever theory one may adopt as to its primary meaning. Among the various interpretations the most groundless is that which makes the "servant" some king, as Hezekiah, Uzziah, or Josiah. There is scarcely anything to favor the hypothesis. But little more plausible is the supposition that the passage refers to some individual prophet, perhaps Jeremiah, who has undergone peculiar persecution. It is almost grotesque to think of any ordinary prophet described as sustaining such a unique relation to the people. There is nothing whatever to suggest it; the "servant of Jehovah" in this section (xl.-lxvi.) is *nowhere* distinctly applied to an individual prophet. This fact bears equally against the view that the "servant" is here collectively used of the prophets in general. The term is doubtless used collectively for the most part, but is applied not to the prophets, but to the people as a whole (xli. 8, xlii. 19, xliii. 10, xlv. 1, 21, etc.). Sometimes, however, the servant is distinguished from the people (as in xlii. 1-7, xlix. 1-6, l. 10). The exegetical question is, whether in this latter case the servant is conceived of as an individual, or as the *pious part* of the people. Apparently it *must* be one or the other. The prevalent collective sense in other cases favors assuming a collective sense in these cases; but this is not decisive. Where the singular number is used continuously, and the general *impression* produced is that of an individual rather than of a collection — as in xlix. 1-6, and especially in lii. 13-14. 12 — there is not the slightest exegetical difficulty in supposing that the prophet really had an individual in mind. If he confessedly uses the term now in a comprehensive, and now in a restricted, sense, — so restricted that in xlix. 6 it is represented as the mission of the "servant" to "raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel," as well as to be "a light to the Gentiles," — there is no exegetical objection to

the power of his enemies, now as a victorious and invincible warrior; — when one comes to see this, then the conviction becomes irresistible that no mere presentiment, no magical arts, no shrewd prognostications, and no cunning deceit could have so constructed the prophecy and so brought about the fulfilment.

This is a line of argument which will of course not be stringent to one who recognizes in Christ himself no divine illumination and authority. Such a one may speciously urge that the Messianic anticipations of the Jewish prophets have failed of fulfilment in respect to their predominant feature, namely, the *kingly* character of the Messiah. Jesus, it may be said, was

our supposing that the restriction goes so far as to limit the term sometimes to an individual, who in a unique manner realizes the divine ideal of a servant. And in chap. liii. everything favors this hypothesis. So sharply is the servant individualized and contrasted with the people in general, that some (*e. g.*, Hitzig, following the later Rabbins) conceive verses 2–10 to be the language of the *heathen* amongst whom the Jews were dispersed, — a view, however, so groundless that it hardly needs refutation. Now it is a simple rhetorical principle that, if the singular noun or pronoun is used collectively, the context must make this fact evident. In xli. 8–14, *e. g.*, no one can doubt that the people as a whole are meant, even apart from the phrase “men of Israel” in verse 14. But in lii. 13–liii. the case is reversed. We there have not merely the singular number uniformly used; but the marks of individuality are so various and pointed that it becomes difficult to adjust the section to the theory of a collective signification. *E. g.*, when the servant is called “a man of sorrows,” one who “opened not his mouth,” was “cut off from the land of the living,” etc., it requires a straining of “the exegetical conscience” to understand the prophet as meaning the whole people, or even a collection of persons. The *presumption* here is that a single person is in the prophet’s mind, and that this individual is the expected Messiah. This view, favored by the internal evidence, and adopted by the earlier Jews and the great majority of Christian interpreters, is not likely to be abandoned. It is surprising that Professor Ladd should say that “no other answer has greater difficulties than the one which makes the passage . . . directly and solely Messianic” (*Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 55). Professor Ladd strongly asserts indeed the Messianic character of the passage, but regards it as only typically Messianic. This is of course *possibly* correct; but few will be likely to come to that conclusion on account of such a subtle exegesis of Luke xxii. 37 as he adopts (p. 54), following Meyer, against nearly everybody else. See on this subject, Urwick, *The Servant of Jehovah*, and V. F. Oehler, *Der Knecht Jehova’s*.

anything but a king. He expressly refused to be made a king. He was simply a wise and good man who tried to get men to follow his precepts. With such objectors we are not disposed to contend. The true force of the argument from prophecy can be felt only by one who recognizes in Jesus something higher than a distinguished moralist or philosopher; who sees in him the realization of the highest ideal of true Kingship; who acknowledges him to be the Head of the Kingdom of God, the Lord to whom the members of the community of believers owe homage and allegiance. He who sees in him the real Anointed of God has no difficulty in seeing how he fulfils the types and predictions of the Old Testament; Christ is rather the one fact that gives unity and consistency and significance to what otherwise is obscure and confused. This faith in Christ, it is true, is not ordinarily the product of a study of the prophecies. The evidences of Christianity which are most convincing are doubtless those which are found in the history and inherent character of Christianity itself. But provided the faith exists, it receives an additional support, when it apprehends the relation of Christ to the law and prophecies of the Old Covenant, and sees in him the focus towards which the various and seemingly scattered rays of previous revelations all converged.

3. Another question is: How far do Christ and his apostles authenticate the miracles of the Old Testament? Even though on account of their testimony we believe that Moses and the prophets received supernatural revelations, does this require us to give full credence to every story of the Old Testament which reports the occurrence of a miracle?

The miracles of the Old Testament, as compared with those of the New, have always been the first to receive the assaults of skeptics. Being more remote from us, they are not so directly attested, and in many cases they seem to have less intrinsic probability and less apparent justification. Some of them are favorite butts of ridicule. Is there reason for any distinction between these and the Christian miracles?

In general, it must be obvious that no radical distinction can be drawn between the two classes. If miracles are needed as

vouchers for the genuineness of any special revelation of the divine purpose and character, then they were needed when a revelation was made through Abraham, Moses, and the prophets, as well as when one was made through Christ and the apostles. In so far, therefore, as Jesus recognized the Old Testament dispensation as of divine origin, he implicitly recognized the miracles which served to attest this origin.

But if even with regard to the New Testament miracles we adopt certain *criteria* of genuineness, assuming at least the *possibility* that apocryphal stories may have got entrance into the canonical books, then of course we may equally, or even to a greater degree, exercise the same right of discrimination with regard to the Old Testament. But the same caution in exercising the right is needed in the latter case as in the former. The necessity and the fact of miracles as accompaniments of the divine revelation being once assumed, it is not an easy matter to draw the line between those which shall be acknowledged as fit and appropriate, and those which shall be discarded as unworthy of God, and as legendary. If a reported miracle were palpably at war with the known character of God, that would be sufficient reason for questioning the authenticity of the story. But in applying this criterion different persons will come to different conclusions. For example, to some the accounts of the destruction of the Egyptian first-born, or of the messengers sent to Elijah (2 Kings i. 9-12), will seem to be inconsistent with the character of a God who is represented, even in the Old Testament, as a God of infinite compassion and forbearance (Ex. xxxiv. 6; Jonah iv. 2, etc.); whereas others, who lay more stress on the attribute of righteousness in God, and on the need of its being made impressively manifest, will find no serious difficulty in such narratives. Or again, some may be inclined to object to some miracles as trivial, undignified, or purposeless, as for example, the speaking of Balaam's ass (Num. xxii. 28), the resurrection of the man who was buried in the tomb of Elisha (2 Kings xiii. 21), the story of Samson's exploits, or of Jonah's preservation; while others are not scandalized by such things, and are able to discern a meaning worthy of God in them.¹

¹ Christlieb (*Moderne Zweifel am christlichen Glauben*, pp. 367-391) de-

In many cases it may be a question whether the event recorded is, strictly speaking, a miracle at all. The Old Testament writers are so much accustomed to ascribe all events, especially striking and important ones, directly to divine agency, that it is not necessary to call everything miraculous that at first glance may seem to be described as such. For example, when it is said (Josh. x. 11) that Jehovah cast down great stones from heaven upon the Gibeonites, the hail-storm which is reported need not be regarded as a miracle. And likewise in the numerous instances in which God is said to have spoken to individuals, or to have moved them to do this or that, it would be a misconception of the Biblical style and meaning to assume in all such cases a strictly supernatural intervention.

But the question immediately before us is, How far the New Testament sanctions the miracles reported in the Old? We should not expect a particular and detailed reference to each separate miraculous event. The Old Testament history is referred to in general as one under especial divine direction, and certain of the recorded miracles are alluded to as facts. The following are thus referred to: Jonah's preservation (Matt. xii. 40), the deluge (Matt. xxiv. 39; Luke xvii. 27; Heb. xi. 7; 1 Pet. iii. 20), Jehovah in the burning bush (Mark xii. 26; Luke xx. 37; Acts vii. 30), Elijah and the widow (Luke iv. 25, 26), Elisha's healing Naaman (iv. 27), Moses' brazen serpent (John iii. 14), the gift of manna (vi. 31, 32, 49). The foregoing are referred to by Jesus himself, as reported in the Gospels. In the following books we find reference to still others, viz.: the call of Abraham (Acts vii. 2, 3, Heb. xi. 8), the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt (Acts vii. 36, xiii. 17; Heb. xi. 29), the birth of Isaac (Rom. iv. 19-21; Heb. xi. 11), the shining of Moses' face (2 Cor. iii. 7), the offering of Isaac (Heb. xi. 17-19; Jas. ii. 21), the destruction of the Egyptian first-born (Heb. xi. 28), the fall of Jericho (xi. 30), the demonstrations on Mount Sinai (xii. 18-21), Elijah's prophecy of drought (James v. 17), Balaam's ass speaking (2 Pet. ii. 16). These are only a part of

votes a section (omitted in the English translation) to a few of the miracles that have been especially assailed, viz. those concerning Balaam's ass, Joshua's stopping the sun, Elijah's translation, and Jonah in the fish's belly.

the miraculous events narrated in the Old Testament, and in many of these cases the event is merely alluded to incidentally. But this is just what might have been expected. The miracles of the Old Testament are endorsed, or vouched for, by the New Testament implicitly rather than explicitly. That is, the whole Old Testament history and economy being treated as under divine direction, the several incidents recorded in the Old Testament, whether miraculous or not, are presumptively included in this general endorsement. It would therefore be very unreasonable to pronounce the unmentioned miracles less credible than the others simply because they are not mentioned in the New Testament, while on the other hand the general endorsement which the New Testament gives to the supernatural character of the Mosaic dispensation does not of itself preclude the possibility that certain of the narratives of the Old Testament may be regarded as more or less inaccurate.

But the question may be asked, whether even all of the Old Testament narratives of miracles which are referred to in the New Testament are necessarily for that reason to be regarded as authoritatively vouched for. Or, to put the question in another form, Does faith in the divine authority of Christ compel us to hold that the Old Testament miracles which he is reported to have referred to really occurred as they are described in the Old Testament?

We should be obliged to answer this question with an unqualified affirmative, were it not possible to take a middle course between this and a disbelief in Christ's trustworthiness. It may be held that, though Christ is to be absolutely trusted, yet the evangelical accounts of him are not to be absolutely trusted. Accordingly one may entertain the opinion that in certain instances in which Jesus is said to have referred to an Old Testament miracle as a fact, he has perhaps been misreported by the historian. Such a conjecture may be without any solid foundation; but it is certainly possible to cherish it, and yet retain implicit faith in Christ.

Or one may hold that Christ, in his references to the stories of the Old Testament, had no intention of pronouncing them historically true, but used them only as illustrations of the

truths which he himself wished to impress on his hearers; just as the incidents of mythological tales are often referred to by Christian speakers and writers as if they were facts, though neither the speaker nor the hearer so regards them. Here, too, it may be argued in reply that there is no good reason for regarding Jesus as making such a use of the Old Testament as the one alleged; but still it is possible for one to hold such a theory without impugning the trustworthiness of Christ himself.

How, then, shall we answer the question? It can be fully answered only by a complete exegetical and critical examination of the New Testament records. If such an examination should result in showing conclusively that Jesus is inaccurately reported when he is said to refer to the miracles of the Old Testament, and that the authentic accounts of him show him to have been no believer in the genuineness of the recorded miracles, or that at least he nowhere plainly avowed or implied a belief in their genuineness, then the case is clear: One can hold what views he pleases concerning the Old Testament miracles, and still remain fully loyal to Jesus Christ.

But it requires no elaborate investigation to make it clear that such a conception of the New Testament records cannot be made reasonably plausible. One can arbitrarily maintain it; one can adopt an *a priori* assumption that Jesus never could have endorsed as genuine the miracles to which he is reported to have referred. But such a view must always be a pure assumption, unsustained by any candid examination of the records before us. Everywhere Jesus is described as speaking with the utmost reverence of the Old Testament Scriptures: everywhere he speaks of the Jewish people as the recipient of a divine revelation; everywhere he treats the events of Jewish history as facts, and as instructive facts. There is not the slightest indication that he represents the reputed miracles as any less authentic or less instructive than the other events of the past. Moreover, he is everywhere represented as himself working miracles and as appealing to them as a divine authentication of his mission. It is, therefore, not a critical exegesis, but dogmatic caprice, which can find in the sources of our

information any indication that Jesus did not hold to the genuineness of the Old Testament miracles. There is, therefore, no ground, except that of subjective caprice, for the notion that Jesus referred to the miracles merely by way of illustration, without meaning to imply whether he regarded them as fact or fiction. His auditors certainly regarded the Old Testament as a record of veritable history, miracles and all. There is no indication that Jesus had any different conception. And if he did, there is as much reason for supposing that he held the *whole* of Jewish history to be legendary, as for supposing that he held the miraculous part of it to be legendary.

While, therefore, one may resort to either of these methods of invalidating Christ's endorsement of the Old Testament miracles, one cannot do so reasonably. There remains to the skeptic only to assume that Christ himself, though he believed in the reality of the Old Testament miracles, was mistaken in so believing. But this, as we have before seen, is equivalent to a rejection of the authority of Christ as an inspired bearer of a divine revelation.

In general, therefore, the fact of miracles under the Old Testament dispensation must be regarded as affirmed by Christ and the authors of the New Testament. If there still remain any question, it must have reference to matters of detail. It may sometimes be doubted whether the original narrative is to be understood as that of a miracle. It is possible to suppose, for example, in the case of the history of Jonah,¹ that what at first blush seems to be an account of miraculous events, was in reality quite otherwise meant. But the presumption will always remain that, when the Old Testament presents narratives of palpably miraculous events, and these are referred to in the New Testament as historical, they are to be regarded as authenticated by such reference.

It is unnecessary to dwell in detail on the several references in the New Testament to the Old Testament miracles. And as to the unmentioned ones, we can only say that, as the Old Testament, substantially at least in the form in which we still have it, was received by Christ and his followers as a trustworthy

¹ See Exeoursus VIII.

history of the earlier revelation, the presumption is that the miracles were generally accepted as historic facts. And the same answer is to be made to the question: —

4. How far do Christ and his disciples authenticate the Old Testament history in general? On the one hand, they cannot be appealed to as directly vouching for all the details of that history, especially when they are not referred to; on the other, there is a presumption that, since they certainly accepted the Old Testament in general as a sacred record of God's dealings with men, and particularly with the Jewish race, they regarded the book as trustworthy in its details.

The use made of the Old Testament by Christ and his apostles is mostly or wholly a practical use. Moral and religious lessons are enforced not only by appeal to psalmists and prophets, but by reference also to historical events. That the reference is made for such a purpose, does not indicate that the events referred to are for that reason any the less historic; on the contrary, that such a use is made of them is rather a witness to their superior importance as historic facts. But the homiletic or religious use made of Biblical incidents carries with it that the reference is generally to the salient and suggestive features of the events, rather than to the subordinate details. Thus Paul refers to the original sin of Adam in order to set forth the scope of the atonement of Christ (Rom. v. 12-21); he does not here even mention Adam by name; but he does in 1 Cor. xv. 22, 45, where a similar general reference is made to Adam as bringing death into the world, as contrasted with Christ, the life-giver. Now Paul here does not specifically refer to the Book of Genesis, nor even to the Old Testament Scriptures in general. No one could prove from these passages that he accepted the story of the fall as it is given in detail in Gen. iii. Yet no one can doubt that he really alludes to the familiar history, — an assurance which is confirmed when we find him elsewhere (2 Cor. xi. 3) speaking of Eve's being tempted by the serpent, and again (without mention of the serpent) in 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14. A general reference to the creation of man and woman is made in 1 Cor. xi. 8, 9, and in 1 Tim. ii. 13, but without allusion to details. But no one can doubt that he was familiar with the

Book of Genesis, that he here refers to it, and that he implicitly attests the history which is there given. The question of special interest, however, is whether Paul's use of the narrative commits us to any particular interpretation of it. Must we, on account of his allusions to the story, understand it in the most literal way? Need we understand it as real history at all? May it not be a mystical, symbolical, or allegorical representation of man's primeval history, or even of the moral development of the human race in general? This view of the narrative of Gen. ii.-iii., as old at least as Philo,¹ has been held by many interpreters in all periods of the Christian Church.² It cannot be called an inadmissible or heterodox view, provided it can be made clear that *the author intended* the story to be understood in this manner. Even if it could be plausibly made out that such was the author's intention, it would still be possible that Paul understood it literally. In that case we should have to admit a hermeneutical error on the apostle's part. It seems pretty certain that Paul looked on the history of the first pair as in part at least historical. The comparison of Adam with Christ would be utterly pointless if Adam were not conceived of as an individual, and as a historical individual. So the assertion that Adam was first formed, then Eve, and that the woman, not the man, was deceived (1 Cor. xi. 8, 9; 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14), must imply that Paul regarded those two features of the story, at least, as facts. He argues from the facts, and draws practical inferences from them,—all which would be absurd, if he had supposed the story to be a purely allegorical representation of the human race.

If we look further in the New Testament for references to this section of Genesis, we find one in Matt. xix. 4-6 (cf. Mark x. 6-9), where Christ distinctly refers to the creation of man, the original distinction of sex, and the institution of marriage, as recorded in Gen. i. 27, ii. 24. We must believe that, so far at least as this point is concerned, he speaks of the narrative as

¹ *On the Creation of the World*, §§ 55-61. He makes the serpent symbolic of pleasure.

² See Quarry, *Genesis and its Authorship*, pp. 29 *sqq.*, for illustrations of this statement.

historical. When he contrasted the Mosaic law of divorce with what God instituted "from the beginning," there would have been no meaning in his reply to the Jews' question, unless he had assumed it to be a fact, as recorded in Genesis, that there was one original human pair united together in marriage. Further, we find in Rev. ii. 7, xxii. 2, a "tree of life" given as the conspicuous feature of the heavenly Paradise. This, however, though undoubtedly an allusion to Gen. ii. 9, iii. 22, is not such a reference as necessarily involves any opinion as to the historical character of the original tree of life. Indeed it has been argued that, this heavenly tree of life being evidently allegorical, we may reason back to the conclusion that the first one was no less so.¹ But this is manifestly fallacious. As well might it be inferred from Rev. xxi. 2, where the new Jerusalem is described as seen coming down out of heaven, that, the language being plainly allegorical, the old Jerusalem of Palestine, to which allusion is made, was allegorical also. On the contrary, since facts furnish the basis of figures, the figurative language of the Apocalypse would seem to point to a historic fact as its foundation.

If we examine the original history itself, the first observation to be made is, that the narrative of Gen. i.-iii. is indissolubly connected with what follows. The same Adam and Eve there described as created and tempted are afterwards described as having children, who in turn also have children. The human race is represented as proceeding from this pair, and human history as beginning with them. If Gen. i.-iii. are allegorical throughout, we have no right to make the allegory end with iii. 24. Allegorical characters cannot be transformed into real characters. If Adam and Eve were unreal personages at the outset, they must have remained so to the end. And their children and children's children must have been equally allegorical.

A certain historical element must, then, be assumed to belong to these chapters, at least in the intention of the writer. A modification of the allegorical hypothesis, however, may be adopted, to the effect that on a basis of historic fact the author

¹ So Quarry, *Genesis*, etc., p. 113.

has constructed a description which largely abounds in allegoric or symbolic features. This hypothesis may be that these features are mythical, or that they are the inventions of the writer himself; in either case they are supposed to embody certain moral and religious ideas. In favor of this view it is urged that the narrative abounds in representations which are so improbable in themselves, and so unlike anything else in sacred history, that the writer must have intended to be understood as veiling his meaning under a mystical garb. The making of a human body first, and putting life into it afterwards; a tree whose fruit could confer immortality, and another whose fruit bestowed the power of moral distinctions; the construction of a woman out of a man's rib; a serpent endowed with the faculty of speech, and with intellectual cunning sufficient to tempt the woman to disobedience; Jehovah walking in the garden, and the guilty pair hiding from him; the cursing of the serpent and condemning him to go on his belly (as he must have done already before), — all these are certainly traits which do not characterize history in general, whether sacred or profane. They resemble the fabulous or the mythical. Did the writer mean to be understood literally?

The question is not altogether easy to answer. Even though one should find himself unable to believe that the facts ever literally corresponded to the description, it would not follow but that the *writer* meant it all literally. It is impossible to determine at what point a narrative becomes so improbable that we cannot suppose the writer to believe in the truth of what he writes. It is certain that many of the *readers* of the story — perhaps the larger part of them — have believed in the literal truth of it. If so, it is certainly possible that the writer did the same. Still it is perfectly legitimate to argue, from the internal evidence, that the writer must have meant to be understood allegorically. Can it be that a Hebrew theist could represent Jehovah as jealous of man's advance in knowledge, and as afraid lest he might attain immortality through the eating of a certain fruit (Gen. iii. 22)? Can it be that he really regarded human sin as first introduced into the world through the cunning persuasions of a talking snake? Can it be that he could

have thought the tree of knowledge of good and evil capable of producing such a marvellous physical, mental, and moral effect on human beings? Can it be that he conceived of a rib as transmogrified into a woman? Does not the very crowding together of so many singular things argue a very peculiar style of composition? Is it not warrantable in itself, as well as consonant with sound religious sense, to suppose that these features in the story are figures and symbols of truths which the writer could in no other way so well convey? A substratum of historic fact may be assumed; but may not the clothing be deemed allegoric?

This is certainly plausible; and it will hardly be possible absolutely to disprove the correctness of this hypothesis. There are many sporadic specimens of parables, and even of fables, in the Bible; may not this be a historico-parabolic tale? The supposition is all the more plausible, inasmuch as the topics treated of belong to a time and a sphere so entirely strange to human experience. It seems not improbable that a vivid impression of the primeval history and its moral significance could be best given in certain graphic pictures and symbolic representations, which may not literally correspond to the actual facts. The common interpretation of the temptation confirms to some extent this conception. It is usually assumed that the real tempter was not the serpent, but the devil. The devil is called "that old serpent" in Rev. xx. 2. The serpent has generally been made a type of malicious cunning. If Eve was in fact tempted by Satan, may it not be that this introduction of the serpent in the narrative is merely a parabolic way of stating the truth? As soon as we assume Satan to have been at work, merely using the serpent as his tool, we depart from the literal sense of the account: for this says explicitly that the *serpent* did the tempting, being more subtle than the other beasts. It would be only departing one step further from the literal sense to assume that there was no literal serpent concerned in the temptation, but that the writer describes the Satanic work under the guise of a temptation effected through a serpent, leaving it undetermined just what the actual process of the temptation was.

So as regards certain other features of Gen. ii. and iii. To some minds the story of the rib is the most difficult to believe, if taken in all literalness. To represent God as like a surgeon putting Adam into a state of insensibility, cutting out a rib, and then closing up the wound, is certainly not in harmony with ordinary conceptions of the divine working. To other minds the statements about the two trees are especially offensive. To others again it seems strange that the effect of disobedience should be described as simply shame on account of physical nakedness. In all these things we may find symbolic suggestions of deep spiritual truths;¹ but if the literal sense is the whole sense, the story seems crass, if not even fantastic and grotesque.

On the other hand, however, it is not necessary to assume that the literal sense is the whole sense. If a fictitious representation can be symbolic of spiritual truth, equally well, or better still, may facts convey such instruction. And when we bear in mind that ordinary human experience can furnish no parallel to the conditions of creation and of man's primeval history, we see reason for not being too positive as to what may or may not have been the exact truth relative to that distant and unique period with which the first chapters of Genesis have to do. It has often been remarked of late years that that narrative is much more true to intrinsic probability, in picturing the primitive man, as a being of childlike simplicity and artlessness, than the older theological conceptions of him, according to which he was from the very first of super-angelic capacities and knowledge. The statements about the two trees are the most characteristic and suggestive in the whole section. To many minds these trees are unmistakably symbolic, — not real trees, but poetic representations of the motives and aims of human action. But to others not only is there nothing incredible in supposing that the trees were real, but this supposition seems the most in accordance with what must have been the original mental and moral condition of the primeval man. As with young children the first great moral struggle has generally to do with some command concerning an outward palpable

¹ Cf. Delitzsch, *Commentar über die Genesis*.

object, — a command not to touch this or that, or to go here or there, — and not one relating to the general duty of benevolence ; so the question whether the first man, in the incipency of his moral development, was to remain loyal to God could be better tested by a command respecting the enjoyment of certain fruits than by abstract precepts which as yet must have been unintelligible to him. As to any poisonous properties in the tree of knowledge, such as many commentators have told about, the narrative itself says nothing.¹ In what sense it conferred knowledge the sequel of the eating indicates. The disobedience in the eating produced the moral effect of developing an evil conscience ; the guilty pair fled from the presence of Jehovah. There is more appearance of an intention on the part of the writer to ascribe a peculiar physical power to the other tree. Its name, and especially the language which Jehovah is represented as using in iii. 22, seem to imply that its fruit was conceived as capable of conferring physical immortality. But it is in accordance with the analogy of the name and function of the other tree, and involves a very slight straining of the apparent literal sense of the description, if we regard the tree of life as symbolizing the reward of obedience. It was the palpable pledge of the divine favor. It *represented*, but did not *confer*, the “life” which was the real reward. And as a child, whose disobedience has caused him to forfeit a promised reward, is made to feel his guilt most keenly by being removed from all sight and reach of the expected gift, especially since by a natural confusion of thought he is apt to imagine that if he can only by any means get hold of the coveted object he in some sense neutralizes the effect of his disobedience ; so it was necessary for Jehovah to drive Adam and Eve away from the tree whose fruit they might look on as somehow able to repair the damage which their sin had wrought. The language of iii. 22 admits this construction with certainly less forcing of its strict sense than is used when in the account of the temptation we understand the real tempter to be, not the serpent, but Satan.

This illustrates what is most probably the correct exegesis

¹ Even Delitzsch, however (*Commentar über die Genesis* on ii. 9), assumes that the tree had in it such a quality for one who disobediently ate of it.

of this unique section. Just how far the literal meaning must be pressed, it may be difficult to determine. But there is no sufficient ground for thinking that the writer did not mean to be understood as narrating substantial history. And the reference which Paul makes to the story of the temptation cannot naturally be understood otherwise than as implying that he believed in its essential truthfulness.

The case is somewhat similar with regard to the narrative of the creation in the first chapter of Genesis. Here, however, the direct references in the New Testament are more scanty, and the chief interest gathers around the relation of the narrative to the results of geological research. If we except general statements about God as Creator, the New Testament nowhere makes reference to this chapter except in Matt. xix. 4 (cf. Mark x 6), where Christ quotes Gen. i. 27, and in 2 Cor. iv. 6, where Paul alludes to Gen. i. 3. Incidentally the first and the last of the works of the six days are thus referred to, and by implication endorsed as facts.

There is not the same temptation to resort to the allegorical interpretation with reference to chapter i. as with reference to chapters ii. and iii. But those who despair of seeing any reconciliation effected between the testimony of Genesis and that of geology are often disposed to find relief in the hypothesis that the author of Gen. i. really did not design to narrate historic or geologic facts at all, but only to set forth the truth that one personal God is the Sovereign of the universe. There is an important truth in this view; but it is easy to overwork it. Thus, it is observed that the plan of the chapter is highly artistic, especially in that there is a manifest correspondence between each of the first three days and the corresponding days in the second triad. That is, the first day describes the creation of light, and the fourth, that of the luminaries; the second, the formation of the realms of air and water, and the fifth, that of the fowls and fishes which inhabit those elements; the third, the preparation of the dry land, and the sixth, that of land animals and man, the inhabitants of the dry land. From this it is inferred that the description is purely ideal, not historical, that the author had no thought of portraying the literal order of

geologic events, that his point of view was purely theological, and that therefore it is idle to talk of a real or possible contradiction between this description and the conclusions of geologists.¹

This, however, is a somewhat too easy way of getting over a difficulty. No doubt the narrative has a monotheistic and religious aim; no doubt also the arrangement is ideal and artistic. But from this it does not follow that the writer did not mean to be understood as narrating facts. Facts may be both real and ideal. If the author wished only to set forth the fact that God is the Maker and Ruler of all things, he could have done so in two or three sentences, summarily stating the grand truth, without going into a detailed account of a creative process. He would thus never have given rise to the vexed questions about the harmony or disharmony between his narrative and the truths of geology. The very fact that, instead of confining himself to such a general statement, he undertook to give a particular history of the process of creation, would seem to indicate that he thought there really was such a process. Otherwise it is hard to see why he invented it. It was not necessary in order to the enunciation of the theological and religious truth which alone he is supposed to have aimed to impress on his readers. By introducing it he has in fact made the impression that he meant to describe a real process, though the ideality and beauty of the form of his description was long ago recognized.

On the whole, then, we can hardly do better than to regard the question as still awaiting a full solution. In general, it is a fixed and remarkable fact that in its grand features the Mosaic account strikingly corresponds with the conclusions of geologists, however difficult or impossible it may be to bring the details into complete harmony.

The other references in the New Testament to the historical parts of the Old can be dealt with more briefly. In general, there can be no reasonable question that, when such a reference is made, it implies on the part of the author a belief in the authenticity of the record referred to. For example, when Jesus

¹ So, *e. g.*, Prof. W. G. Elmslie on *The First Chapter of Genesis in Contemporary Review*, December, 1887, where this view is forcibly and eloquently set forth.

quoted in his own defense the conduct of David in eating the shew-bread (Matt. xii. 3, 4), it is clear that he regarded the incident as a historic fact. And so with all similar cases.

There is one class of references, however, respecting which there is more doubt how far their testimony goes; we mean those references which touch on a question of authorship. When Christ speaks of Moses and the law of Moses, we must distinguish between an allegation that Moses *commanded* this or that, and an allegation that he *wrote* this or that. The explicit statement that Moses wrote anything is made by Christ only twice, viz., in Mark x. 5, and in John v. 45-47.¹ But in either case the reference is only to a specific thing, and cannot be adduced as evidence concerning the composition of the Pentateuch in general. Where we read about the "law of Moses" (Luke xxiv. 44; John vii. 23), or the "book of Moses" (Mark xii. 26), or about Moses in general as a legislator (Mark i. 44, vii. 10; Luke xvi. 29; John v. 45, vii. 19), we can infer no more than that Moses was regarded as the promulgator, under divine direction, of the legal part of the Pentateuch; whether he himself wrote down the whole code, or delivered it in part orally, to be recorded afterwards by others, is left undecided by such references.

But even if it should be admitted that in Jesus' time the Pentateuch was popularly ascribed to Moses in the sense that he wrote the whole of it, yet a general reference to the book, or a particular quotation from it as the book of Moses, does not necessarily commit Christ or an apostle to a positive endorsement of this popular opinion.² Such quotations and references concern the *matter*, not the *author*, of the book. The book would most naturally be designated according to the current title of it. If Moses was regarded as the promulgator of the Pentateuchal laws, the Pentateuch would almost of necessity be called the book of Moses, even though parts of it may have been written by other men. Paul, therefore, in speaking of the reading of

¹ The Sadducees speak of the Levirate law as having been written by Moses, Mark xii. 19; Luke xx. 28.

² So one may quote a passage as from "Homer," without meaning to commit himself necessarily to the theory of the Homeric authorship of all the so-called Homeric books.

the Scripture in the synagogues, could say, "Whosoever Moses is read" (2 Cor. iii. 15), without necessarily meaning to be understood as affirming that Moses himself wrote all of the books which went by his name. Or when he quotes a particular passage, and prefaces it by saying, "Moses describeth" (Rom. x. 5), or "Moses saith" (x. 19), the stress is laid on the thing said, not on the person saying it, and does not necessarily mean more than that we read in the book of Moses this or that.¹

The case is similar as regards references to the Psalter. The phrase "in David," as used in Heb. iv. 7, most naturally means, "in the book commonly called the Psalms of David." The passage referred to (Ps. xev. 7, 8) is in a psalm not ascribed to David or any one else. It would be unwarrantable to try to find in this reference to the passage authentic information as to the authorship, when in the original Hebrew the psalm is anonymous. And even when Paul uses the expression, "David saith" (as in Rom. iv. 6, xi. 9), inasmuch as the point of the quotation lies in the thing said, not in the person who said it, the formula of quotation is not necessarily to be understood as meaning anything more than that the words quoted are found in the book commonly called the Psalms of David. The case is somewhat different with the references to David in Matt. xxii. 43-45 (Mark xii. 35-37; Luke xx. 41-44), where the point of the reference depends on the Davidic authorship of Ps. cx.; and also with the use which Peter (Acts ii. 25-33) and Paul (Acts xiii. 35-37) make of Ps. xvi.

The general attestation which Christ and his disciples give to the Old Testament history is not impaired by the fact that they also, in some cases, make statements that appear to rest on Jewish tradition, as distinct from the Old Testament writings, unless the tradition is contrary to the Scriptures. And it is very doubtful whether any such contradiction can be found. Where a tradition is followed, we can only say that this is something additional to the Scriptural history. The following are instances: In 2 Tim. iii. 8, Jannes and Jambres are given as the names of the magicians who withstood Moses;

¹ *Vide*, on the general subject of the witness of the New Testament to the Old, F. Watson, *The Law and the Prophets*, Excursus, pp. 25 *sqq.*

whereas in Exodus no names are mentioned. A Jewish tradition, found in the Talmud, had given these as the names of the magicians, together with other particulars about them.¹ Whether the names are genuine or not, is of little account. Paul used them as those familiarly known to his readers; and nothing depended on the accuracy of the tradition. Even if we had to assume, with Schöttgen, that Paul was divinely inspired to confirm the Jewish tradition as to the names, still his using them in no way brings the passage into any disagreement with the history as given in Exodus. A still more striking instance of Jewish tradition in the New Testament is found in 1 Cor. x. 4. Paul here alludes to a notion current among the Jews, that a rock flowing with water followed the Israelites in their wanderings. It is only an allusion, however. Paul does not endorse the story, but spiritualizes it. He says there was a *spiritual* rock that followed the Jews; he does not imply that he adopted the notion that a literal rock followed them. In Jude 9, where reference is made to a contention between Michael and Satan, use is made of a Jewish legend concerning the burial of Moses. And in verses 14, 15, a quotation is made from the apocryphal Book of Enoch. Here the writer appears to accept the traditions. But whatever may be made out of these references (and being in a deuterocanonical book they are of less significance than otherwise), they do not at all affect the general question of New Testament references to the Old.

In some other cases also there are found modifications of Old Testament incidents, or additions to them, which may rest on oral tradition. In the description, given in Heb. xi. 33–38, of the doings and sufferings of the Hebrew saints and heroes, there are features which cannot be traced directly to any record in the Old Testament. Some of them (especially in verses 35–37) can be illustrated only by the Books of the Maccabees; and one of them—the being sawn asunder—undoubtedly refers to a current tradition that the prophet Isaiah was thus put to death. In Acts vii. 53, Gal. iii. 19, and Heb. ii. 2, the law is said to have been ordained through angels, — a statement

¹ For which cf. Schöttgen, *Horae Hebraicae, in loc.*

which agrees with one found in Josephus (*Ant.* xv. 5, 3), and with the Rabbinical notion, but nowhere distinctly intimated in the Old Testament. The poetic passage in Deut. xxxiii. 2, where Jehovah is said to have come "from the ten thousands of holy ones," especially in the LXX. version, where the last clause of the verse reads, "on his right hand angels with him," is the only one in the Old Testament which could suggest the conception. In Luke iv. 25, and James v. 17, the length of the drought foretold by Elijah is definitely given as three years and a half, though in the Old Testament the length is not given. The "third year" of 1 Kings xviii. 1, leaves us uncertain from what point the reckoning was made. The definite period of three years and a half may very probably have been adopted from a common tradition. It does not contradict the narrative in the Book of Kings; it is simply an exact figure which can easily enough be made to harmonize with that narrative, though not directly suggested by it.¹

¹ Professor Ladd (*Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 69) finds this tradition "divergent" from the Old Testament account, and discovers in the phrase ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τῆν γῆν "a popular hyperbole which spoke of the drought as extending over the whole earth." This, however, hardly seems to be pertinent as an instance of Christ's "meritless attitude" towards details; for γῆ surely means "land" as well as "earth" (*vide* Thayer's Grimm's Lexicon, *sub voc.*); and as the same double meaning belongs to אֶרֶץ, one might find the same hyperbole in 1 Kings xviii. 1. Professor Ladd finds also in Luke xvii. 27, and Matt. xxiv. 38, "features added to the narrative of Genesis," viz., the eating, drinking, and marrying, and infers from them that Christ here was following "a tradition of the Flood which differed in some particulars from that of the Hebrew Scriptures." But surely it hardly required a special tradition to suggest to Christ that the antediluvians were in the habit of eating, drinking, and marrying! Not more reason is there for the opinion that the drinking is "in apparent contradiction of the narrative of Gen. ix. 20." Professor Wright's reply (*Divine Authority of the Bible*, p. 185), that it is not implied in this narrative that no wine was made before the Flood, may be sufficient; but a more obvious one is that Christ says nothing about *vine* at all. Could not the antediluvians drink water? A German comic song represents Noah as praying for a new kind of beverage after the Flood, on the ground that he has lost his relish for water,

"For that therein have drownèd been
All sinful beasts and sons of men."

But *before* that calamity what good reason for abstaining from water-drinking could there have been?

Whatever in the New Testament writings may have been derived from tradition, as distinct from the Old Testament history, is, then, at the most very slight, and in no case in conflict with that history. At the same time in their use of the history there is no painful following of minute details. As in quoting from the Old Testament Christ and his apostles are not careful about literal exactness, so in referring to Old Testament history they are more concerned about the substance than about the form. It is manifest that they looked upon that history as in a very peculiar sense the arena on which God had displayed his power and grace. They found intimations, lessons, and types such as no other history contained. It was to them a sacred history.

The foregoing has in part anticipated what needs to be more particularly considered under the head of the record of divine revelation.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RECORD OF REVELATION.—INSPIRATION.

THE distinction between *revelation* and the *record* of revelation is one which, though often overlooked, is legitimate and important. Jesus left no written record of his work and words; but he revealed the divine character and will; and even if no one else had ever prepared a written account of his mission, what he said and did would none the less have been a divine revelation which would have left its impress not only on his associates and contemporaries, but through tradition on succeeding generations. More particularly we may observe:—

1. Revelation is prior and superior to the record of it. The discovery of America was more important than the history of the discovery; the invention of the telegraph, of more consequence than written descriptions of the invention. It is equally clear that God's original manifestation of himself was a weightier matter than the Scriptural records of it. The records are important only because the revelation was important. In a certain sense it was an accidental circumstance that the revelation became a subject of written record. This method of transmitting the divine message may be the best available method; but it is still only the mode of transmission; it is not the message itself. Oral tradition may serve the same purpose; in some instances it has been the actual and even the only possible means of communicating the message. The primeval revelation, if there was one, must have been handed down at first without a written record. The gospel itself did its first work, and left its ineradicable impress on the world, before the narrative of Christ's work became committed to writing. If the art of writing had never been known, we are not to suppose that a divine revelation would have been impossible or ineffective.

And in any case the revelation — the message of salvation — is of more account than the means by which it is recorded.

2. It is likewise obvious that the divine revelation is of more account than the state of mind of those who wrote the record of it. In other words, revelation outranks in importance the inspiration of the sacred writers. If it was in a certain sense non-essential that the revelation should be scripturally recorded at all, still more non-essential must it be that the writers should have been in such and such a state of mind when they wrote. If the revelation was to be put into a written form, the most urgent requisite was that it should be *accurately* recorded. Provided this could be done without any miraculous or special influence exerted on the penmen, such a special inspiration cannot be pronounced indispensable. In many cases certainly it is conceivable that an accurate and trustworthy account of revelatory facts might have been written without any other than the ordinary faculties of mind and facilities of obtaining knowledge. In so far as the Biblical writers told the truth, it is quite immaterial whether in telling it they were worked on by an extraordinary divine influence or not. Inspiration, as working on the *original recipient* of the divine message, cannot of course be regarded as unimportant; it is involved in the very idea of special revelation that the organ of it should be supernaturally inspired to receive it. But when it has once been received, there is no obvious and intrinsic reason why others may not learn and communicate the message without such supernatural inspiration. Certainly the masses of those to whom the word of revelation comes receive it and transmit it without such special inspiration. So those who made the written record which has come down to us may possibly have made it with the exercise of only ordinary powers of observation and acquisition. Conscientious and pains-taking effort to tell the truth might have given us all that is essential in the message revealed. At the best, special inspiration could have been only a means of securing a more perfect record of what without it might have been recorded with substantial faithfulness.¹

¹ See Alex. Mair, *Studies in the Christian Evidences*, chap. iii. "It is quite certain that we are not shut up by any stern necessity of an *a priori* kind to

3. The proof of the fact of a revelation does not depend on the assumption of the special inspiration of the Biblical writers. This is, if possible, still more evident than the preceding propositions. We are not convinced that the patriarchs, apostles, and the Redeemer were inspired to receive a revelation, because we are first convinced that some persons, whose very names may be unknown to us, were specially inspired to write down the account of the supernatural revelation. There would be no occasion for asserting, and no ground for believing, that the Biblical writers were divinely inspired, unless there were antecedently an assumption that it was a divine revelation which they were specially commissioned to describe. The writers are believed to have been inspired, because there is believed to have been an all-important revelation which needed to be carefully recorded. If there is no antecedent faith in the fact of a divine revelation, there is no proof of the inspiration of the Scriptures which can carry conviction to any thinking mind. The mere assertions of the writers that they were inspired, even if we had many more of them, would prove nothing, unless their general veracity were on independent grounds very firmly established; for such *peculiar* claims would themselves provoke distrust, unless the claimants are shown to be peculiarly trustworthy. And when the *contents* of the Bible are appealed to as proof of the sincerity and truthfulness of the claims of inspiration on the part of the writers, the argument assumes the truth of the things narrated.¹ That is to say, a revelation, about which the Scriptures treat, is assumed to be a fact before the inspiration of the writers is regarded as proved; otherwise the nature of the contents of the Bible would be no proof of

one or other of the two extremes: to verbal inspiration, or absolute skepticism; we may reasonably hold the middle way of practical common-sense certainty."

¹ This is implied also by Dr. Lee (*Inspiration of Holy Scripture*, p. 94, 4th ed., 1865), where he argues that it is no *petitio principii* to adduce proofs from Scripture of its own inspiration. The credibility, he says, of the sacred writers is established by independent proofs. "Having convinced ourselves of the authority of the Bible, that its doctrines are revealed, that its facts are true, we can feel no scruple in admitting as accurate the character which its own writers ascribe to it." We cannot believe the Biblical writers to be truthful, unless we believe what they say about divine revelations.

its inspiration. Manifestly, therefore, we cannot reverse the order of argumentation, and prove the fact of a revelation by the fact of the inspiration of the Biblical writers.

What is thus clear as a general proposition is, if possible, clearer still, when the argument for the inspiration of the New Testament in particular is considered. That argument, as ordinarily conducted, is substantially this: The apostles' claim of special inspiration is to be credited because Christ promised them such inspiration. And Christ's promise is to be credited because he was the Son of God sent to bring salvation to men. Obviously the fact of the divine revelation mediated by Jesus Christ is here assumed in the argument for the inspiration of the New Testament; and of course, therefore, the genuineness of the revelation cannot conversely be inferred from the inspiration. The revelation is first credited on other grounds. The testimony of the apostles concerning Christ is credited, as it was credited before they had written anything, on the ground of their general credibility, and the special evidences of their sincerity. Their particular testimony about Christ's promise of the Holy Ghost would not be accepted, unless their general testimony concerning Christ's character and mission were first accepted. In other words, the general fact and the general contents of the Christian revelation are assumed as the foundation of the argument for a special inspiration of the New Testament writers. Clearly, then, it would be preposterous to make the truth of the alleged revelation rest on the reality of a special apostolic inspiration.

The foregoing considerations, while they may seem to degrade the importance of the doctrine of inspiration, or even to make the fact of it questionable, serve to guard what is more important than this doctrine from resting on an insecure foundation. They tend to assure us that the essential facts and truths of supernatural revelation are secure, even though the Scriptural witnesses can adduce for themselves no supernatural attestation of their credibility. They serve to show that doubts or cavils about the alleged inspiration of the recorders of the revelation do not need to unsettle the foundation of one's faith in the revelation itself.

But if the case is as above stated, is not the doctrine of inspiration shown to be without any solid foundation? Shall we not abandon the theory of the special inspiration of the Biblical writers? By such an abandonment we do not necessarily lose any of the truths of revelation; and we gain the advantage of being relieved of the difficulties which encumber the theory of Biblical inspiration. We are relieved of the obligation to determine how this inspiration differed from the inspiration which is enjoyed by all pious men. We are freed from many of the embarrassments which beset the question of canonicity.

It certainly does follow from what we have here conceded concerning inspiration, that it is not of the central importance which it has often been made to assume. One may hold to all the essential doctrines of revealed religion; one may exercise the most perfect faith in Jesus Christ; one may insist on the unique value of the Bible, and yet see no sufficient reason to believe that any exceptional supernatural influence was exerted on its authors when they were writing it. Still it does not follow that the doctrine of Biblical inspiration is unfounded or unimportant. We remark therefore:—

4. That there is substantial ground for holding to the doctrine of the special inspiration of the Bible. But before presenting any positive arguments for this proposition, we need to make certain preliminary observations.

a. In the strict and proper sense, not the Scriptures, but only the Scriptural writers, can be said to be inspired. A writing is a merely material thing, having no meaning or use except as it is the product of a mind. A book, as a mere book, can no more be inspired than a rock. The inspiration can have to do only with the *production* of the book, and must operate on the conscious author. When we speak, as for convenience every one does, of an inspired book, we make use of a trope quite similar to that which is found in the phrase “a learned book,” in which case of course no one means that the book is learned, but that the author is. Whatever may be one’s theory of inspiration, the inspiration must be conceived as imparted to the writer, unless one goes so far as to make the writer a

mere tool, as passive and irresponsible as a pen in the divine hand. But in that case there would, properly speaking, be no inspiration at all. The case would simply be that God had written a book; we could not say that he had inspired it. But it is hardly necessary to consider this view. For—

b. It is now generally conceded that the Biblical writers were conscious and responsible in the act of writing. They did not act as mere machines, the merely passive agents of another power. When Luke speaks of having “traced the course of all things accurately from the first” (i. 3); when Paul (1 Cor. i. 16) appeals to his memory in reference to what he writes; when Biblical writers generally (especially Paul) discourse about their personal history and inward experience,—it is impossible not to assume that such writers were intensely conscious of what they were doing. Even the peculiar ecstacy which was often experienced by the Hebrew prophets, and sometimes by the apostles (Acts x. 10, xxii. 17; 2 Cor. xii. 1–4), cannot be shown to have suspended the self-consciousness of the subject of those experiences. But even if the extremest Montanistic view respecting this matter were to be adopted, this would still prove nothing as to the mental condition of those who wrote the Biblical books. Without explicit testimony to the effect that these men, when writing, were in an ecstatic or even unconscious state, the presumption must be that they were in their normal self-conscious state, and used their faculties in the act of writing.

c. It follows from the foregoing that the product of the Biblical inspiration, as of that of the ordinary Christian, is not a purely divine product, but is also a human product. The inspired man is not only conscious, but he consciously produces. There is a human element in the product. Even the so-called mechanical theory of inspiration,—the theory which conceives God to use inspired men as the passive vehicles of his communications,—even this cannot wholly dispense with a human side. The language which serves as the medium of communication is a human language, the product of human intercourse, expressive of human conceptions, limited in the range of its expressiveness by human limitations. So that, even if the Biblical

writers are conceived of as ever so purely mechanical in their agency; even if the writers were nothing more than mere tools, as passive in the power of the Spirit as a pen in the hand of a scribe, — still even then the Spirit would be using an instrument affected with human characteristics and human imperfections, — an instrument which is often found unequal to the work of expressing our own human thoughts and feelings, and which therefore must be inadequate to the revelation of the wealth of divine truth.

But this theory of inspiration is in its strictness not now defended by any school. It was an innovation when first propounded, growing out of antagonism to the Papal doctrine of tradition, and could not perpetuate itself as the general doctrine of the Church. We have hardly more than a sort of antiquarian interest in the doctrines propounded by such men as Quenstedt,¹ Baier,² Calovius,³ Hollaz,⁴ and others of the Post-Reformation time. The marks of human individuality are too clearly traceable in the different parts of the sacred record to leave it possible for any reasonable man to regard the inspired writer as a mere tool or amanuensis. The desperate shift of the advocates of verbal inspiration, that the Holy Spirit adapted his style to the personal peculiarities of the several amanuenses,⁵ even if there were any proof to be adduced for

¹ "Omnia enim, quae scribenda erant a Spiritu S. sacris Scriptoribus in actu isto inscribendi suggesta et intellectu eorum quasi in calamus dictitata sunt." *Theologia didactico-polemica*, Wittenberg, 1696, vol. i. p. 68.

² "Prout amanuensi in calamus dictantur, quae is scribere debeat." *Compendium theologiae positivae*, ed. Preuss, Berlin, 1864, p. 46.

³ "Nihil eorum [quae loquuti sunt] ac ne verbum quidem humana voluntate protulere." *Systema locorum theologicorum*, vol. i. p. 563, Wittenberg, 1655.

⁴ "S. Scriptura . . . est verbum Dei scriptum, i. e., sensus divinus literis a Spiritu S. amanuensibus sacris in calamus dictatis expressus." *Scrutinium veritatis*, Wittenberg, 1711, p. 34.

⁵ Baier, *ibid.*, p. 51. "Fatendum est Spiritum S. ipsum in suggerendis verborum conceptibus accommodasse se ad indolem et conditionem amanuensium." In more modern times Gausson (*Theopneustia*) propounds essentially the same doctrine. Though he says (p. 31, Edinburgh ed., 1854), "Every verse without exception is man's; and every verse without exception is God's," thus apparently recognizing a human as well as a divine element in the Bible, yet he afterwards (p. 50) explains himself after this fashion: "If

it, would be a burdensome doctrine to maintain; for such an adaptation of himself to human peculiarities on the part of God would be useless in itself, and would involve all the elements of intentional deception. If the Holy Ghost merely wrote in the *style* of Moses and Peter, while yet Moses and Peter contributed absolutely nothing to the final production, it becomes a puzzling question why such an accommodation was made at all, unless it was to make the *impression* that these men really were consciously and actively productive in what they wrote, when in fact they were not. Nothing is gained in the matter of the communication of truth by such an adaptation of style; nothing appears to be accomplished by it at all, except that the Divine author studiously conceals himself, while professedly revealing himself, and tries to make the impression that forty different men are writing, each in his own way and in accordance with his own mind and will, whereas, in fact, they are mere tools of a compelling power, made to write in spite of themselves just as they would write if they did not write in spite of themselves.

But we need not dwell on this practically exploded hypothesis. It is true that in inspiring men God must in a sense adapt himself to human conditions, and in particular to the individuals

he [God] behoved on this earth to substitute for the syntax of heaven and the vocabulary of the archangels the words and the constructions of the Hebrews or the Greeks, why not equally have borrowed their manners, style, and personality?" And he repeatedly insists that it is not the man, but the book, that is inspired. God "dictated the whole Scriptures" (p. 47). Dean Burgon (*Inspiration and Interpretation*) scarcely falls short of this, when he says (p. 76), "The Bible, from the Alpha to the Omega of it, is filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit of God: the Books of it, and the sentences of it, and the words of it, and the syllables of it, — aye, and the very letters of it." To be sure, he says (p. 77), "Least of all do we overlook the personality of the human writers." But he compares them to musical instruments, each of which gives forth its own music, but all of which were made by one artificer; quoting the illustration from Hooker, who makes the Biblical writers differ from the pipe or harp only in that they "felt the power and strength of their own words." The comparison is as old as the early church-fathers Justin (*ad Graecos cohortatio*, chap. viii.) and Athenagoras (*legatis pro Christianis*, chap. ix.). *Vide* Rudelbach (*Zeitschrift für die gesammte Lutherische Theologie*, 1840, p. 27).

who record the revelation. But he *uses* the men, and does not merely *imitate* them. Not only human language is used, but *the* human language of those who act as God's agents. And not only their language, but antecedently to this their minds and hearts.¹ For language cannot be detached from the mind whose expression it is. Language is the product and representative of mental states. God, therefore, in using human language uses human minds as the medium of the communication of his messages.² But if this is so, then in some sense the divine inspiration is shaped by the human subject of it. The inspired man, though inspired, yet speaks out of his own mind and heart, and speaks like himself, and not as a mere irresponsible reporter of another's words.

d. There is no warrant for regarding the inspiration of the Bible as superior to that of the original organs of revelation. If we must compare the two in point of rank, we should rather give the precedence to the immediate recipients of the divine

¹ Row (*Nature and Extent of Divine Inspiration*, pp. 152 *sq.*) forcibly emphasizes the fact that the Apostles call themselves *witnesses*. But "recollection forms the essence of testimony." Even though the memory may be supernaturally quickened, still it must be the writer's own memory to which he appeals. He testifies what he himself once saw or heard. A pure dictation under which the writer was passive must have destroyed the value of the words as personal testimony.

² Of course it cannot be denied that God could, and possibly in some cases did, suggest particular words to those whom he specially inspired. It must, however, be insisted that this was not the usual method. All the evidence favors the view that not only the Biblical writers, but the original recipients of special revelations, retained and used their own powers while moved upon by the Spirit, and expressed each in his own way the thoughts which the inspiration suggested. But, inasmuch as a divine influence, in order to accomplish anything, must have affected the thoughts of the inspired men, and inasmuch as thoughts cannot be dissociated from words, it might be argued that the inspiration must after all result practically in a suggestion of particular words. And this is true, if we make a distinction between the suggestion of mere words, as such, and the suggestion of thoughts which necessarily result in the use of words which would otherwise not have been used (Philippi's distinction between *Wörterinspiration* and *Wortinspiration*, in his *Kirchliche Glaubenslehre*, vol. i. p. 184, 1st ed.). Inspiration would be meaningless and fruitless, if it were not verbal inspiration in the latter sense. Warrington (*The Inspiration of Scripture*, p. 260) has clearly and forcibly set forth this distinction.

messages. These persons are generally described as divinely inspired, whereas the Biblical writers comparatively seldom lay claim to special inspiration as directing them in the act of writing. If the Biblical inspiration were to be regarded as superior to the other, we should have to maintain that the unknown writer who narrates the history of Elijah was more powerfully moved by the Spirit than the prophet himself; that Luke, in reporting Paul's sermon on Mars' Hill was more thoroughly inspired than Paul was in framing it; nay, that each of the Evangelists, in recording the words and deeds of our Lord, was, so far as inspiration is concerned, more favored than He who received the Spirit without measure. Indeed, if the highest kind and degree of inspiration was accorded to the writers of the Bible, we may even wonder why there need have been any other. The inspired writers would seem in that case to have been the most suitable media of an original revelation; and the antecedent revelation, mediated by an inferior inspiration, would become superfluous, or at all events superseded. The Scriptures would become, not so much the record of a revelation, as a new and more perfect revelation itself.

It should indeed not be forgotten that, with regard to a large part of the Bible, this distinction between revelation and the record of it is slight. Such writings as the Psalms, the Prophetical books, and the Apostolic Epistles, may be regarded as practically the direct utterances of the organs of revelation. The organ of the revelation and the historian of the revelation are one and the same individual. Yet even here the distinction is not annulled. The act of receiving a divine communication is not identical with that of committing it to writing. In many cases a considerable time seems to have intervened between the two events. So far as any distinction is to be made in such cases between the receiving and the recording of the revelation, the presumption would seem to be that the former requires the highest degree of inspiration. The natural powers of memory might suffice for the recording of the communication; but in order to the reception of it a supernatural inspiration is necessary.

e. For like reasons we must assume that there is no ground for thinking that the organs of revelation were more perfectly

inspired when writing than when speaking under the impulse of the Spirit. On this point the case of Paul is the most instructive. He often appeals to his apostolic authority, but not particularly to his letters, as distinguished from his oral utterances. Indeed in the only passage (2 Cor. x. 10) in which the two are directly contrasted with each other to the disadvantage of the oral utterances, the comparison is represented as made in an unfriendly spirit; and Paul takes pains to assure the Corinthians that what he is in word by letter when absent, he will be also in deed when present. And later (xiii. 10), he speaks of his authority as especially exercised when personally present rather than through his letters. In the Epistle to the Galatians the burden of the apostle's rebuke is that the readers had departed from the gospel which he had orally preached. That to which he ascribes especial divine authority is the gospel which he had preached by word of mouth (i. 8, 11). Nowhere is the written word pronounced of superior authority to the preaching of the inspired apostles. It was through the oral preaching that the Christian Church was planted and nurtured. The written communications were comparatively few. The most of the apostles wrote either nothing, or at least nothing that has come down to us. As in all subsequent periods, so at the first, the gospel became the power of God unto salvation chiefly through the spoken word of life.

But notwithstanding these concessions and qualifications, which seem to be required by a candid weighing of the facts, the doctrine of a special inspiration of the Biblical writers is not discredited, but rests on a strong foundation. The same Spirit who moved the prophets and apostles is indeed said to be imparted to all Christians (Rom. viii. 9; 1 John ii. 20); but if in the older times God can be said to have spoken "in divers manners" (Heb. i. 1), and if in apostolic times there were "diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 4), it certainly may be that there is a diversity as between the ordinary Christian and the chosen recorders of the word of salvation.

The question, then, is: Was the inspiration of the Biblical writers *specifically* different from that which all members of

the believing community enjoy? The answer to the question is encumbered with grave difficulties. In the first place, inspiration itself is in general difficult of definition; it is therefore difficult to distinguish specific kinds of inspiration, — to determine whether the differences are merely of kind or of degree. In the next place, the question is complicated with that of canonicity. If it were clear that special inspiration and canonicity had always been synonymous conceptions; and if there had never been any wavering judgment as to the limits of the Canon, the case would be simpler. But the fact is that for a long time, with regard to both the Old and the New Testament, doubts and divisions prevailed, so that certain books which finally obtained admission into the Canon (as, for example, Esther and Second Peter), were very extensively, and up to a late period, looked on with suspicion as not worthy of being co-ordinated with the other sacred books; while, on the other hand, certain books which were finally excluded from the Canon (such as the Old Testament Apocrypha and the Shepherd of Hermas) were very extensively used as of equal authority with the other sacred books.¹ And this fact seems to indicate that canonical inspiration was not sharply distinguished from ordinary inspiration. The same writer (for example, Origen) seems at one time to reject, at another to countenance, the canonical standing of certain books. Furthermore, the reason why some writings became preserved and collected into a Canon, as of peculiar authority, while others were left out, is obscure, — especially as regards the Old Testament. Why, for example, should a book written by the prophet Isaiah² have been excluded, while the anonymous Book of Esther was admitted? What considerations finally prevailed to secure the admission of the Song of Solomon? As to the New Testament, did the distinction that was made turn upon internal evidence of peculiar inspiration, or merely upon the evidence of apostolic authorship or endorsement? Finally, we must take cognizance of the fact that the Christian Church is to this day

¹ See a good summary of the history of the process in Ladd, *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. part ii. chap. ix.

² The "acts of Uzziah," *vide* 2 Chron. xxvi. 22.

divided as to the recognition of certain of the Old Testament Apocrypha, the Council of Trent having formally co-ordinated them with the canonical books in general, whereas the Protestant Churches agree in giving them a subordinate position. The final fixing of the limits of the Canon seems, accordingly, to have been determined by a sort of chance. Not even the decrees of Councils have been universally respected. And to this day, though no formal change in the Canon can now ever be expected to be generally agreed upon, yet individual Christians do not hesitate to exercise the same right of recognition or rejection of the canonical authority of certain books which was exercised by Clement, Origen, Jerome, and Augustine.

It is, therefore, very plausible when, as the result of a careful discussion of the question, Professor Ladd¹ comes to the conclusion that "inspiration, as the subjective condition of Biblical revelation and the predicate of the Word of God, is *specifically* the same illumining, quickening, elevating, and purifying work of the Holy Spirit as that which goes on in the persons of the entire believing community." It is urged, in defense of this position, that "no theory of the inspiration of the Biblical authors has ever succeeded in defining the characteristics which separated them, as writers of Scripture, from other members of the believing community."² Further, it is said, to require that the truth of revelation "shall prove itself by an assumption as to a specific kind of divine influence through which the truth comes, is to require that it shall support itself upon that which is far weaker than itself."³ Moreover, respecting sacred history in particular, it is further urged that its authority "cannot be enhanced by any theory of the infallibility of the inspired authors of the history; for the evidence for the inspiration of the authors can never equal the evidence for the authenticity of their history."⁴

These propositions in themselves may be admitted, and indeed have been substantially admitted in the foregoing. But it may be questioned whether they prove that for which they are used as proofs. For example, the impossibility of clearly defining

¹ *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. ii. p. 488.

² *Ibid.*, p. 490.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 492.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 574.

wherein Biblical inspiration differs from the ordinary work of the Holy Spirit does not prove that there is no such difference. It is equally impossible to define the exact nature of the inspiration of the prophets; but if we infer that there was therefore no peculiar inspiration in their case, then we abandon all faith in a special revelation.¹ Again, as to the second point, it must be admitted that the truth of revelation cannot be proved by the assumption of a peculiar kind of divine influence on the mind of the Biblical writers. But this does not prove that there is no peculiar divine influence in the case. If the theory of the inspiration of the Bible were adopted simply as a means of establishing the fact of a divine revelation, and had no other ground, then the theory would indeed be not only futile, but foolish. The truths of revelation must, it is true, be practically established apart from any theory of the special inspiration of the Bible; but for all that there may be valid reasons for believing that there was such inspiration. Again, when it is said that the authority of sacred history cannot be enhanced by any theory of the infallibility of the inspired authors, and in general that a peculiar kind of inspiration cannot constitute a ground of faith in the Bible "apart from the nature of the word itself,"² we can assent to the proposition, but with a qualification. Faith in the Biblical history is not *created* by an antecedent faith in the peculiar inspiration of the historians, but it may be *enhanced* by such faith. This faith in the inspiration of the writers may not rightly be said to be produced "apart from the nature of the word;" but it does not follow but that *with* the word itself the peculiar inspiration would be an additional ground of confidence. The case is similar to that respecting Christ himself. His claim that he was the Son of God, and that he enjoyed altogether peculiar communion with the Father, would not have constituted a sufficient ground of faith in his word, apart from the nature of the word itself. But *in connection with* his word his extraordinary claims become an additional ground of confidence in him above and beyond what the words

¹ Professor Ladd distinctly assumes such a peculiar inspiration in the case of the prophets; *e. g.* *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 124.

² *Ibid.*, p. 492.

themselves would have commanded. The contents of the Bible are certainly not first trusted after and because the plenary inspiration of all the Biblical writers has been proved. The proof of this itself requires a very large degree of antecedent faith in those same contents. But such faith once existing may nevertheless be strengthened by an argument (if a sound one) which goes to show that the authors of the Biblical books enjoyed a peculiar kind of divine inspiration. A general faith in the authenticity of a Biblical narrative may be gained as one gains faith in any other historical narrative. But if one finds reason, in addition to this, to think that the authors of the Bible had exceptional help imparted to them, why, then the faith in their general veracity may properly become a faith in their special and peculiar veracity.

What, then, are the reasons for holding that the sacred writers enjoyed an inspiration specifically different from that of ordinary believers?

i. The first reason is an *a priori* one. That a peculiar guidance was imparted to the sacred writers is made probable by the very fact that it was their part to put into permanent form the record of a divine revelation. It would seem to be intrinsically desirable that Scriptures which were to serve as the authoritative record of the divine communications should at the outset have been specially secured from errors and follies, from overstatements and understatements, from meagreness and excess,—in short, from whatever would tend to give an inadequate or misleading impression of the contents of the divine word. If there was occasion for a supernatural communication at all, was there not likewise, and for the same reason, occasion for special precaution against an erroneous report of the communication? ¹

This argument is just the reverse of the one we have above rejected. Not the revelation is inferred from the inspiration, but *vice versa*, the inspiration is inferred from the revelation. The argument is of course not demonstrative. It does not follow, because one thinks there was need of supernatural guidance, that therefore there was such guidance. But it is

¹ Cf. Lee, *The Inspiration of Holy Scripture*, p. 254.

a fact of no small moment that there is an instinctive tendency to assume the need and the fact of it. This impulse of the mind is itself an argument; it creates at least a strong presumption in favor of the hypothesis that the writers of the Scriptures were favored with more than ordinary illumination.

With regard to certain parts of the Scriptures this presumption is peculiarly strong. We refer to those books which were written by the direct recipients of divine revelations. While we have no sufficient reason for assuming that the prophets and apostles were *more* inspired when writing than when officially speaking, we certainly have no good reason to suppose that they were *less* inspired, or not at all specially inspired, when writing. It is with reference to the historical books only that doubt can plausibly be entertained. As to the most of the Old Testament histories we know nothing about their authors. As to those of the New Testament, we know that three of them, at least, were written by men whom we have no reason to regard as apostolically inspired men. What is the proof that, just in the composition of these books, Mark and Luke received an inspiration which they had at no other time? The answer is that there was, so far as any one can see, as much need of supernatural guidance in the preparation of the history of Christ's life and of the establishment of the Christian Church as there was in the writing of the Apostolical Epistles. If we were obliged to make a distinction, we should be inclined to decide that the portraiture of the character, words, and works of Jesus Christ was of more vital importance to the succeeding generations of Christians than the meditations and exhortations which were the outgrowths of that history. The burden of proof certainly rests on one who would assert that Paul's Epistles are supernaturally inspired, but that Luke's histories are not; or that Matthew's Gospel is inspired, and Mark's uninspired. Such a conclusion would imply that inspired and uninspired histories became mixed together and made of practically equal authority in the estimation of the Christian Church. The only alternative of one who denies the specific peculiarity of Biblical inspiration must be that the

inspiration of the apostles was not specifically different from that of other Christians.¹

But we are now dealing only with a general presumption. It is very certain that, even though the Biblical writers may not have been aware that their writings were to be preserved as the authoritative record of the divine message for all generations, yet such was to be the fact. And God must have known what the fact was to be. And if there is reason to believe that he vouchsafed special illumination to prophets whose prophecies never went farther than to their contemporaries, there would seem to be at least equal reason why he should have given special aid to those who were to write down the divine revelations as a guide for all ages.

ii. Another consideration of no little weight is the fact that the Scriptures always have been regarded and treated by the great majority of the Christian world as inspired in an altogether peculiar sense. It is true that this is not a decisive argument. An error may become general and maintain itself persistently. The general opinion of the Papal Church, that the Pope is infallible, can hardly be taken as a proof of the correctness of the opinion. Moreover, exaggerated and even fantastic notions concerning Biblical inspiration have sometimes had wide and almost universal currency. The vagaries of the allegorical view of Scripture, and the extravagances of the doctrine of verbal inspiration, though they have sometimes been shared by nearly all Christians, cannot for that reason be regarded as justifiable.

Nevertheless these very extravagances indicate the strength

¹ So Professor Ladd, *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 191. But he goes on to emphasize the fact that the Apostles were better fitted than others for the work of writing as well as preaching, (1) because called and commissioned directly by Jesus, (2) because they "had a more abundant endowment of the same revelation and inspiration which belonged to Christians in general" (p. 192). Elsewhere, however, in speaking of apostolic inspiration, he says (p. 85, 86), "The effect of this inspiration is a special and supernatural fitness for their work of receiving men and training them in the Church of Christ." This seems to be an affirmation of all that need be claimed for apostolic inspiration, especially as it is made to cover the scriptural activity of the apostles also (p. 79). A special and *supernatural* fitness for their work must imply an inspiration specifically different from that of ordinary Christians.

of the underlying conviction that the Scriptures possess an altogether exceptional value and authority. And this general conviction has always expressed itself in the doctrine that the Bible was written under the special guidance of the Holy Spirit. That such a doctrine could become so wide spread and deep-seated, is a significant fact. It must have had some foundation. The very existence of such a belief furnishes a presumptive argument in favor of an essential truth as lying at the basis of it. Such a belief is not, it is true, to be blindly accepted as too sacred to be critically tested. No doctrine of inspiration, as has often been said, can be a true doctrine which is at war with facts. If a scientific examination of the Bible can demonstrate that the common notion respecting it is radically erroneous, that notion must be abandoned, however hard or even dangerous the abandonment may seem to be. But such an examination must respect the traditional opinion, and seek to discover the truth which it contains, even though error may be found mixed with it. For one of the facts which a scientific investigation must take cognizance of is this wide-spread, persistent notion respecting the inspiration of the Bible.

iii. Starting with these presumptions, we next notice the testimony of the Bible itself concerning Biblical inspiration.

Respecting this testimony it hardly needs to be observed that we cannot make the force of it depend on the assumption that the testimony itself is inspired. This would be assuming the thing which is to be proved. If a Biblical writer asserts that the Bible in general is an inspired book, his assertion cannot be accepted as true on the ground that he was divinely inspired to say so. Nor can a writer's assertion of his own inspiration be regarded as proof positive that he was inspired. Such assertions, if credible at all, are credible for the reason that the writers, aside from any presupposition as to their peculiar inspiration, are sincere, sensible, and godly men, and that therefore their testimony or their judgment on this point is worthy of credit.

More especially, it should be observed that the testimony of Jesus Christ on this point is of peculiar worth and authority. We assume him now to have been the inspired Revealer of

the divine character and purposes, the authoritative expounder of religious truth. If he declared the Old Testament to be an inspired book, his declaration must be accepted as true. On this point there can be no concession. Whatever may be the fact respecting the limitations of the incarnate Son, it is certain that concerning the matter in question he knew more than any modern critic. He who was commissioned to make a final and perfect revelation of God's truth cannot be called in question in his utterances concerning the very thing which it was his business to proclaim. Even if it should be conceded that he was not exempt from all the erroneous notions of his age respecting matters lying outside of the province of a religious dispensation, it cannot be conceded that he could have been in error respecting matters which do emphatically concern such a dispensation. Coming professedly to complete a revelation previously given, he must, if not a veritable impostor, have been competent to pass judgment on that previous revelation. If he pronounced it, as he did, to be in some respects deficient and in need of supplementation, his assertion is to be implicitly trusted. And for the same reason, if he declared the record of that revelation to be inspired of God, we cannot question his declaration without impugning his authority in general.

It may, however, be alleged that Christ nowhere explicitly does assert the peculiar inspiration of the Old Testament writers. Strictly speaking, this is true; and it is also true that, with a single exception, none of the Biblical writers in express terms makes any such affirmation. But it is nevertheless certain that the notion of such an inspiration was cherished by the New Testament writers, and that it is virtually, even if not expressly, conveyed by them. The single passage just alluded to (2 Tim. iii. 16), being a solitary one, would not deserve the importance generally attached to it, were not its designation of the Scriptures as inspired of God substantially, though not in form, borne out by the general drift of the New Testament references to the Old. The doubt about the correct translation of the verse does not materially modify the force of its testimony as to the point in question. If we assume that the epithet "inspired of God" is to be taken as belonging to the

subject (according to the Revised Version), still the verse virtually predicates inspiration, in an emphatic sense, of the Old Testament as a whole. The apostle has (ver. 15) just spoken of "the sacred writings" (of course, the Old Testament in general) as "able to make wise unto salvation." And now he adds, "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching," etc. If the Old Testament, as a *whole*, is declared to be able to do the greater thing, — make wise unto salvation, — it would be inconceivable that Paul could now mean to say that the lesser thing — teaching, reproving, correcting, and instructing — could be done only by the *inspired parts* of the Old Testament. Timothy had certainly never been taught to make any such discrimination; and Paul, if he meant to imply any, leaves Timothy and us in the dark as to where the line is to be drawn. If *θεόπνευστος* grammatically belongs to the subject, then the meaning must evidently be: "Every part of Scripture, being inspired of God, is also profitable," etc.¹ Or if any discrimination is implied, it must be one between the Old Testament and other (uninspired) writings.²

¹ So Origen, in *Librum Jesu*, Hom. xix: *πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος οὐσα ὠφέλιμος ἐστὶ*. Cf. Beck, *Erklärung der zwei Briefe Pauli an Timotheus*, in *loc.*, and Wace (in *Speaker's Commentary*) in *loc.* The "also" likewise best accords with this interpretation.

² Or possibly, though much less probably, the use of *πᾶσα γραφή* without the article may intimate that Paul here means to include, with the Old Testament Scriptures (spoken of in ver. 15 as *τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα*), also the New Testament Scriptures, a part of which had already been written. So Mosheim, *Erklärung der beyden Briefe des Apostels Pauli an den Timotheum*, in *loc.* In either case it cannot be Paul's intention to imply that the Scriptures were made up of inspired and uninspired writings, though some, as, *e. g.*, Martineau (*The Rationale of Religious Enquiry*, London, 1836, p. 200), so interpret the apostle. Professor Ladd (*Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 183) also appears, though obscurely, to intimate that such a distinction is suggested. He says: "All Scripture that is theopneustic is also morally profitable; and although it is not the intent of the writer to suggest the possibility of denying theopneusty to any Scripture whatever, neither is it his intent to imply such theopneusty of any such Scripture as is not also morally profitable. Whether each book and passage in the *ἱερὰ γράμματα* is, taken in detail, to be considered as theopneustic and also profitable for the purposes specified, the writer does not pronounce." The meaning of this is not altogether clear. The apodosis seems hardly to consist with the protasis. If it is true that the

However the verse may be translated, it affirms, either directly or indirectly, the inspiration of the Old Testament. As to the meaning of *θεόπνευστος* there is not, and cannot be, any material difference of opinion.¹ The chief difference relates to the sacred writer does not intend to imply theopneusty "of any such Scripture as is not morally profitable," then it must be that he intends to imply that such Scripture is not theopneustic. He certainly cannot mean to imply that it is neither one thing nor the other. If Paul regarded any part of Scripture as not morally profitable, he must, by fair implication (according to Professor Ladd), have regarded it as not theopneustic. The only way of escape from this alternative would be to ascribe to the apostle the agnostic attitude of not determining whether any Scripture is unprofitable or not. But even this would not accomplish the purpose; for such a non-committal position would at least still "suggest the possibility of denying theopneusty" to some parts of Scripture. Indeed it is impossible to understand what reason (if Professor Ladd's interpretation is correct) Paul could have had for using the term *θεόπνευστος* at all, unless he did mean to imply that some of the Old Testament was not inspired, and hence not morally profitable. But such a construction of the apostle's language would conflict with the almost unanimous view of exegetes, whichever translation they adopt. Thus, Ellicott (*Pastoral Epistles, in loc.*) and Huther (in Meyer's Comm. *in loc.*), though agreeing with Professor Ladd as regards the grammatical construction, find no implication of a distinction between inspired and uninspired Scripture. The latter says: "There was no reason for directing attention to the fact that the whole of Scripture is *θεόπνευστος*. There was no doubt on this point (*viz.*, that the whole of Scripture, and not a part of it, was inspired of God), but on the point whether the Scriptures as *θεόπνευστοι* are also . . . *ᾠφέλιμοι*." The translation preferred by Ellicott, Huther, and others (followed by the Revised Version) takes the universal inspiration for granted; the other asserts it. As to the question, which translation is to be preferred, though the weight of scholarly opinion is doubtless against the rendering of the Authorized Version, the authorities are still, and probably always will be, divided. Against the rendering of the Revised Version are such scholars as Chrysostom, Calvin, DeWette, Wiesinger, Conybeare, Fairbairn, Holtzmann, and likewise Rothe (*Zur Dogmatik*, p. 181), whom Professor Ladd (*Ibid.*) seems to quote as if on the other side.

¹ The chief lexical difference relates to the question, whether it is to be understood passively — "breathed by God" — or actively — "God-breathing," *i. e.*, breathing a divine spirit. The latter is defended by Cremer, Article *Inspiration* in Herzog and Plitt's *Realencyclopädie*, and in his *Biblisch-theologisches Lexicon, sub voc.* (*vide* Supplement to the Eng. ed.), though the other definition was given in the first and second editions. Practically, the difference is not very great; only the theory of verbal inspiration may be better defended, if the first definition is adopted. Defined in the second way, the

rather to the object and the degree of the inspiration: whether it is the writings, or the writers, that are inspired; and whether the inspiration secures absolute infallibility or not. From the word itself, however, as Ellicott,¹ Warington,² and others properly insist, we cannot infer a verbal inspiration such as the older theologians taught; nor can we directly draw any inference from it as to the degree of the inspiration. But the passage does affirm the universal inspiration of the Old Testament.

Although the epithet "inspired of God" is found only this once, the notion conveyed by it is found in abundance. The general manner in which the New Testament writers refer to the Old corresponds perfectly with the declaration of the verse we have been considering.

(1) The very names by which the Old Testament is designated are significant of the peculiar dignity accorded to it. Its books are called "*The Scriptures*," (or collectively) "*The Scripture*."³ And these writings, thus distinguished from and above all others, are everywhere spoken of as the depository of the divine will, as the immutable word, and as the arbiter of truth. Those Scriptures, it was held, "must be fulfilled" (Mark xiv. 49, Acts i. 16; John x. 35); the apostles reasoned from them (Acts xvii. 2); the Scriptures were to be carefully searched, as the source of religious truth (John v. 39; Acts xvii. 11).

(2) The language of the Old Testament is often quoted as the language of God or of the Holy Ghost, even when in the original the words are not directly attributed to God. So especially in the Epistle to the Hebrews; for example, i. 6, 7, ii. 12, iii. 7, iv. 3, 4, v. 6, x. 5, 15; but also in Rom. xv. 10; Eph. iv. 8.

(3) The emphasis which is laid upon the word of revelation as *written* is significant. Jesus met the tempter by quoting to

phrase *implies* the activity of the divine Spirit in inspiring the writers; defined in the first way, it more directly asserts it. Thayer's Grimm's *New Testament Lexicon* gives the passive sense.

¹ *Pastoral Epistles, in loc.*

² *Inspiration of Scripture*, p. 48.

³ *E. g.*, Matt. xxi. 42, xxii. 29; Mark xiv. 49; Luke xxiv. 27, 32, 45; John v. 39; Acts xviii. 24; Rom. xv. 4.

him that which was *written* (Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10). It is insisted that the things which are *written* must be fulfilled (Luke xviii. 31, xxi. 22, xxiv. 44). The Scriptures are said to have been *written* for the instruction, warning, and comfort of those that were to come after (Rom. iv. 23, xv. 4; 1 Cor. ix. 10, x. 11).¹ Paul frequently personifies the Scripture, as when he says (Gal. iii. 8), "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham." And continually, in instances too numerous to adduce, appeal is made to the Scriptures, as the rule of faith and conduct, in the use of the formula, "it is written," or "as it is written" (as, for example, Matt. xxi. 13; John vi. 31, 45; Acts xv. 15; Rom. i. 17, iii. 4, x. 15; 1 Cor. xv. 45). Such forms of expression indicate not merely that special authority was attached to Moses and the prophets, as men of God, not merely that the Old Testament economy in general was held to be of divine institution, not merely that certain individuals were inspired; but that the Old Testament *Scriptures*, as they were known to the New Testament writers and to Christ himself, were regarded as of special sacredness and authority — as divinely inspired. What Peter expressly asserted as to the inspiration of the prophets (1 Pet. i. 10, 11; 2 Pet. i. 21) is implicitly asserted of the Scriptures in general; for they are all referred to in the same way.

(4) The typical significance which Christ and his disciples found in the Old Testament indicates that they regarded it as divinely and peculiarly inspired. Even if one should disagree with them in their interpretation, the argument is not affected. The fact that they found a wealth of typical meaning in what might seem to be of slight significance indicates that *they* conceived the Scriptures to be in a peculiar sense inspired of God. The more trivial and far-fetched these applications of the Old Testament writings may seem to be, the more cogently may we conclude that the writers conceived the divine mind to have been peculiarly concerned in determining the form and the sense of the Scriptures.²

¹ Cf. John ii. 22, xx. 9; Acts viii. 32; Rom. iv. 3; 1 Pet. ii. 6.

² On this see Bannerman, *Inspiration*, pp. 311 *sqq.*

These several points might be expanded; but it is hardly necessary. What Paul expressed by that general characterization of the Old Testament as inspired of God, is borne out by the general manner in which those Scriptures are referred to in the New Testament. Rothe, who assumes the liberty to disagree with the New Testament writers in this respect, is yet emphatic in asserting that they held a very extreme doctrine of verbal inspiration. These authors, he says, "regard the words of the Old Testament as *immediate* words of God, and introduce them expressly as such, even those which are by no means reported as direct utterances of God."¹

When Rothe, however, undertakes to find a sharp distinction between Christ and his disciples as regards the mode in which they view the Old Testament, we must pronounce the attempt a total failure. He finds only two occasions on which Christ appears to endorse the notion of the special inspiration of the written word. These are Matt. v. 18 (cf. Luke xvi. 17) and xxii. 43 (cf. Mark xii. 36). In the first, he says, Christ refers, not to the *Mosaic codex* of laws, but to the *law*, and therefore cannot mean to lay stress on the minutiae of the written form. As to the second, he argues that our Saviour's language only affirms that David was inspired in composing 'Ps. ex., but not that he was inspired in writing it. But these are subtleties that carry with them their own condemnation. Rothe's case is made only the worse, when he undertakes to show that Jesus directly undertook to combat the current conception of the Old Testament, and quotes as proof Matt. xxii. 29 (cf. Mark xii. 24), where Christ says that the Jews did not understand the Scriptures, and John v. 39, where, he asserts, Christ even affirms it to be a mere *conceit* on the part of the Jews to suppose that they could find eternal life in a *book*. As to the latter passage, it is sufficient to say that this interpretation of it is itself a *conceit* without foundation.² In both this and the other passage Jesus simply tells the Jews that, much as they professed to

¹ *Zur Dogmatik*, pp. 180 sq.

² Although countenanced by some others, as Weiss, *Der Johanneische Lehrbegriff*, p. 106, and Hilgenfeld, *Das Evangelium und die Briefe Johannis*, p. 213.

reverence the Scriptures, they did not really *understand* them. They searched the Scriptures, he said, in order to find in them eternal life; and so they might, if they only found *him* there testified of; for he would give them life (verse 40). The fault was not that they thought too much of the Scriptures, but that the word did not abide in them (verse 38),—that, though trusting in Moses, they yet did not believe him (verses 46, 47). It is past comprehension how these charges, that the Jews had failed to understand the Scriptures, in any way imply that the Scriptures were not divinely inspired. On the contrary, the clear implication is that, if the Old Testament is only rightly understood, it will lead to eternal life. If there were *anywhere* any plain intimation from Jesus that he repudiated the doctrine of inspiration, the case would be different. But the word used (*δοκέω*), like the English “think,” cannot be understood to denote an erroneous opinion, unless there is some other evidence that this is the case than the mere use of the word. And everywhere Jesus is represented as speaking with the utmost reverence of the Jewish Scriptures; ¹ nowhere does he speak of them, or any part of them, slightingly. It may, indeed, be urged that he emphasizes the *spirit* of the Scriptures, as contrasted with the letter; and in this respect he undoubtedly did differ from his Pharisaic and superstitious countrymen. But we are now comparing him, not with the unbelieving Jews, but with the enlightened and believing apostles; and we find them likewise exalting the spirit above the letter (2 Cor. iii. 6). In short, it is only a misplaced subtlety, or a predetermination to discover a difference, which can find that Christ’s general attitude towards the Hebrew Scriptures is essentially different from that of the New Testament writers. Though the phrase “inspired of God” is only once applied to the Old Testament, the notion expressed by it is found throughout the New Testament, no less in the quoted utterances of Christ than in the independent declarations of the apostles.

He, therefore, who seeks, as Rothe does, to plant himself on the authority of Christ, as distinguished from that of the New

¹ See, *e. g.*, Matt. xxi. 42, xxvi. 54, 56; Luke xvi. 29, 31, xxiv. 27; John x. 35.

Testament writers, in defining the doctrine of the inspiration of the Old Testament, has the feeblest kind of foothold. There is a strong presumption that the apostles and historians who portray the life, work, and doctrine of Jesus intend not only to report what he said and did, but also to accept his views and carry them out. If they held different opinions from his respecting the Old Testament, and were *conscious* of that difference, then they were consciously disloyal to the Master whom they professed implicitly to follow. If they disagreed with him *unconsciously*, then the necessary conclusion seems to be that though they were intelligent enough to report Christ's words accurately, yet they were not intelligent enough to see wherein those words were in conflict with their own sentiments. Such a phenomenon is perhaps conceivable; but he who assumes it to be a fact can have but little respect for the authority of writers who are so conspicuously deficient in intellectual and spiritual clearness of apprehension. At all events, before we can accept such a theory, we must have cogent proof of it. And when we find that the alleged proof, as soon as tested, entirely collapses, we may safely dismiss the theory which it is employed to support.

The fact stands fast, therefore, that both Christ and his disciples ascribed to the Old Testament as a whole the character of a divinely inspired book. The book was then well defined in its form and extent. It was a collection of various writings, but recognized as being essentially a unit, and as embodying the substance of God's revelation of himself to the Jewish people.

The question of the inspiration of the New Testament is in some respects a distinct one. We still have, and even in a heightened form, the arguments from the presumptive need of supernatural aid on the part of the writers, and from the general judgment of Christendom. But we cannot quote Christ as affirming the inspiration of a book which, when he lived, was not yet written. We can only draw inferences from what the New Testament writers say of themselves.

We shall look in vain, if we expect to find any general assertion covering the whole New Testament Canon. This Canon was not formed; the writings of the apostles had not been col-

lected together. It is not probable that in any case these writers wrote with the distinct consciousness that their writings were to become co-ordinate with the Old Testament as sacred Scripture, or that these writings were at once regarded and treated as such by others. The very fact that in 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16 the Epistles of Paul are spoken of as being a part of the "Scriptures," constitutes one reason for doubting the genuineness of the Epistle. If the declaration had been more comprehensive, embracing all the books now known as the New Testament, especially if they had been designated by a comprehensive title, the ground for suspicion would have been still greater. All that we can naturally look for is individual testimony as to individual inspiration, or general statements about apostolic inspiration, but without reference to books already written.

These testimonies are of three kinds: (1) the promises given by Christ of the special help of the Holy Spirit to the apostles in their apostolic work;¹ (2) the historical account of the fulfilment of these promises;² and (3) the direct claims made by the apostles that they have this promised help.³ We assume the trustworthiness of these statements, but refrain from a particular analysis and examination of the several passages. This work has been often done; and the general significance of the testimonies lies on the surface. There are, however, some considerations which may seem to indicate that these passages do not prove a specifically peculiar inspiration of the New Testament *writers*.

(a) Both the promises and the claims have respect to the general apostolic commission, and not particularly to the apostles as writers. This is true; but the general commission surely

¹ Here belong Matt. x. 19, 20, xxviii. 20; Mark xiii. 11; Luke xii. 11, 12, xxi. 14, 15, xxiv. 49; John xiv. 16-18, 26, xv. 26, 27, xvi. 12-15, xx. 22, 23.

² Particularly, Acts ii. 4, iv. 31, xiii. 2-4, xvi. 6, 7.

³ *E.g.*, Acts xv. 28; 1 Cor. ii. 10-16, xiv. 37; 2 Cor. x. 8-11, xii. 9, 12, xiii. 2, 3; Gal. i. 9-12, 15, 16; Eph. iii. 1-7; 1 Thess. ii. 13, iv. 1, 2, 15; 2 Thess. ii. 13-15; 1 Pet. i. 10-12; 2 Pet. iii. 2; 1 John i. 1-3; Rev. i. 1-3, xxii. 6, 7. To which may be added Paul's general claims of apostolic power, as Rom. i. 1; 1 Cor. i. 1, ix. 1, xv. 8-10; 2 Cor. xi. 5; Gal. i. 1, ii. 6-9; Eph. i. 1; Col. i. 1; 1 Tim. i. 1; Tit. i. 1-3.

may be assumed to cover the several forms which the apostolic functions assumed. And though we may not find any promise or claim of peculiar aid as enjoyed by the apostles in writing, quite as little can we reasonably assume that the general promise failed them when they were discharging this important duty. Moreover Paul, in 2 Thess. ii. 15, plainly co-ordinates his oral and scriptural injunctions, and the Epistle to the Galatians was manifestly written with the consciousness that the readers were to recognize in these written words the full inspiration and apostolic authority of the writer. It is not necessary to decide whether the special inspiration of the apostles was a general and uniform one, or was more or less occasional, being imparted when particularly needed. We find that sometimes there is a special mention of their being moved by the Holy Ghost,¹ as if ordinarily they were less under his power. Even if it can be shown that the inspiration was of this intermittent sort, yet it must be insisted that the apostles never needed it more than when engaged in writing epistles and histories which were to be perpetual sources of instruction to the Christian Church. If, on the other hand, we hold the inspiration to have been a constant charism of the apostles, then as a matter of course it must have controlled them when writing. On the whole, then, this objection is of slight account.

(*b*) It may be said that the promises of special help and illumination made to the apostles are not to be understood as limited to them, but rather as applicable to all believers. Christ in his high-priestly prayer prayed not merely for the apostles, but for all who should believe on him through their word.² The Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost fell not only on the apostles, but on all the Christians who were assembled with them.³ Repeatedly the Spirit is said not merely to have filled or directed such leading men as Stephen (Acts vi. 5, vii. 55) and Philip (viii. 29), but to have fallen upon the multitudes of believers (viii. 17, x. 44, xv. 8, xix. 6). The Christian life is uniformly described as a life the marked characteristic of which

¹ *E. g.*, Acts iv. 8, xiii. 9, xvi. 6, 7.

² John xvii. 20.

³ Acts ii. 1-4; cf. verses 14, 15.

is the indwelling and influence of the Spirit.¹ By what right, then, it may be asked, can the inspiration of the apostles be pronounced specifically different from that of the whole community of believers?

This is an objection of decidedly greater weight than the one previously mentioned, and requires careful consideration. We observe with regard to it:

(1) So far as the Christian life in general is a life controlled by the Holy Spirit, of course it must be granted that both the apostles and ordinary Christians alike shared the gift. This gift, however, is often described according to the *ideal* Christian life, some Christians being represented as not possessing the Spirit, or at least scarcely deserving to be called spiritual. Especially noteworthy is the manner in which Paul characterizes the Corinthians as not spiritual, but carnal (1 Cor. iii. 1-3), though shortly afterwards he says, "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (iii. 16). So he says to the Galatians, "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now perfected in the flesh?" (Gal. iii. 3); and later (vi. 1) he intimates that the church is made up of the "spiritual" and those who are not spiritual. This spirituality was conceived, then, as varying in degree; and though Paul sometimes speaks as though some were already "perfect" (1 Cor. ii. 6; Phil. iii. 15), yet he disclaims even for himself having been made perfect (Phil. iii. 12), and the perfection spoken of evidently either is meant in a relative sense, or (as, for example, 1 Cor. xiii. 10; Eph. iv. 13; Col. i. 28) is conceived as an unrealized ideal. In this general sense, as *Christians*, needing the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost (Tit. iii. 5), both apostles and others stood on common ground, though the apostles may be presumed to have excelled most, or all, others in their spiritual attainments. All this, however, does not settle the question whether the apostles may not have had peculiar gifts of the Spirit, whereby they were distinguished from other Christians. We observe, therefore, further:

¹ *E. g.*, Rom. v. 5, viii. 1-5, 9-14; 1 Cor. vi. 19, xii. 3-13; Gal. iii. 2, v. 16; Eph. i. 13, iv. 30, v. 18; 1 Thess. iv. 8; 2 Thess. ii. 13; Tit. iii. 5; 1 Pet. i. 2, iv. 14; 1 John iii. 24.

(2) The objection, if pressed, proves too much; for it may be carried to the extreme of obliterating all essential distinction between Christ himself and his followers. There is scarcely any distinction of the Redeemer which cannot be paralleled by what is predicated in the New Testament of the redeemed. Is he the Son of God? But so are Christians "sons of God" (1 John iii. 1, 2; Gal. iv. 5-7). Is he "the heir of all things" (Heb. i. 2)? But so are Christians "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 17; Gal. iv. 7). Is he a King and a Priest? But so are Christians "a royal priesthood," "kings and priests unto God" (1 Pet. ii. 9; Rev. i. 6). Is he to be the Judge of the world? But so we read that "the saints shall judge the world" (1 Cor. vi. 2). Is he one with God, the possessor of divine glory? But so it is said to be the destiny of Christians to be "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. i. 4); and Christ says of his disciples, "The glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them" (John xvii. 22). Did Christ suffer for the sake of the elect? But Christians are said to be partakers of his sufferings (2 Cor. i. 5, 7; Phil. iii. 10), and even to fill up that which is lacking in his afflictions for the sake of the Church (Col. i. 24).

Now it is hardly necessary to enter minutely into an examination of these and other such representations, and show that after all the general impression left by the New Testament teaching is that Christ is unapproachably superior to all other men. That he is thus unique is made very obvious even to a careless reader. And similarly, although the apostles and other Christians are said to share common gifts, it is still obvious that there was a distinction accorded to the apostles. While some of the promises made to them may fairly be made to extend to all of Christ's disciples, others are meant especially for the apostles (for example, John xiv. 26, xx. 23; Matt. xviii. 18). He also imparted to them the power to cure diseases (Matt. x. 1). They were to be in an emphatic sense the leaders and pillars in establishing the Church of Christ on earth (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Luke xxiv. 47-49; John xxi. 15-17, xx. 21; Acts i. 8). He had left them with no written instructions. They were the sole media of the communication to the world of his

everlasting gospel. They were to speak and act with authority. And so in fact they did. On the day of Pentecost and afterwards they assumed the attitude of commissioned leaders and teachers (Acts ii. 14 *sqq.*, iv. 13). When the disciples made common stock of their possessions, the apostles were made the guardians of it (Acts iv. 35). They gave direction concerning the appointment of assistants in the management of the external duties of the church (vi. 1-4). They assumed authority to settle disputed questions concerning doctrine and practice (xv. 1-29). Paul, who was not one of the original apostles, is especially emphatic in insisting upon the peculiar prerogatives of the apostles (Rom. xi. 13; 1 Cor. ix. 1, xii. 28; 2 Cor. xii. 11, 12; Eph. ii. 20, iv. 11) and upon his co-equality with the others (2 Cor. xi. 5; Gal. i. 1, ii. 6). It was to him a distinct and peculiarly responsible office; and in all his letters he speaks as one having authority. The distinction was not merely that the apostles had been eye-witnesses of Jesus' works and hearers of his words. Others besides them had had this privilege, and Paul had not had it. When after the defection of Judas the apostles chose Matthias to take his place, they acted in the consciousness that the apostolic office was one which was invested with a peculiar dignity and responsibility.

This being so, that which was common to the apostles and their fellow-Christians cannot be adduced as proof that there was nothing peculiar to the apostles. And as their office was peculiar, so their endowments were peculiar also. Though there was but one Spirit, there were diversities of gifts (1 Cor. xii. 4); "and he gave some to be apostles" (Eph. iv. 11; 1 Cor. xii. 28). There were spiritual powers which could be recognized as "the signs of an apostle" (2 Cor. xii. 12). The principal work of the apostles was to teach and preach authoritatively the gospel of Christ (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Acts vi. 4, xx. 24; 1 Cor. i. 17, xv. 1; Gal. i. 8, 9, 11, 12). And this gospel was set forth not only by oral preaching, but in written histories and homilies. It was committed to the apostles so to set it forth that it might safely serve for all coming ages as a "foundation" on which others might build (Eph. ii. 20; 1 Cor. iii. 10-12). That they might do this, they had a special revelation from the Spirit of God

(1 Cor. ii. 6-13), and were so sure of the authoritativeness of their teaching that they could anathematize any who should dare to preach a different gospel (Gal. i. 8, 9).

(e) A further difficulty may be raised on the ground that not all of the books of the New Testament were written by apostles. If special inspiration is argued on the ground of apostolical authorship, what shall be said of the Gospels of Mark and Luke, the Book of Acts, the Epistle to the Hebrews, not to speak of other books of disputed authorship? As to this we remark:

(1) Even if the books above mentioned were to be regarded as uninspired, or less inspired than the apostolical ones, we should still have the larger part of the New Testament vouched for as specially inspired. The other books would even in that case not be valueless. As the works of conscientious and painstaking men, having access to the best sources of information, they would be invaluable. This would be true of the Book of Acts in an especial degree, as there is nothing else that covers the same ground.

(2) But it is not necessary to assume such a sharp distinction between the two classes of books. The promise of special inspiration to the eleven apostles does not exclude the supposition that certain others might likewise be made subjects of a similar distinction. The case of Paul is here in point. He was not one of those to whom the promises of Jesus were addressed. Yet no one¹ would now esteem him as inferior in spiritual endowment and divine inspiration to the other apostles. Though "born out of due time," yet he became an apostle, and was recognized as such by the others and by the churches. He was not chosen to fill a vacancy, but was directly commissioned as the thirteenth apostle by Jesus Christ himself (Gal. i. 1, 15, 16; Acts xxvi. 16). Somewhat similar is the case of Stephen, who is particularly described as a man "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost" (Acts vi. 5, vii. 55), as doing miracles (vi. 8), and as preaching with irresistible power (vi. 10). So Philip the Evangelist became a distinguished preacher and a miracle-worker (viii. 5-7, 13), and received special revelations (viii. 29, 39), while Philip the Apostle is not once mentioned as doing

¹ Except Swedenborgians, and a few others.

apostolic work. Barnabas likewise is said to have been "full of the Holy Ghost" (xi. 24). He secured Paul's recognition on the part of the apostles (ix. 27), and became Paul's companion in labor, and once seems even to be called an apostle himself (xiv. 14).

It is a noticeable fact that, while (except in the catalogue of Acts i. 13) none of the apostles are mentioned by name in the Acts or in the Epistles, besides Peter, John, and the two Jameses, prominence is given to the labors of those just mentioned as well as of Judas Barsabas, Silas, Apollos, Titus, Timothy, Tychicus, Epaphroditus, Mark, and Luke. Timothy is associated with Paul, as if joint author of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, and of the Epistles to the Philippians, the Colossians, and the Thessalonians. Silas (Silvanus) appears as joint author of First and Second Thessalonians. While none of these men can be put on a par with Paul in point of apostolic authority, there is evident reason for assuming that they had a peculiar measure of the Spirit. If Paul, though not included among those whom our Lord before his ascension commissioned and to whom he promised special inspiration, afterwards was invested with apostolic authority and inspiration, surely Mark and Luke may likewise have been commissioned and qualified to write the histories which are ascribed to them. The ancient tradition that Mark wrote as a reporter of Peter's preaching and with his approbation, and that Luke's Gospel was written under the influence and with the sanction of Paul, is intrinsically probable, and only tends to strengthen one's confidence in the trustworthiness of the Gospels, and to give to them a quasi-apostolical authority.

(3) The very fact that these writings, and no others of the many that appear to have come early into existence, were acknowledged and used by the early Christians as canonical, is itself an evidence that they were regarded as composed under the special direction of the Spirit. The value of this evidence does not depend on any supposed supernatural illumination of those who fixed the limits of the Canon. It simply shows that, since Sacred Scripture in general was conceived as inspired of God, they would not have put these writings into that class

unless they had deemed them to have that character. This judgment may indeed be regarded as a mistaken one; but there is a presumption in favor of this judgment, as compared with any later one, for the reason that those who formed it stood nearer to the time of the origin of the books, and had therefore better grounds of judgment.

(*d*) But it may be urged, as another difficulty in determining the fact and the nature of the inspiration of the New Testament books, that the authors themselves do not, as a rule, make any claims to being specially inspired. At the most only Paul and John (in the Apocalypse) have anything to say about the special authority of their writings.

This is a consideration which may be adduced quite as much for as against the inspiration of the books in question. Any formal announcement made by the writer say, for example, by Luke in his prefaces) that he had received a special commission and inspiration to write a book might be regarded as the mark of one who is thus endeavoring to secure currency for the book. Frequent and explicit appeals to divine inspiration as vouching for the authenticity and authority of a book would excite suspicion. The claims which Paul himself makes are all incidental and not formal. He nowhere makes a general statement that his letters are peculiarly inspired. What he says about his inspiration has reference to the general commission of himself and the other apostles; or, in so far as it relates particularly to himself, it is called out by the partisan opposition of enemies.

Particular interest belongs to those passages in which Paul apparently disclaims inspiration with reference to certain of his written utterances.¹ In these cases at all events, it is sometimes argued, the apostle gives us to understand that he speaks simply in the character of an uninspired man. The reply sometimes made, that the disclaimers relating to those few passages prove only the more emphatically that Paul claims full inspiration for all the others, may have some force as an *argumentum ad hominem*, but not otherwise. On the other hand, to argue from them that if here, then in all probability

¹ Especially 1 Cor. vii. 6, 10, 12, 25; 2 Cor. xi. 17, 23; Rom. iii. 5, vi. 19; Gal. iii. 15.

also elsewhere, the apostle may be regarded as speaking only as a man without special inspiration,¹ is quite beside the mark. The true explanation of the problem raised by these passages in 1 Cor. vii. is that there is not a sharp distinction between them and Paul's other written utterances in point of inspiration, but rather that they point to a distinction between what Paul says on the ground of express commands given by Christ and what he says by virtue of his own general apostolic authority.² It may, indeed, fairly be inferred from these, as well as from many other, utterances, that the apostle's human personality asserted itself in his writings and in his apostolic utterances; but this is all. To argue the total absence of inspiration from these particular passages is to resort to a theory of inspiration almost as mechanical as the exploded one of the post-Reformation theologians. It implies that the inspired writer was ordinarily distinctly conscious of a divine suggestion or dictation, but that here and there he suddenly found himself left to his unaided wisdom. There are, it is true, indications of special *revelations* received by the apostles; for example, 2 Cor. xii. 1-4; Gal. ii. 2. These refer apparently to occasional and exceptional experiences; but there is no good reason for assuming that the ordinary inspiration of the apostles was of an intermittent sort. This may with more probability be affirmed of the inspiration of the Old Testament prophets. Under the Old Covenant, when "the Spirit was not yet given" (John vii. 39) as a general possession of the people of God, the contrast between the prophet and ordinary men, as also between the prophet's ordinary state and his state of prophetic inspiration, was doubtless greater than existed under the New Covenant.

It is also very doubtful whether any sharp distinction can be made between the official and the extra-official activity of the apostles.³ It is by this distinction that the difficulty arising from Peter's defection at Antioch⁴ is got over. He was, it is

¹ As is done by Row, *Revelation and Modern Theology Contrasted*, pp. 113 sq.

² Vide Cremer, in Herzog and Plitt's *Realencyclopädie*, art. *Inspiration*; Ladd, *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 203; Wright, *Divine Authority of the Bible*, pp. 29 sq.

³ As is done by Lee, *Inspiration*, etc., pp. 237 sqq. ⁴ Gal. ii. 11-14.

said, then acting as a mere man, not as an apostle. But Paul evidently, in his rebuke of Peter, made no such distinction. To his mind Peter, by his weakness, was lending all his apostolic, as well as personal influence in favor of a course that was to be condemned. If his conduct tended to force the Gentile converts to Judaize (Gal. ii. 14), it was doubtless because it was viewed as the conduct of an *apostle*. Barnabas and the others were "carried away" by Peter's example, because it was Peter the Apostle who set the example. If it should be said that, though they may have *thought* him to be acting officially, yet in reality he was at that moment destitute of apostolic character, it is sufficient to answer that such a distinction between apostolic and unapostolic character is practically an idle one, unless it is meant that all that an apostle *did* was without authority, but that all he *said* and *wrote* was strictly inspired. This, however, is an utterly untenable position. Paul in this same chapter (ii. 2) tells of an action which was done "by revelation," and goes on to speak of his action relative to Titus as having been taken in order "that the truth of the gospel might continue with" the Galatians (ver. 5). On the other hand Paul's words addressed to the high-priest, as recorded in Acts xxiii. 3, can hardly be regarded as according to the mind of the Spirit; for Paul himself found immediate occasion to apologize for them. Actions speak louder than words; and apostolic conduct must have been a very important part of apostolic teaching.

Still it may be rightly urged that a man's utterances are more likely to be correct than his conduct. The judgment and the conscience are usually in advance of the will. One may through the force of sudden temptation commit an act which he would condemn when speaking or writing dispassionately and giving utterance to his conscientious convictions. It has often been remarked that Peter's addresses and epistles give no countenance to the error which was countenanced by his conduct at Antioch. And it may in general be observed that in the act of writing one is least of all in danger of being swept away by external solicitation or by sudden gusts of passion into rash and unguarded utterances.¹ An inspired man, writing for the edifi-

¹ Cf. Rougemont, *Christ et ses témoins*, vol. ii. p. 343. Yet some have argued

eration of the churches, would naturally in this act, when he could weigh his words and summon up all his deepest convictions and most instructive knowledge, give utterance to the purest and truest sentiments of which he is possessed. On this ground, but not on the ground of any inspiration peculiar to apostolic writing, as distinguished from apostolic speaking, the writings of the apostles may be said to be of superior value to their oral utterances, or to the lessons of their conduct.

(e) But it may still be objected, that little practical advantage is gained by the theory that a peculiar inspiration was accorded to the writers of the Bible, so long as no one can define what its nature was, nor tell how much was accomplished by it. If the writers wrote out of the impulse of their own minds; if there is really a human element in the Scriptures; if even we undertake to specify different degrees in the inspiration,¹— then is there not given to us scope for the most unlimited caprice in determining what and how much shall be accepted as strictly divine and authoritative?

To this we reply, that, though we may not know precisely how and how far inspiration worked, it is yet not a matter of indifference whether the Biblical writers enjoyed a special divine guidance. Their words have for us another force, when regarded as peculiarly inspired of God, than when regarded as written only under such divine influence as is accorded to all godly men. For though we may and must make a distinction between revelation and the record of revelation, yet practically to us now the record is the revelation itself. We know accu-

in just the opposite way, urging that, since preaching, not writing, was the main commission and work of the apostles, and they had, so far as we know, no expectation that their writings would ever be treated as canonical Scripture, it is probable that they took the most pains with the preparation of their oral addresses. So Rothe, *Zur Dogmatik*, p. 213.

¹ As, e. g., Kalnis, *Lutherische Dogmatik*, vol. iii. p. 161, who finds three degrees: (1) that of prophets and apostles; (2) the writers of the poetic and didactic books; (3) the historians. Among the latter, however, he makes distinctions, putting Joshua, Judges, etc., above Ruth, Esther, etc. (the histories in the Hagiographa), and in the New Testament Matthew and John above Mark and Luke.

rately of the things revealed only through the written record. And as the revelation is authoritative to us only by virtue of its being a special communication of God, so the Scriptures, as the record of revelation, and as being practically the real revelation, can effectually maintain their authoritative position as the norm of Christian life and opinion, only as they are held to have been penned under a divine direction which invests them with an altogether peculiar authority.¹ And the objection, that one cannot define how the inspiration of the Biblical writers differed from that of other godly men, is no more conclusive against the fact of such difference, than the impossibility of exactly defining the inspiration of the prophets and other organs of special revelation is a proof that there never has been any special revelation at all.

With reference to this and other difficulties that may be raised, the words of Bishop Butler² are still pertinent: "The only question concerning the truth of Christianity is whether it be a real revelation, not whether it be attended with every circumstance which we should have looked for; and concerning the authority of Scripture, whether it be what it claims to be, not whether it be a book of such sort, and so promulgated, as weak men are apt to fancy a book containing a divine revelation should. And therefore neither obscurity, nor seeming inaccuracy of style, nor various readings, nor early disputes about the authors of particular parts, nor any other things of like kind, though they had been much more considerable in degree than they are, could overthrow the authority of the Scripture, unless the prophets, apostles, or our Lord had promised that the book containing the divine revelation should be secure from those things."

But how are we to understand this "authority of the Scripture" of which Bishop Butler speaks? Is it a strict authority — an ultimate, absolute authority? Or is it to be supplemented, or even corrected, by something else, — by the human reason, or the Christian judgment and experience? Are the Scriptures

¹ Cf. Prof. G. N. Boardman on *Inspiration* (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1884, pp. 527 sq.).

² *Analogy*, etc., part ii. chap. iii.

to be regarded as the supreme authority, or, on the other hand, is the so-called "Christian consciousness"¹ to be regarded as a secondary or co-ordinate authority alongside of the Scriptures? The consideration of this question is necessary as a supplement to the foregoing discussion.

¹ This barbarous phrase, imported into our language as a translation from the German, where also it is a modernism dating from Schleiermacher, is an unfortunate one, the use of which ought to be discouraged. In spite of all explanations, it will often, if not generally, be understood as implying (what the English word naturally means) a direct perception or intuition of truth analogous to what is commonly meant by "consciousness;" and so the dispute about the thing is complicated by a misunderstanding about the meaning of the word. If the Christian is really *conscious* of this or that, why, that should be the end of all debate; if not, then why use a word which properly means that? Better avoid the phrase entirely rather than foster needless confusion and contention. It is true that there is no one word which fully expresses the somewhat complex conception meant to be expressed by the phrase "Christian (or religious) consciousness." But "experience," "judgment," "feeling," "mind," or "sense," can generally be used, and certainly have the advantage of not being ambiguous and misleading. The term "consciousness" is especially objectionable in composition, as, *e. g.*, "God-consciousness" and "world-consciousness," — hideous terms which are used as the equivalents of *Gottesbewusstsein* and *Weltbewusstsein*, *i. e.* consciousness (or sense) of God and of the world. But the terms might as well mean God's consciousness and the world's consciousness; in fact, Mr. Royce, in his *Religious Aspect of Philosophy*, p. 348, uses the term "world-consciousness" in the sense of "universal consciousness," as contrasted with the individual's consciousness.

CHAPTER X.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

THE fact of a divine revelation is now taken for granted. Christianity is assumed to be the chief and final disclosure of the character and purposes of God. But it is a somewhat different question, whether the *Bible*, as we have it, can lay claim to be an absolute authority.

Much is said nowadays about the matter of religious *assurance*. The need is felt of a firm and impregnable ground to stand on, as over against the assaults of skeptics and materialists from without, or the unsettling effects of inward doubt. Some find it in the Christian experience;¹ others in the objective authority of the Bible. Thus, for example, President F. L. Patton says: "A man feels certain, let us suppose, that Christ is his Saviour. . . . How does he know that his certitude rests on a sure basis? Because, we shall be told, this certitude is the witness of the Spirit of God. But what has led him to interpret his consciousness in this way? The Bible, of course; for it is there we learn that the Christian hath the witness in himself. The case, then, seems to be this: The Christian has the present certitude of consciousness. When he reflects upon it, however, he finds that subjective certitude is not necessarily a guaranty of objective fact. He seeks to corroborate his certitude by accounting for it. He accounts for it by ascribing it to the witness of the Spirit. He is authorized to ascribe it to this cause by the Bible. So that the certitude of consciousness, after all, depends upon the authority of the Bible. But what becomes of the certi-

¹ *E. g.*, Dörner, in the conviction of sin and in the apprehension of Christ as a sufficient Saviour, *Christian Doctrine*, § 11; Frank, in the consciousness of being regenerate, *System der christlichen Gewissheit*, § 15 (in Clark's Theological Library, *System of Christian Certainty*).

tude of consciousness, if this certitude rests ultimately upon the Bible, and the Bible gives us only probability?"¹

The implication here is that the Bible is the ultimate source of Christian assurance, and that therefore there can be no real certitude unless the Bible can be depended on as absolutely infallible. But this at once suggests the further question: How does one come to *know* that the Bible is infallible? If we depend on its testimony for our Christian certitude, then we must be *sure* that its testimony is absolutely trustworthy. It is not infallible *to us*, unless we believe in the infallibility of the judgment which pronounces it to be infallible. How, then, is this judgment reached?

There are two methods by which the authority of the Bible is argued, the subjective and the objective. The first is that emphasized by the early Protestant theologians, who affirmed that the Christian recognizes the divinity of the Scriptures by virtue of the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit within him; the judgment being a sort of intuitive judgment, perfectly satisfactory, though not capable of being reduced to the form of a logical argument. It is manifest that, if this is the source of our knowledge of the Bible's infallibility, then a most important function is thus assigned to the Christian's private judgment. Inasmuch as the Spirit's testimony cannot be consciously distinguished from the Christian's own mental process, and inasmuch as the *Christian* mind is in any case a mind enlightened by the Holy Spirit, this alleged recognition of the divine authority of the Scriptures is practically a simple deliverance of the Christian "consciousness" in the proper sense of that term.

It would seem to be an obvious inference from this doctrine, that a judgment or intuition which is able directly and infallibly to pronounce all the books of the Bible—these wholly and these alone—to be the inspired and faultless Word of God, must be infallible with regard to spiritual truth in general; and so a very wide door is opened for the largest claims which may be made on behalf of the authority of the "Christian consciousness." True, the doctrine was not so meant. The design was to postulate for the Christian soul the power unerringly to detect

¹ The New York *Independent*, Dec. 4, 1884.

in the Bible a divine standard of truth, which being discovered, the Christian's judgment can be absolutely trusted in nothing else; the objective standard, discovered by the subjective method, must be accepted as the only and perfect standard. But this itself suggests the weak point in the doctrine. This alleged faculty of the Christian mind, if it really gives us assurance concerning the special inspiration and divine authority of just our canonical Scriptures, must be able, in order to do this, to discern the perfect truth and divinity of each and every part of the Bible. It must be able infallibly to distinguish the apocryphal from the canonical. It must be able to pronounce judgment concerning the genuineness, or at least the inspiration, of the disputed books. It must be able to detect all interpolations of uninspired transcribers, and all deviations of the manuscripts from the original record. And all this, before it can pronounce the Bible as a whole to be absolutely infallible. For unless the Christian is *sure* respecting all these critical and historical questions, he cannot be sure that *every part* of the Bible as we have it is strictly divine, and therefore he cannot pronounce the *whole* to be so.

Evidently this is attributing altogether too much to the authority of the "Christian consciousness." However true it may be that the Bible carries with it a power peculiarly its own, and makes an impression, in its general import and drift, of conveying a divine message, probably few can be found who would claim for the Christian judgment the power of intuitively settling all the vexed questions of canonicity and inspiration. The true Christian spirit itself rejects the assumption which has been made on its own behalf.

Whatever of truth there is in this doctrine of the *testimonium Spiritu Sancti* can have relation only to the vital truths of revelation, — the saving truths that are capable of being translated into religious experience. A testimony of the Spirit which should go further than this, — which should testify concerning the infallible inspiration of every minutest utterance of the sacred writers, however remote it might be from one's actual religious life, — such a testimony would be itself nothing short of a new revelation. The testimony of the Spirit, unless it is such a supernatural communication, can be nothing but a con-

scious experience of a spiritual sort, — as, for example, of regeneration, of the beatifying and purifying effect of the sense of pardon, of a growing love to God and men, etc., — such an experience as illustrates and confirms what relates to it in the Scriptures. But no religious experience can ever enable a man to determine whether the name of the great king of Babylon should be called Nebuchadnezzar or Nebuchadrezzar. A Christian man will find in the Scriptures as a whole a spirit which seems to him to be of divine origin. His own spirit, illumined by the Divine Spirit, will discern in the Scriptures the marks of a superhuman influence that must have been concerned in the production of them. He will be conscious of a peculiar stimulus and illumination as coming from the contents of the Bible. But no religious experience can go to the length of enabling a man to recognize the divine inspiration and authority of every part of the Biblical books.

And so we come to the second method by which the divine authority of the Bible is argued, — the objective method, which relies on the so-called external evidences. In brief it is this: The apostles were honest, earnest, and intelligent men; they affirmed the sinlessness and divinity of Jesus Christ; they recorded that he promised them the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; therefore the books written by them must be infallibly inspired. But plainly this argument is not a logically demonstrative one, however great its force may be. The first premise is denied by some; but granting its validity we meet at every point a lack of absolute conclusiveness. For example, how does the general promise of inspiration necessarily involve absolute infallibility? All Christians enjoy the indwelling of the Spirit; where do we find indicated the sharp distinction between apostolic infallibility and the general fallibility of all other Christians? Again, how does the general promise of inspiration imply special and infallible inspiration in the act of writing? And again, even if this were made out, how does the promise of the special inspiration to the eleven apostles involve equal inspiration to all the writers of the New Testament? Paul, Mark, and Luke were not among those to whom the promises were addressed. Only a small part of the New Testament pro-

fesses to be, and not even all of this part is universally admitted to be, the work of any of those to whom Christ was speaking. But further, even if this flaw in the argument be overlooked, how are we absolutely certain that the books which we have are exactly the same as those which came from the hands of the writers? Clearly, then, this argument cannot be pronounced perfectly conclusive. If the Christian, in order to be certain of salvation through Christ, depends on the Biblical statement respecting the witness of the Spirit; and if his assurance of the truth of this statement depends upon his certainty that all of the Bible (at least all of the New Testament) is infallibly true; and if his certainty on this point is derived from the argument above given,—then his certitude must be badly affected with uncertainty. The most certain thing about it is that, if the authority of the Bible rests for us on the logical cogency of this argument, if it can be no more absolute than the argument is irrefragable, then the Bible *docs* “give us only probability,”—a very high degree of probability, no doubt, but still only probability.

Each of these methods of proof, then, is by itself defective. Neither of them is adequate to demonstrate the infallible authority of the Scriptures. Will, however, both combined accomplish the desired object? Undoubtedly, as there is force in each, the two strengthen each other. But two probabilities cannot be added together so as to produce an absolute certainty. And in the present case it is to be noted that each argument is weakest in the same place: in the demonstration of the infallibility of those portions of the Scriptures which have the least to do with what is vital to the Christian life.

The consciousness of this weakness of the argument has led on both sides to the adoption of the view that Biblical inspiration has chiefly or wholly to do with *moral* and *religious* truth, and does not necessarily secure to the writer such absolute freedom from all error as can scarcely be anything but the product of omniscience. The *locus classicus* on the subject of Biblical inspiration (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16) itself lays all the stress on just this spiritual use of the Scriptures. Accordingly it has become a wide-spread opinion that, while the Bible must be regarded as

infallible in its religious teachings, it may be left an open question, at least, whether its writers may not have erred with regard to historical, philosophical, and scientific matters. In one way this conception of the subject is certainly an improvement on that which makes the reality of revelation as a whole stand or fall with the perfect agreement of every minutest part of the Bible with the results of the latest scientific researches. But the theory has some difficulties of its own. It retains the assumption of an absolute infallibility in the Bible, but makes a theoretical distinction between the religious and the scientific which in point of fact it is difficult or impossible to carry out. No man can tell where the religious ends and the scientific begins. And the difficulty becomes all the greater, the more clearly it is recognized that Christianity is essentially not so much a system of revealed doctrines as it is a body of historic facts. To distinguish sharply between the historical and the religious in Christianity is impossible, for the historical is religious.¹ If inspiration is supposed to have guided the writers in all their religious communications, and to have been denied them in everything else, the practical result of such a view will be that one will feel himself to be at liberty to draw the line of demarkation between the true and the erroneous wherever he may please. This, then, is obviously not the full solution of the problem.

On the other hand, however, it is equally clear that the problem is not solved by ascribing to the Christian judgment the capacity of discerning and testing religious truth independently of Biblical or other external helps. If the *individual* mind is the absolute criterion, then the individual is to that extent infallible. But individual Christians do not all agree with one another, and of course not all of them are infallible. Is, then, the *common* Christian judgment the unerring standard of religious truth? This is more plausible; but the common judgment is only the aggregate of the individual judgments; and unless there is some infallible method of striking an *average* which will yield us an infallible result, it is idle to hold up the common judgment as the

¹ See a suggestive discussion of this point by Prof. E. P. Gould on the *Extent of Inspiration*, in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for 1878.

unfailing standard. Besides, does not the history of the Church seem to show that the majority of Christians may become the victims of error? As Protestants, how can we think otherwise?

What shall we say then? Let us attempt to fix upon some of the general principles which must underlie any correct settlement of this question.

1. Christianity is not the offspring either of man's natural consciousness or of the Bible. It originated as a revelation from God mediated by Jesus Christ. Although men often loosely speak as if the New Testament were the source of Christianity, yet the truth needs only to be stated to receive immediate assent, that neither originally, nor generally at present, do men become believers in Christ directly and simply on account of what they find in the New Testament.¹ Originally Christianity was widely established before there was any New Testament. The apostles preached it as a divine revelation; their successors handed down their testimony. Parents taught the Christian faith to their children, and churches were planted all over the Roman Empire before the Gospels and the Epistles were written. And no less true is it now that the Christian religion is propagated from person to person, and not chiefly by the reading of the Bible. Children are taught to believe in Christ before they are able intelligently to read the New Testament. The impenitent are gathered into the Church mostly through the personal influence of Christians, and not by first becoming convinced of the divine authority of the Bible.

It is equally manifest that Christianity did not originate, and is not now propagated, as a mere intuition of the human mind. It is not a system of truths wrought out by philosophical meditation, and is not now presented to men as something which every one is capable of evolving out of his own consciousness. It comes to men as a divine revelation, communicated from one generation to another. Just as soon as professed Christians discard this view, and pretend that the essence of Christianity is to be found in every man's intuitions, we know that such men have lost, or have never found, the essence of Christianity.

¹ Cf. Kalmis, *Lutherische Dogmatik*, vol. iii. §§ 6, 8. "In fact, the ordinary way by which the Word brings man to the truth is that of tradition."

2. In the strict sense neither human opinion nor the Bible is invested with any *authority* over the Christian Church. Christ is the supreme and only authority. He is the Lord and Master. All branches of Christendom recognize this; but Papists make the clergy or the Pope Christ's infallible representative, and so, practically, the substitute for Christ as an authority. Protestants sometimes do nearly the same thing, when they pin their faith to the dicta of some great theologian. But it is the fundamental principle of Protestant Christianity, that Christians have direct access and relation to their divine Master, and need no priestly or other human intervention. The convictions or speculations of no successor, or substitute, or representative, of Christ can replace him as Master, or claim the right to control Christian faith or life.

So far all is clear. But is not the Bible — at least the New Testament — after all in some sense an authority? What are the facts? As we have observed, the New Testament was not the source, but only the product or depository, of the Christian revelation. It is not authoritative as being the author of our religion. But is not the New Testament an *authoritative record*? It certainly was not such before it was in existence. When Christ's gospel was proclaimed only orally, men received the apostolic testimony whenever they became convinced of its truth; and they did not become convinced of its truth by first becoming convinced of the infallible authority of the apostles. And after men became Christians, they were not expected to acknowledge the apostles as having a right authoritatively to control their religious conduct and opinions. Paul expressly disclaims any right to exercise lordship over the faith of his converts (2 Cor. i. 24). And though he sometimes (especially in the Epistle to the Galatians) seems to assume magisterial authority, he is careful to make it clear that he speaks as "a servant of Christ" (i. 10); and his reproof of the Galatians is put on the ground that they had disobeyed, not him, but the gospel which he had preached (i. 6-9). "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord" (2 Cor. iv. 5), — this is everywhere the spirit of the apostolic message.

If now the apostles as living preachers exercised and claimed

no authority over the churches, no more can such authority be ascribed to their writings. What the apostles said by word of mouth and what they said by letter would naturally be held in equal estimation. Nowhere do they themselves attribute superior weight to their writings. Why, then, is so much importance now attached to the New Testament? For the obvious reason that the apostles and other early witnesses of Christ's work and words are dead. If Peter and John were still living with unclouded memories and with apostolic inspiration, and could tell us in person what they saw and heard and thought, that testimony would be quite as valuable as what we now get from their writings, — and indeed more so, inasmuch as it would be more full and direct, and more free from the liability of being modified and adulterated which besets the transmission of written records through the centuries. But the apostles had to die; and that process has been a natural and indeed a necessary one, by which their writings, and the writings of others who stood near to them and to the things narrated, became invested with an increasing value. Those writings embodied the substance of the oral apostolic testimony on which the Church had been founded. There was danger that without such a permanent record of their teachings the gospel might become corrupted. The farther the Church is removed from the time of the apostles, and consequently from a trustworthy tradition of their utterances, the more valuable and indispensable do these Scriptures become. They must continue to be the canon, the rule, the safeguard against abnormal deviations from what Christ and his immediate followers taught.

In an important sense, therefore, the Scriptures (especially those of the New Testament) are authoritative; but they are only *mediately* authoritative. They are authoritative as a written edict is which purports to have come from a sovereign; the written words have no authority except as they make known the will of him in whom the authority resides. So over the Christian Church Christ is still the only Master. Our allegiance is due to him, not to the Scriptures. As the Church was founded and for a considerable time was propagated without any written law, so it is conceivable that it might have continued to the

present day without the written records. As already intimated, in an important sense it has been so handed down. There exists a great volume of Christian faith which, beginning during the life of Christ, has been propagated from generation to generation by living believers from that time to this. This Christian faith, experience, sentiment, motive, hope,—in short, this Christian life, in so far as it is genuine, also possesses a sort of authority. Otherwise it could not be commended with confidence by one to another. But it, too, has only a relative authority. It is an outflow from Him who alone is the absolute Truth and Life.

But this suggests the question: Which has the *most* of this relative authority,—the Bible or the Christian experience? To this it may be replied in part by observing that—

3. It is impossible that in any vital respect a normal Christian experience should conflict with a correct understanding of the Christian Scriptures. For both the Christian experience and the Christian Scriptures come from the same source,—from Him who is the Truth and the Life. It is idle, therefore, to speak of these as materially conflicting with each other.

To be sure, it may be said that these three qualifications here rob the proposition of all special value. What is a *normal* Christian experience? and a *correct* understanding of the Scriptures? and a conflict on *vital* points? Who is to determine when these conditions are fulfilled? Yet it is not without importance to emphasize the proposition, self-evident as it may seem to be. For if Christian life and the Christian Scriptures come from the same source, then the question as to the relative authority of the two loses, to say the least, much of the significance often attached to it. At all events, an abnormal or spurious Christian experience has no authority; and neither has the Bible, wrongly understood. But a healthy Christian sentiment is of more weight than a wrong conception of Biblical truth; as, on the other hand, the Scriptures, understood according to their true spirit, are of more weight than a perverted Christian judgment.

But, it may be asked, do not the Scriptures have a certain priority? In order to secure a *normal* development of the Christian life, must we not make the Bible the *standard* of faith and conduct? If it is true that a healthy Christian experience

will not conflict with the Bible, is not that because a Christian experience is healthy only when it is built up on the Bible? It would be easy, perhaps, to give an unqualifiedly affirmative answer to these questions, were we not at once confronted with the requirement that the Scriptures, in order to be a safe guide, must be *rightly understood*, and that they can be rightly understood only by one who already has a normal Christian experience. We thus seem to be moving in a circle: The normal Christian experience depends on a correct understanding and application of the Bible, while a correct understanding of the Bible depends on a normal Christian experience. The solution of the difficulty is to be sought in the very fact above emphasized, that both the personal Christian life and the history of God's revelation come from the same source; neither of them is solely dependent on the other; and for the same reason neither of them can materially conflict with the other. If God revealed himself in the gospel of Christ, and provided that that gospel should be both preached and recorded by the original recipients of the revelation, and that the gospel should be continuously propagated, there must be essential agreement between the written record and the continuous product of the revelation. This is said on the assumption that our New Testament is what it has commonly been supposed to be, namely, a trustworthy history of the origin of Christianity, and a correct embodiment of its essential spirit. And on this there is virtual unanimity. If the fact were otherwise, if the New Testament were (as some extremists have held) the product of the second century and in its distinctive features untrustworthy, then the necessary inference would be that we have no certain knowledge of the Christian revelation, and indeed that it is doubtful whether there was any revelation, properly so called, at all. For the New Testament at all events represents what, at the time of its production, were supposed to be the facts respecting the origin and the essence of the Christian revelation. No oral tradition could in any case be *more* trustworthy than these written productions, as regards the primitive history of Christianity. In point of fact, however, the oral tradition itself unanimously testifies to the trustworthiness of the written records.

Thus far, then, Christian experience and the Bible seem to be in a sense co-ordinate, each having a relative, but neither of them an absolute, authority. And they are assumed to be in essential concord. But the question may still be pressed: Suppose there is, at least on some points, an alleged disagreement between Christian sentiment and the language of the Scriptures, what then? As to this we observe:

4. In so far as the Bible and Christian opinion can be set over against each other, the Bible is to be regarded as the superior and regulative authority. If for no other reason, the Scriptures possess a peculiar authority by virtue of their being the most original exposition of Christian truth and history. Their authors lived nearest to the sources of information, and even if endowed with no peculiar gifts, they are, on ordinary principles of judgment, to be regarded as better exponents of Christian truth than any later authorities can be. And even if in certain matters of unimportant detail it seems impossible to give full assent to the Biblical statements, the corrective is to be found in other parts of the Bible itself. It is certainly conceivable that some incidental features of the Bible are inconsistent with the main drift of Biblical teaching. In such cases it is not the Christian judgment as an independent authority, but the Christian judgment as formed and enlightened under the influence of the Scriptures themselves, which modifies the Scriptural statements. Manifestly in such instances one cannot speak of the Christian judgment as overruling or contradicting the Bible. It is a judgment in which the general drift of the Scriptures is set over against subordinate features of it. Whether there is a real contradiction between the general drift and these incidental features is a distinct question, respecting which a difference of opinion may exist. At this point we need only insist that there is a general presumption in favor of the correctness of the Biblical statements.

So much will be readily conceded by all who hold that the Bible — especially the New Testament — is in general a trustworthy record of God's special revelation of his saving grace. Let one make what distinctions he will between the main purpose of the book and its incidental features, still the very fact

that the main purpose is one of supreme importance diminishes the probability of serious faults in the subordinate particulars. If we find there a correct account of Christ, his character, words, and work, the *presumption* is that the local, historical, and incidental *setting* of that account is correct also ; especially as the portraiture of Christ and his work is so largely given in the form of historical sketches that serious inaccuracy in the details must almost necessarily involve inaccuracy with regard to the main point. Moreover, if we believe that the preparation and preservation of these early written memorials of the work of redemption were in the divine mind of serious importance as a means of securing the transmission of a correct report to later generations, we can hardly avoid believing that these memorials were in some sense prepared under special providential direction, and, to say the least, possess a peculiarly high degree of credibility. Although the revelation is to be distinguished from the written record of it, yet, if the written record was needed (on account of the certain danger of error in merely oral tradition) in order to preserve a pure gospel, it was needful that the record itself should be substantially free from error.

We have thus, at the outset, what we may call a deliverance of the Christian judgment itself in favor of the general and special trustworthiness of the New Testament in its description of Christ and the Christian revelation. As over against those who regard the Christian Scriptures as generally the work of weak, fanatical, and untrustworthy men, Christians must regard them, on the contrary, as of peculiar value. It is practically inconceivable that the Christian Church in general should ever come to adopt the view that one may freely doubt, disbelieve, modify, or correct the Biblical account of God's revelation of himself. Such a position would amount to the self-destruction of Christianity.

Does this mean, now, that everything, without exception, that is found in the Scriptures is to be accepted as absolutely unadulterated truth ? Is all critical inquiry into the historical and scientific accuracy or logical soundness of Biblical utterances to be cut off ? By no means. The Bible was written by imperfect and fallible men ; and it is only by the use of the rational

and critical judgment that Christians have come to regard it as of exceptional trustworthiness. If the same method of examination should reveal occasional instances of discrepancy and error, this would be nothing more than what might be expected, unless it has been demonstrated that the writers were so inspired as to make them absolutely infallible. But no such demonstration has ever been made. On the contrary, it has become one of the commonplaces of Biblical criticism, that the existence of discrepancies, on minor points, between different writers who have traversed the same ground is one of the best evidences of the independence, originality, and genuineness of the writings.

But while the possibility and even probability of unimportant inaccuracies in the sacred record may be admitted, it must still be insisted that the general faith in the genuineness of the Christian revelation carries with it such a presumption in favor of the trustworthiness of the Bible, not only in general, but in detail, that the burden of proof may always be rightly thrown upon the man who brings a charge of error even respecting minor and incidental matters.¹ And at all events, as regards the main purpose and drift of the record of revelation, the Biblical books must be regarded as the perpetual fountain and only external standard of revealed truth and religious life. This must be the Christian attitude towards the Scriptures in general. In particular, the New Testament as a whole must be taken as the regulative source of our knowledge of Christ's nature, doctrines, and work. There are only three possible

¹ Whether any of the apparent inaccuracies and discrepancies of the Bible are incontestably such is a question on which opinions will vary according to one's preconceptions. The general fact is that, if one is predisposed to find error, he can make out a list of indefinite length; whereas if one is predisposed to believe that there are none at all, the apparent errors can be explained away with greater or less plausibility. On either side there is a liability to use some violence in the interpretation of the facts. We cannot go into the vexed questions in detail, but must refer to the Commentaries, Bible Dictionaries, and other works treating of the several points in dispute. J. W. Haley, *Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible*, gives perhaps the most comprehensive discussion of the subject. Prof. J. J. Given, *The Truth of Scripture in connection with Revelation, Inspiration, and the Canon*, discusses some of the more difficult cases.

ways in which this knowledge can be supposed to have come to us : by direct personal intercourse with Christ ; by oral tradition through the Christian Church ; by written records. As to the first, while it must always be insisted that there is a direct relation of every Christian to Christ, and such a relation that we may say with John (1 John i. 3), "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," yet all attempts to attain such a fellowship by a purely direct process, independently of the help and guidance of the outward historical sources of knowledge, invariably tend to a one-sided and fanatical mysticism. Though it is a truth never to be surrendered, that each individual must believe or disbelieve for himself, yet it is equally true that no one can attain a genuine faith which is not largely the product of external instruction. Mysticism itself, even in its wildest forms, cannot disengage itself from the influence of example and education. The more it undertakes to do so, the more certainly does it violate the fundamental principle of Christianity, that Christians are to constitute a *body*, a brotherhood, each of whom is to be helpful and indebted to every other ; the more certainly, too, will it degenerate into unbridled caprice, and become a hotbed of intellectual vagaries, of moral lawlessness, or of deceitful pretensions to prophetic inspiration.

What, then, shall be the regulative check to prevent such fanatical excesses ? Shall it be the oral tradition of the Christian Church ? In an important sense it must be. Christianity is transmitted orally, and has been so transmitted from the first. For nearly a generation tradition was the principal or only source of transmission. When the New Testament books were first written, the testimony of the still living apostles was co-ordinate with those books as a source of enlightenment respecting Jesus Christ. And if the traditions concerning apostolic teaching could have been orally propagated in an uncorrupt form, they might properly still be accepted as a valid and authoritative source of information respecting Christian truth. But all experience shows that tradition cannot be depended on to preserve itself for long periods free from error. It can claim infallibility only in so far as it can claim to be itself supernaturally preserved from error, — a claim which can never be

substantiated. Moreover, even tradition itself asserts the superior authority of the Scriptures. Even the extremest Papal doctrine of the authority of tradition has never gone so far as in theory to set tradition above the New Testament as a source of light and authority. The Scriptures have by all the principal branches of Christendom been accepted as constituting the standard of truth contrary to which no pretended authority can be valid. They are a fixed standard; tradition is variable. They are the oldest standard; all subsequent traditions and speculations must be tested by them.

The Scriptures, then, must constitute the only regulative standard of Christian belief and practice. Whatever growth or progress there may be in the Christian Church must be a growth out of, not away from, the original germ, whose most authentic accessible embodiment is found in the New Testament Scriptures. It is practically inconceivable that any tradition should be more trustworthy than those records, or that any intuition or reflection should lead one to more truthful conceptions of the nature and mission of Christ than those which are there found set forth or involved.

But the question still remains: In case those Scriptures are inconsistent with themselves, or seem to contradict the better religious sense of men, must not that religious sense become the decisive arbiter? To this it must be answered that, if the pretended religious sense contradicts the *general drift* of the teaching of the New Testament, then it necessarily ceases to be a *Christian* religious sense. It is more plausible when some men insist that, as Christ is the centre of Christianity, that part of the Scripture is to have the precedence in which his own language is directly given; in other words, that the Gospels are to be decidedly preferred to the rest of the New Testament, as an exponent of the true Christian doctrine. But this is an illegitimate position. There would be more plausibility in it, if Christ had left us a history of his life and utterances recorded by himself. But inasmuch as this is not the case, the Gospels stand upon the same footing as the other books. When, therefore, men undertake to contrast the doctrines of Christ with those of his followers, they seem to forget that

we learn of Christ's doctrines only through his followers. If the general fallibility of the apostles and other disciples of Christ is regarded as a reason for giving to their statements only a qualified confidence, then it may equally well be made a reason for distrusting their accuracy in reporting the language and doings of Jesus Christ. The Epistles, no less than the histories, profess to set forth what Christ is and has done.

This distinction between the Gospels and the Epistles is usually made with special reference to Paul. He is contrasted with the Evangelists, as one who introduced new features into Christianity. This is sometimes argued as a merit, sometimes as a demerit. In the latter case, his doctrines are sharply condemned as being in many respects opposed to those of Christ, or at least as something new, not found in the Gospels. But such critics apparently forget that Paul's principal Epistles were written before the Gospels were, and that, though he had not been a disciple of Jesus, he had abundant opportunity (even if no stress is laid on the direct revelations which he claimed to have received) to learn from the disciples about Jesus and his doctrines. We do not know that Mark or Luke had any personal intercourse with Christ. Their Gospels, therefore, are exposed to the same charge that is brought against Paul's writings, namely, that they are a report at second hand. There is also strong reason for judging that much of the First Gospel could not have been written by an eye-witness, though the tradition that Matthew wrote it be adopted as substantially correct. And however firmly we may hold to the Johannean authorship of the Fourth Gospel, it is yet a fact that it has been vigorously and plausibly contested, whereas the genuineness of Paul's principal Epistles is as good as unquestioned. The attempt, therefore, to set up the Gospels against the Epistles, as presenting to us Christianity in a purer form, rests on a false assumption. We must affirm that there is an altogether peculiar authority in Christ; but we cannot distinguish any parts of the New Testament as surpassing all other parts in the same way that Christ surpasses his disciples; for every part of the book was written by his disciples. We can only say, in general, that the New Testament gives us a portraiture of Christ

as he impressed himself on his immediate followers. We must take the portraiture as it is, and make the best of it.

When, for example, some persons contrast Christ's references to the Old Testament with those of Paul, and find the latter to be more or less fanciful and rabbinical, and Christ's not at all of this nature, what shall we say? In the first place, the difference, if it exist at all, is much smaller than it is often represented as being. Indeed it may plausibly be argued that there is nothing of this sort in Paul's writings which cannot be paralleled in the reported utterances of Christ.¹ But besides this it is to be considered that what is reported as from Christ is but a small part of what he said. We are told that he opened the apostles' mind, that they might understand the Scriptures (Luke xxiv. 45). We have no right to presume that what may happen to strike us unpleasantly in the apostolic interpretations of Scripture is certainly not sanctioned by Christ's authority, simply because we do not find it beforehand in the Gospels. There is, on the contrary, a general presumption that, as the apostles were in constant communion with him during his ministry and received instruction from him concerning his work and his truth, they must have become indoctrinated with his view of the Old Testament in its relation to him. Nor can an exception be made of Paul. We cannot press his claim that he did not receive the gospel from the apostles to the extent of supposing that he got absolutely nothing from them. What was he talking about with Peter during those fifteen days when he visited him at Jerusalem (Gal. i. 18)? Or if we press this claim to the extreme, we must remember that over against it is his claim that he received the gospel directly from Christ; and how much that revelation contained of specific instruction concerning the interpretation of the Old Testament, no one can affirm.

On the whole, then, the conclusion must be that, though Christ was radically superior to his disciples, this fact cannot be made use of in order to discredit any part of the New Testa-

¹ Dean Burgon (*Inspiration*, etc., pp. 134 sq.) refers to Luke xx. 37, 38, Matt. xxii. 41-46, and John x. 34-36, to show that the criticisms made on Paul might with equal justice be made on Christ.

ment, unless in equal degree the whole is discredited. But if the whole is discredited, that is, if no part of it can be trusted in its representation of Christ, we are left without any certain knowledge of him at all; and in that case it is idle to hold up his authority as over against the Scriptural account of him. Every attempt to distinguish the pure and original Christianity from the apostolic additions to it or corruptions of it, gives us simply the opinion of the individual critic; and this opinion is founded on the reports of the very men whose trustworthiness is denied. The ultimate result of the various efforts to discover the genuine Christ and the pure gospel is of course a multitude of gospels all derived from the New Testament writings.

Still less can one hope to reach the unadulterated truth of Christianity by any arbitrary reconstruction of the Canon, or by deciding in his own mind what books of the New Testament shall be recognized as representing the truth as it is in Jesus. Such a procedure is opposed to all sound principles of historical and critical evidence. The New Testament as a whole must be taken as the source from which is to be derived the true conception of what Christianity originally was, and was intended to be. And the more it is insisted that Christianity is essentially a new life-force rather than a mere system of propositions or dogmas, the more important does it become to call into requisition every part of the original documentary records of the history of Christ's life and of its workings on the primitive Church. Whereas a petty and arbitrary criticism would undertake to say that only one type of conception is to be adopted as regulative of our judgment, a broader and more truthful view would rather emphasize the need and importance of a variety in the sources of information, in order that the picture of the true gospel may be made as complete as possible. In such a search one will not be alarmed by contrasts or even apparent contradictions. He will not be disturbed, but rather helped, when he sees how different in many respects John's portraiture of the Redeemer's life and words is from that of Mark or Luke. He will not set Paul against John, or John against Paul, but will put the two together as supplementing one another. He will make use of every detail of both the histories and the Epistles

in his effort to obtain an accurate and comprehensive view of what Christian truth really is. But this very fact, that one must put together and compare, suggests another reflection :

5. The religious experience and insight of Christians has an important and decisive function. The regulative authority of the Scriptures does not execute itself. Their authority is no authority till their meaning is understood. And what they mean must be determined by men in the exercise of their own faculties. Christians, though as Christians they cannot freely set aside, correct, or supplement the Scriptures, must *interpret* them. The new life which was brought into the world by Jesus Christ is an expansive one, propagating itself from generation to generation and from race to race. In itself it remains essentially the same. And living Christians must have more or less definite opinions respecting the vital features and truths of the Christian religion. These opinions cannot be formulated and deposited in any verbal statement in such a way as to have a meaning and validity independent of the active judgment of the living Christian. Statements, creeds, the New Testament itself, mean nothing to him except as he individually, by the exercise of his own Christian powers of apprehension, attaches a meaning to them. Every one, therefore, is, to a greater or less extent, an interpreter of the Scriptures. And in this interpretation two things in particular must be taken into account.

(a) Christians in their interpretation of the Scriptures must distinguish between what is fundamental and universal, on the one hand, and what is incidental or temporary, on the other. They may differ from one another on the question, what is essential and what is incidental; but every one makes distinctions, and attaches greater importance to some portions of Holy Writ than to others. And since no explicit rule can be found in the Bible itself, each one must follow the leadings of his own judgment. In many cases, or even the most, this judgment may be little more than a trustful acceptance of the distinction which others have already made; but still the distinction is one which has been made, and must be made, by Christians, and that, too, with no infallible inspiration to guide

them. In a general way there is substantial agreement as to what the most vital features of the gospel are. It is agreed that the main purpose of the Christian revelation was a spiritual one: Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. All the particular features of the evangelical history and teachings are to be viewed in relation to this grand central feature of Christ's mission,—the regeneration and purification of man's moral nature.

But the gospel, while it aims to save all, and is therefore essentially the same to all, must adapt itself to each man, and so, in a sense, be a special gospel to every individual. It must be adapted to different nations and different ages. Consequently it cannot be rigidly and minutely defined and bounded by any one man or group of men, in such a way as to overlook the peculiarities of others. A certain degree of indefiniteness and flexibility must, therefore, be assumed as characterizing it. What Paul said of himself, as the preacher of the gospel, may be said of the gospel itself: it becomes all things to all men, that by all means it may save some. Consequently only that which is of universal application can in the strictest sense be regarded as essential in the gospel. Principles, precepts, promises, and offers of a general sort are to be sought for as the underlying substance of the scheme of redemption, while the particular application and development of them depends more or less upon the necessities, temperament, and circumstances of the individual.

Here, then, the Christian common sense must be acknowledged to have a legitimate function: it must judge how far the Biblical word is to be pressed in its literalness. It must judge, for example, whether literal compliance with the command to give to every one that asks (Matt. v. 42) would best fulfil the real spirit of the command. It must judge whether the injunction to anoint one's self before fasting is not to be interpreted in the light of the customs of the time in which Jesus lived. It must judge whether Paul's advice respecting marriage and the demeanor of women is to be regarded as determined in its form somewhat by the sentiments of the age and the local circumstances of those particularly addressed, and therefore not necessarily applicable in all its strictness to the churches of the present day. This judgment may err either on the side of exces-

sive literalness, or on the side of excessive freedom; but when the question presents itself to him, the Christian *must* form a judgment. In any case, however, even though one judge that a Biblical precept or statement received a shaping and shading from the local and temporary circumstances which called it forth, yet that judgment does not involve a charge of *error*, unless it goes so far as to say that the local and temporary circumstances themselves called for something different.

(b) The second task which the interpretation of the Bible imposes on the Christian is that of harmonizing the representations of the different parts and authors. Christianity is a unit,—a self-consistent thing. It must be such at least to every sincere Christian. Yet apparent differences or contradictions in the statement of Christian principles, or in the living illustration of the Christian spirit, will be found in the original records of Christian life and thinking. Particularly this function of reconciliation relates to the harmonizing of the utterances of the different writers of the New Testament.

The original recipients and transmitters of the Christian revelation were men, having each his own peculiarities of mind and character. Consequently each one's conception and representation of the divine revelation must have borne the mark of his own individuality; and therefore the different men could not but present different phases of the common treasure of revealed truth. Over against the older method of interpretation which by use of the "analogy of faith" tended to obscure or ignore the differences of the several authors of the sacred books, the science of Biblical theology aims to recognize, and perhaps tends to exaggerate, these differences. Now, just where differences pass over into discrepancies, and discrepancies into contradictions, it is difficult to determine; but the abandonment of the older theory of verbal and mechanical inspiration requires us to assume that each Biblical writer was in a proper sense an author, writing out of his own religious apprehensions and experience, and that accordingly, not only with regard to incidental matters, but with regard to the truths and facts of revelation, the personal peculiarities of the writers more or less affected their conceptions and representations.

What attitude now does Christian thought take with reference to this feature of the Scriptures? Here, as in the case of discrepancies of a more external character, it is obvious at all events that the distinctively *Christian* mind does not predispose one to look for and find contradictions and errors in the religious and moral teachings of the Bible. The Christian, while he will not, if truth-loving, shut his eyes to plain facts, is not naturally inclined to emphasize these differences, but to reconcile them. It was a normal impulse which led the older theologians to construct doctrinal systems whose aim was to harmonize and combine all parts and statements of the Biblical books, whatever may be thought of their assumption that those books are all absolutely and equally faultless. It is a legitimate desire of the Christian to obtain a comprehensive view of the plan of redemption, and to make all the parts of the scheme, and all the utterances of the human organs of revelation, work harmoniously together. But it should not be forgotten that this effort to harmonize and systematize is itself a movement and an impulse of the Christian spirit. There would be no motive for it and no interest in it, unless there were antecedently a Christian life, sentiment, type of feeling and thinking, which has continuously flowed forth from the original fountain of the Christian revelation, and which finds in the Scriptures the most original and authentic statement of that on which Christian belief and life are founded.

With reference, then, to both the above-mentioned points the Christian must, from the nature of the case, exercise a judgment. If there are apparent inconsistencies needing to be harmonized, it is the Christian mind that must do the work. And in order to do it one must adopt some guiding principle of interpretation. If two Biblical writers seem to be at variance with one another, the expositor who desires to bring them into harmony must somehow fix upon a standard of truth according to which the two are to be judged. The more strict his theory of inspiration may be, the more urgently is he impelled to search for some canon of judgment that shall regulate the process of reconciliation. And in deciding on this canon he is left to himself or to the judgment of those Christians in whom, for whatever reasons, he has the most confidence.

The necessity which is put upon Christians of exercising a judgment relative to these matters is most strikingly evinced in the very fact that even as regards questions of the highest doctrinal and practical consequence various views are entertained. Respecting the attributes of God, the nature of Christ, the relative importance of divine and human agency in salvation, the nature of justifying faith, the relation of this life to the next; respecting the true idea of the earthly church, its authority, polity, and sacraments; respecting moral duties, such as forgiveness, veracity, self-defense, oaths, charitable aid to the poor;—respecting these things conscientious Christians come to different results, all professing too to be following the same Scriptures. The variant views may all be fairly defended from the Scriptures. Thus, the divine sovereignty is certainly taught there; but so is human responsibility. How they are related; which shall be regarded as outranking the other in religious importance; or whether both are to be somehow reconciled through some third principle,—these are questions on which the Christian world has come to no agreement. Where the Old Testament seems in general to differ from the New, as, for example, respecting the *lex talionis*, the Christian interpreter must regard the New Testament as being the superior authority. But when the New Testament seems to countenance opposing views, the interpreter must either show that there is no real, though there may be a formal, difference; or else he must regard one passage as furnishing the canon by which the other is to be interpreted.

In general, it is clear that the different phases of Christian truth do not receive in different parts of the New Testament the same relative prominence; or they are even made to come into apparent disagreement. There is no doubt that James emphasizes the duty of a strict morality, and seems to depreciate the faith which Paul emphasizes as the central thing. Unquestionably John lays stress on the divinity of Jesus Christ, while Matthew lays stress on his descent from David and his Messianic calling. Or the same writer may seem to contradict himself, as, for example, when John at one time (1 John i. 8) says that Christians deceive themselves if they

say they have no sin, whereas at another (iii. 9) he affirms positively that those who are born again do not and even cannot sin. But is there a real contradiction or only an apparent one? Must we adopt the maxim that the Bible is absolutely free from error and self-contradiction? Or shall we admit that it is more or less imperfect in some of its subordinate features? These are questions which must be answered by the Christian in the exercise of his own sanctified common sense. They are not answered for him by any authority palpably supreme and beyond appeal. With reference to them we may observe:

6. The general theory that the Bible is absolutely perfect and infallible does not solve the particular questions respecting which differences of opinion exist. From the general proposition, that the Bible is infallible, one may infer that all apparent contradictions and errors may somehow be explained away. *Somehow*, but how? Where is the rule of interpretation to be found? Little or no help is obtained by saying, with the authors of the Westminster Confession, that "the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself."¹ If the Bible, like a living Pope, could issue an authoritative and unmistakable utterance, whenever its meaning is dark or disputed, and thus remove all doubts and differences, there would indeed be an end of all controversy. But so long as this is not the case, the statement that the Bible infallibly interprets itself must be regarded as more rhetorical than serviceable. Doubtless in an important sense the Bible is self-interpreting; one part helps us to understand another,—as may be said of any other book. But when it is said that the Bible furnishes an *infallible* rule of interpretation, we cannot but ask how a rule can be infallible which, in point of fact, when applied by different Christian interpreters, yields discordant results. The infallibility of the rule is of no use unless it can be infallibly applied; and how this is to be done we can never know, until we find *another* infallible rule by which we can infallibly determine how this first infallible rule is to be infallibly used by fallible Christians.

Practically, then, there would seem to be little difference

¹ Chap. i. art. ix.

between those who hold the strict theory of the absolute infallibility of every part of the Bible, but cannot agree in their understanding of it, and those who admit the possibility or even reality of incidental errors, and yet hold that the Scriptures give us an essentially truthful account of what God has revealed concerning his character, will, and redeeming work. Both bring to the study of the Scriptures certain preconceptions derived from religious and philosophical training, and both may come to the same general result as to the essential truths of revealed religion. But those who hold the stricter theory of Biblical infallibility are led by their preconceptions — their “Christian consciousness” — to put a strain upon those parts of Scripture which seem not to harmonize with their system; while the others are led by their preconceptions to look upon such parts as of subordinate importance, and as being affected by the imperfection to which all human productions are liable. The stricter school may accuse the others of unsettling the foundations of faith, if they admit the possibility of any error in Holy Writ; while the latter may urge that the foundations of faith are in danger of being unsettled, if the faith is made to rest on a theory of Biblical infallibility of which there is no cogent proof, and which can be maintained only by violent distortions of the obvious meaning of Scriptural language.

Still it may be contended that, if the strict theory of the infallibility of the Bible is relaxed, a flood-gate is opened for the introduction of the wildest vagaries and conceits in judging of Biblical history and teaching. If *any* part of it can be adjudged faulty, what is to hinder *every* part from being in turn denounced as unworthy of confidence? The answer is that we are now dealing with *Christian* judgments of the Bible; and no real Christian can do otherwise than find the Bible in its general drift a truthful account of a divine revelation. No doubt, it may seem extremely desirable to be able to hold that there is absolutely no error in the Scriptures, even though we may not be able to agree as to what is error and what is truth. But at all events the theory of Biblical infallibility cannot accomplish any useful purpose, unless it is itself well established. With reference to this point we may at least remark that —

7. Every theory of the infallibility of the Scriptures must be rejected which is contradicted by the Scriptures themselves. We may go further, and maintain that no theory of Biblical infallibility is susceptible of proof. The Bible does not affirm its own infallibility. Even if we press to the utmost such language as Ps. xix. 7, "The law of the Lord is perfect," we cannot make it cover the whole Bible, to say nothing of the somewhat lax manner in which this epithet is used, as, for example, where Noah (Gen. vi. 9), Jacob (Gen. xxv. 27, *vile* Marg. of R. V.), and Job (Job i. 1) are called "perfect." The assertion that the Old Testament is inspired of God (2 Tim. iii. 16) also falls short of an affirmation of absolute infallibility.

But more than this: the Bible not only does not affirm its own perfectness, it affirms its own imperfectness. Especially is the Old Testament declared to be defective. It is little less than self-evident that, if the Old Testament revelation had been ideally perfect, there would have been no need of another. It lies on the surface of the New Testament that the Mosaic dispensation was in some sense insufficient, temporary, and defective. The New Testament abounds in utterances which imply or assert this. The whole matter is succinctly stated in Heb. viii. 7, "If that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second." In view of so explicit a statement as this it is almost incredible that Christians should ever have undertaken to treat the Old Testament as of equal authority with the New. And yet the motive is obvious. If the Old Testament contains a divine revelation, it seems like an impeachment of the divine power, wisdom, or veracity, to say that the revelation, or the record of it, is *faulty*. But here in one of the books of the New Covenant itself we find this flatly affirmed. And what is here thus declared in general terms is implied everywhere else. Jesus' answer to the question respecting divorce (Matt. xix. 8), in which he affirms that Moses permitted easy divorce as a concession to the hardness of the Jews' hearts, gives us a specific example of the general fact. And this shows, moreover, that the faultiness is something positive, — that the Mosaic law was in some particulars not merely defective in the sense of

being germinal or prophetic, but defective in the sense of requiring amendment or abolition.

There are numerous questions which spring up in this connection, — questions especially concerning the character of the morality of the Old Testament, the accuracy of its prophecies, the truthfulness and symmetry of its theology, to say nothing of the correctness of its representations of historical and scientific matters. If we compare, for example, Ps. lxxix. 21–28 with the account of Christ's crucifixion, we find that the Psalmist, after charging his enemies with giving him vinegar to drink, supplicates God to pour out his indignation on them; while Jesus, whose similar experience is regarded as typified by this (John xix. 28), begs God to forgive his enemies. If we compare this with Christ's own comment on the *lex talionis* (Matt. v. 38–46), it is impossible to pronounce the spirit of the psalmist to be a model for ourselves. If, however, on Christ's own warrant we may charge faultiness on one feature of the Old Testament, what shall hinder us from extending the charge over other features? But in this case, in what sense can we retain faith in the Old Testament economy as a genuine revelation of God? Be the answer what it may, it should not be made without recognizing the undeniable fact that, while the New Testament in general, and Christ in particular, explicitly assert the faultiness of the Old Testament, they also with equal or greater clearness assert that the Mosaic economy was a genuine revelation from God. The two affirmations must stand together.

Our Saviour tells us that the imperfectness of the Mosaic law was on account of the necessity of *accommodating* it to the condition and needs of the Jewish people. What he says respecting divorce must doubtless be said respecting many other things. No one would now seriously propose to enact all the civil laws of Moses identically as they stand in the Pentateuch, still less, to insist on the enforcement of the ceremonial law. In the Sermon on the Mount, though Christ begins by declaring that he does not come to destroy the law, he yet gives to it a higher and more spiritual sense than his hearers could ever have had, and such as would not naturally have suggested itself to those who lived under the law. It is manifest that the accommoda-

tion spoken of by our Lord consisted largely in leaving existing customs essentially unchanged, even when perfection of character and social condition required a change. The laws concerning slavery and polygamy were given for those to whom these institutions were familiar. The laws aimed to mitigate the evils of the institutions, but did not undertake at once to abolish them. There was an apparent sanction of practices which were gradually given up by the Jews who lived under these laws, and which are inconsistent with the spirit of many of the other precepts of the same code. Indeed the Mosaic law contains the highest rules of conduct and character. The commands to love God with all the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves, which Jesus pronounced to be the greatest of all the commandments, are quoted from the Pentateuch (Deut. vi. 5 ; Lev. xix. 18) ; and we find there, besides, the precept, "Be ye holy, for I am holy" (Lev. xi. 44, xix. 2), — which seems to lift us up to the very summit of spiritual life. Is there not, then, an inconsistency between such precepts and those laws which sanction or tolerate practices which we must regard as marking a low moral, social, and political state? And can that be a divinely given or divinely sanctioned system which contains such an inconsistency?

The feeling which underlies such questions is that whatever comes from God must be absolutely perfect and faultless, — in other words, that an accommodation of the divine law to human weakness is impossible, being inconsistent with the holiness and immutability of God himself. But the same authority which warrants us in believing in the divinity of the Old Testament revelation warrants us also in asserting that there was this accommodation. And there need be no difficulty in admitting this principle as a feature of a supernatural revelation. To say that God adapts his communications and legislation to the capacities and circumstances of his creatures is not to impeach either his wisdom or his holiness. It is a universal principle that parents and teachers, in training the young, must, in order to be successful, adapt their method of administering instruction and commands to the capacities and peculiarities of the pupils. Many things may be winked at in one child which need to be rebuked in another. Slow and patient use of symbols and

illustrations are required for some, while others spring readily to the apprehension of abstract truth. In order to make a correct impression on the whole, a representation must often be made which, judged by a strict scientific standard, would be incorrect. Correctness of impression is more important than mere correctness of statement. It is universally conceded that in our conceptions of the Divine Being and character certain anthropomorphisms must enter in, even though we may be morally certain that, in a higher state of existence and with different faculties of apprehension, we should form different conceptions. In so far as this inaccuracy of conception is made necessary by the limitation of man's intellectual and moral nature, it must be taken into account also by God himself, if he would make a revelation of himself. The principle of accommodation or concession, in a revelation which is to be adapted to the actual condition and necessities of men, seems, then, to be indispensable.¹

Notwithstanding these concessions, however, there is to be recognized a very substantial truth in the common affirmation that the Bible is a perfect and infallible rule of faith and practice. The truth may be stated in the following form :

8. The Bible is perfectly adapted to accomplish the end for which it was made, when used by one who is in sympathy with that end. The sweeping statement that the Bible is perfect requires in any case that one should understand in what sense the term "perfect" is used. If we can say that the Bible is as nearly perfect as under the circumstances it was possible for it to be, this ought to satisfy any reasonable demand. Since a revelation had to be given to imperfect men, possessing imperfect powers of apprehension; since it could be communicated only through human media, and had to be adapted at first to those more immediately addressed, — it was necessarily deficient in that sort of perfectness which it might have had if these conditions had been different. If the media had been infallible, if men's powers of spiritual apprehension had been perfect, no doubt the revelation might have been more absolutely faultless.

¹ Cf. J. L. Mozley, *Ruling Ideas in Early Ages*; Newman Smyth, *Morality of the Old Testament*; G. F. Wright, *Divine Authority of the Bible*, pp. 162 sq.

But in that case it would not have been needed. It was because men *were* imperfect and sinful that a special manifestation of divine grace was necessary.

But what is meant in any case by saying that a book is perfect? Even when a book treats of one of the exact sciences, as of some branch of mathematics, the epithet "perfect" can be applied only in a loose sense. The book may be confidently pronounced free from all false statements, and yet not be perfect in the sense that it treats the subject in the absolutely best way. It may omit some things which it would be well to insert, or it may contain some things which had better have been omitted. If the subject of the book is not one of the exact sciences, it is still more difficult to determine when it can be called perfect. No one supposes that a strictly perfect treatise on physiology, or chemistry, or geology, or even astronomy, has ever yet been produced. And still more impracticable is it to attain a perfect treatment of psychology or ethics. But the Bible is a book which is at almost the furthest remove from a treatise on an exact science. Neither the subjects treated of nor the method of treatment permits the application of any simple objective standard of perfection. It is a heterogeneous work. It treats no subject in a scientific manner. It deals with themes which transcend human comprehension. It addresses the sensibilities and the conscience, rather than the intellect; and the appeal is for the most part indirect rather than direct. In it examples take the place of precept, and history the place of analysis. It embodies the sentiments and conceptions of very different men. It exhibits an advancing development of divine truth, a gradual execution of divine purposes, rather than a consummated system. It gives God's thoughts as reflected in the mirror of his human agents.

A book may be perfect in a negative or in a positive sense. To be perfect in the negative sense of being free from erroneous statements would be of itself a very meagre excellence. Such freedom might belong to a book comparatively inane and worthless. Inasmuch as the purpose of a divine revelation is the production of spiritual renovation in men, that record of the revelation might be properly called perfect which is best

fitted to accomplish this purpose. This is perfection in the positive sense. It may indeed be contended that a Bible might have been produced which would do a better work than the one we have. It may, for example, be thought that, if some of the genealogical matter were left out, and some of Paul's lost epistles were put in, the Bible would assuredly be a better book, and better fitted to do its work. But all such speculations prove nothing more than the individual opinions of the promulgators of them. The only certain thing about the matter is that in a vast number of instances the Bible has accomplished its purpose: it has made men "wise unto salvation."

But, it may be objected, in many other instances this purpose has not been accomplished; multitudes have heard or read the Word of God and been made no better, or have even been offended and injured by it. But the obvious answer is that, as the Bible cannot act mechanically, and the effect it produces must depend on the spiritual attitude of the reader, it can perfectly accomplish its purpose only in so far as its message is addressed to a receptive spirit. He who feels his need of divine mercy and guidance finds in the recorded revelation that which perfectly answers to his needs. He who comes to the Scriptures without such a sense of need is not made wise unto salvation by them; and he would not be, however perfect might be the form of the message. Such a one would find fault with the most faultless book.

In short, every doctrine concerning the authority or infallibility of the Scriptures must take into account the persons to whom they are addressed and the end which they aim at. To call the Bible perfect, irrespective of its relation to those who use it, is like calling an article of food perfect, apart from its fitness to support physical vigor. The same food which is good for one man may be bad for another. In general, certain articles of food have been found to be wholesome and useful. Those which in the greatest number of cases seem to be best adapted to nourish the human system may in a loose sense be called perfect. But for many persons food which for the most would be called inferior may be better than that which is generally called the best.

In like manner the Bible is to be judged according to its fitness to do its work. Not every part of it is equally adapted to every individual, or to the same individual at different stages of his spiritual life. What to some may seem the most useless or questionable parts of the book often prove to be effective in leading others into the way of life.¹ And no one will be led by it into the truth who comes to it in the wrong way. If one is hardened to religious influences, or is filled with captiousness and self-sufficiency, the Bible cannot do its proper work on him. Only one who is seeking life and salvation will find it to be a perfect guide. Only such a one finds and appropriates the deeper religious lessons and stimulus which the book furnishes. The more he is illumined by the Spirit of God, the more does he find of this fulness of spiritual instruction. He finds it even in that which to the light-minded and the scoffing furnishes occasion for offense or for ridicule. He finds even in that which shows traces of the human weakness of the sacred writer a religious help, so that the imperfect and the fallible may itself become, in its connection with the general burden of the divine message, an infallible guide, — a guide which does not mislead, but helps one onward towards that perfection which it is the object of revelation to produce. In short, the Bible is perfect and infallible, for the purpose which revelation aims to accomplish, to every one who in using it is led by the Holy Spirit. It cannot be infallible to those of a different spirit; for in their case it fails of its chief end. An abstract, absolute, ideal infallibility, that is to be defined irrespective of the practical end to be attained by the infallibility, would be worthless in itself, and would moreover after all forever be indefinable.

One who on a clear summer day looks from the Swiss village of Beatenberg upon the view there spread before him, — the malachite green waters of Lake Thun two thousand feet sheer below him; the steep undulating slopes between, clothed with grass and groves; the ranges of mountains beyond, overlap-

¹ *E. g.*, Joseph Rabinowitz of Kischenev, Russia, who was converted from Judaism to Christianity by reading the New Testament, and has since labored amongst the Jews in that place with great success, was greatly influenced at the outset by the genealogical tables in Matthew and Luke.

ping one another, till at the furthest and highest point the landscape is terminated by the snow-clad monarchs of the Bernese Alps, — he who beholds this scene, with its manifold and continually varying shades of richest color, may well exclaim, "This is a perfect view." But a captious critic might object that many a tree is defective or abnormal in shape; that many a chalet is rude or dilapidated; that the pure green of the lake is sometimes marred by the turbid waters of the inflowing streams; that here and there a different contour of the mountain outline would be more according to artistic ideas of beauty; or that a more unbroken snow covering on the lofty summits would enhance the charm of the scene. But he who looks at the scene with an eye sensitive to the power of true beauty and grandeur will be unmoved by such petty carpings. Taking in the grand whole, with its fascinating combinations of light and shade, of height and depth, of form and color, he will still say of it, "This is a perfect view."

And so he who looks at the Bible, with its manifold pictures from the history of divine revelations, with its matchless portraits of character, with its disclosures of the depths of human depravity and human necessities, with its fervid effusions of religious feeling, with its pungent appeals to the conscience, and above all with its disclosures of the holiness and majesty of God and the riches of his redeeming love, — he who looks at the book with feelings alive to the realities and necessities and possibilities of man's spiritual nature, will say of it, "This is a perfect book." It presents a manifoldness of elements which in their combination blend together into one grand, impressive picture, stimulating, elevating, purifying. If a sharp-eyed critic complains of defects and mistakes, and points out wherein the several parts might be improved, he who reads it with a sense of religious need will doubt the power of mere human acumen to reconstruct it for the better, and will say of it that it is a book unique in its power to meet one's deepest wants; that it alone, among all the books of the world, perfectly fulfils the end of communicating and preserving God's revealed truth, and of impressing it upon men.

But the objection may be here raised, that by this mode of

conceiving the matter the real regulative guide is made to be not the Word of God, but the human spirit. As the thoughtful man can find "sermons in stones, books in the running brooks, and good in everything," so the religious man may find suggestions and lessons in those parts of the Bible which are intrinsically of no special worth. In such a case is it not, after all, the Christian mind which put the significance into those things that in themselves and to the more unreflective have no higher significance at all? Are we not lending countenance to the old objection, that the Bible can be made to teach whatever one chooses to make it teach? Is not the "Christian consciousness" thus, after all, made the supreme source of religious opinion?

The objection is easily removed. The fundamental and essential elements of Christian truth are of divine communication. Christianity, as we have before observed, is not a product of the natural consciousness, intuition, or reflection of man; it is a revelation. And if Christianity itself is thus essentially a divine, and not a human, product, the record of it cannot be a thing having no intrinsic significance, and be capable of meaning whatever any one may choose to make it mean. On the contrary, Christian experience and Christian thought being an outflow from the revelation whose most original and authentic expression is in the Scriptures, it would be absurd to say that the Christian mind can legitimately make those Scriptures mean anything and everything. They not only have a meaning of their own, but they are normative and regulative for Christian experience and thought itself. It is the business of the Christian to find out what they do mean, not to say what they shall mean. They are the perennial source from which Christendom must draw its knowledge and conception of what the Christian revelation conveyed and involved.¹

When, then, the endless variety of opinions and forms of doctrine which men profess to derive from the same Bible is adduced as proof that its meaning does not control, but is controlled by, its readers, it is to be replied that this objection is pertinent only as directed against allegorical and purely fanciful interpretations of Scripture. And even these are governed to a

¹ Cf. Dorner, *Christian Ethics*, p. 45.

large extent by the distinctively Christian conceptions which are common to all Christians. Nothing, however, is really legitimate in the interpretation of the Bible but an honest effort to find out what the written word was intended to mean. That different men should come to different results, is not strange. That certain features of the Biblical books should sometimes be made unduly prominent, and certain other more important ones should be overlooked, or that different Christians should differ from one another as to what the relative importance and right proportions of Scriptural truth really are, — this, too, can be easily understood. That through the influence of early education and biasing predilections the obvious meaning of certain Scriptures should be distorted, is also natural and intelligible. It is clear, too, that there is no rule of interpretation which can lay claim to be the only correct and authoritative one. In their methods and in their results Christians do, and doubtless long will, disagree more or less with one another. If these differences, as we may hope, shall gradually disappear; if there shall be developed out of the present divergence a universal accord in religious doctrine, — this will not be a general agreement arrived at irrespective of the intrinsic meaning of the Scriptures, but rather it will come as the result of a more accurate understanding of what that intrinsic meaning is. Any other view would require us to assume that Christian thought and feeling can arrive at religious truth independently of the Christian revelation. If the *Christian* mind can develop truth which contradicts or supplants that which is contained in the records of divine revelation, then the conclusion must be that Christian thinking is a more authoritative revealer of truth than Christ. But this, of course, is equivalent to the denial of the Christian revelation itself. If there has not been introduced into the world, once for all, an authoritative and ample fountain of religious instruction and religious life, then the alternative conclusion is that all religion is a phenomenon of evolution; that the so-called inspiration of to-day, though possibly superior to that of yesterday, is destined to be supplanted by that of to-morrow; that all theology is a mere matter of changing opinion, and all religion a shifting mood of feeling, regulated by no standard of truth or of right.

The conclusion of the matter, then, must be that man's religious sense has indeed a part to play, but that it is not the part of originating a sure knowledge of God, still less, the part of originating the truths of Christianity. Its part, so far as revelation or the record of revelation is concerned, is to apprehend it. This apprehension, as time passes, and Christian experience is enlarged, may grow clearer; there may be a development and progress in the right understanding of the deeper meaning of the Scriptures; but there cannot be a development which will supersede the Scriptures or essentially add to them. What that deeper meaning is which lies below the surface, and is gained only through experience and devout meditation, must of course be left indeterminate. Certain fanciful and arbitrary modes of exegesis may indeed be, and for the most part are already, discarded. But there is a possibility, in abandoning capricious interpretations, of pushing a literal interpretation to the extreme. A certain degree of spiritualizing is legitimate; the Scriptures themselves set us the example, and suggest the general principles which are to be observed in making use of it. The reverent and judicious use of the Bible, which only seeks in a legitimate way to find the spiritual lessons and suggestions that do not disclose themselves to an irreverent or unbelieving reader, is not to be condemned, but rather to be commended. It is self-evident that the spiritualizing interpretation must be one which is fitted to meet a response in the general community of believers. Individual conceits, quixotic manipulations of numbers and letters which aim to bring out some hidden meaning or unsuspected revelation,—all this, and everything akin to this, is to be rejected. But he who holds that the Scriptures embody the revealed will and truth of God, and are therefore able to make men wise unto salvation, will more and more learn that every Scripture is “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction which is in righteousness,” so that he who devoutly studies them will be “complete, furnished completely unto every good work.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONDITIONS AND LIMITS OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM.

IF we understand by the term "criticism" the careful and discriminating examination of the facts concerning the origin and characteristics of a book, according to the best attainable evidence, it is manifest that criticism is not only legitimate but desirable with reference to the Bible no less than any other book. Learning how a thing came to be is an important part of learning what it is. It would be the mark of a narrow and foolish spirit to be afraid of the most searching investigation which scholarship can institute into the age, the authorship, the authenticity, and the import of the several books of the Bible. Whatever can thus be discovered ought to be welcomed by all.

But not every critical study, however conducted, can be depended on to arrive at sure and trustworthy results. There are limitations and difficulties in the nature of the subject, there are imperfections and prepossessions in the critic, which may lead astray or leave the result indecisive.

Without attempting an exhaustive discussion of the conditions and limits of a sound Biblical criticism, we may lay down a few general propositions.

1. Freedom from prepossessions is, as a qualification for critical research, neither attainable nor desirable. It is easy and plausible to say that one who is seeking to ascertain the truth concerning any matter should care only for the truth, and should allow no antecedent convictions to bias him in his investigations. It is self-evident that a man who is searching for the truth should honestly desire to find it; but it is not evident that a man can in his search divest himself of opinions already formed. If, whenever one undertakes a new study, he should begin by regarding everything as uncertain, it is clear that nothing new would ever be learned. Research would result only in

an increase of uncertainty. The superstructure of a house cannot be built unless there is first a foundation. Whatever sure conclusions and convictions a person has arrived at on any point constitute a body of prepossessions which he must and should carry with him in his further research. Provided the earlier convictions are well grounded, he would be a fool, if at every new step in his progress he should allow himself to unsettle those convictions, and attempt to build up again from the very foundations. It is true, the earlier convictions may be erroneous, and therefore the later studies may receive an injurious bias. Of course the abstract possibility of error must always be conceded. To err is human. But if one should undertake to act on the principle of distrusting conclusions already reached, one's whole time and energy would have to be spent in retracing all the steps previously taken; and so no real advance could ever be made. The investigations and conclusions of one generation would be of no use to the next. No system of truth could ever be accumulated and made the foundation of further research or of assured faith. All traditional knowledge would have to be denounced as worthless. No one could be an authority in any sense to another. No science of any sort could ever be regarded as established; each one would have to be set up afresh by each individual; and the diversity of opinions which would inevitably result would be a reason for doubting the correctness of them all. Universal skepticism would be the certain and logical result. There could be not only no advance in knowledge, but no real knowledge at all.

It may indeed be held that sure knowledge is not only unattainable, but not even desirable. This is what is meant — if indeed anything intelligible is meant — by Lessing's famous saying about the search for truth being preferable to the possession of it.¹ The maxim, doubtless, owes its longevity to its

¹ "Not by the possession, but by the search, of truth is breadth given to the faculties in which alone man's growing perfection consists. Possession makes one quiet, indolent, proud. If God should hold all truth in his right hand, and in his left hand the single, ever-active impulse to get truth, even though with the condition that I should forever and eternally fail of it, and should say to me, 'Choose!' I would humbly turn to his left hand and say,

very extravagance; it sounds brilliant, though in itself it is little else than a bald absurdity. If it really were better to pursue than to find, if the ideal state were that of chasing and never catching, and if it were possible to realize that ideal, then the result would have to be that the object of the pursuit must be forever unknown; truth being never attained, one could not even say that he is pursuing truth; he would not know what he is pursuing; the only thing he could be sure of would be that he could never be sure of anything but the pursuit. And even that, if one is really *sure* of it, would be a *truth*, and therefore to be got rid of as soon as possible. In this case, however, it becomes a mystery wherein the joy and zest of the pursuit can consist. If ignorance is the certain goal, one does not need to hunt and chase in order to reach it; the starting-point and the goal are one and the same thing. But, it is said, the good of the search is in the search itself; it is in the mental exercise given by the search. "It is not knowledge," says Hamilton, "it is not truth, that" the votary of science "principally seeks; he seeks the exercise of his faculties and feelings."¹ This is simply not true. What the votary of science seeks, if he deserves the name, is knowledge. The mental gymnastic which comes through the search is doubtless a good; but it comes as an incidental advantage; it is not the thing directly and principally aimed at. And moreover an intellectual exertion whose sole and certain end were simply error and ignorance would itself be a more than doubtful good. A cat vainly chasing her own tail gets, perhaps, a useful exercise by the process; but she is wise enough to give up the pursuit when she finds that the tail cannot be caught. A true type of Lessing's ideal truth-hunter would be a cat eternally pursuing her tail, though growing more and more doubtful whether the tail is after all anything but an illusive phantom.

But there are few who would deliberately go to this extreme.

'Father, give me this. The pure truth is for thee alone'' (*Eine Duplik*, § 1). Sir William Hamilton (*Metaphysics*, p. 13) quotes this (apparently from memory) and other similar sayings with approval. A poor compliment to his own philosophy!

¹ *Metaphysics*, p. 10.

It is generally assumed that truth is attainable, and that the attainment of it is intrinsically desirable. But all hope of an increase of knowledge depends upon the assumption that some knowledge has been already attained. And this previous knowledge, or supposed knowledge, constitutes a prepossession. It may indeed be an error, and lead astray, but it cannot be ignored. Different prepossessions may, therefore, lead in different directions. An atheist, to whom a supernatural revelation is simply impossible, must regard the Bible not only as not divinely infallible, but, on the contrary, as full of falsehood. He will not deem it worth the while to investigate particularly the merits of the several parts; for his prepossession necessarily makes him condemn the whole fabric as a structure of fiction and foolish fancy. His general opinion as to the origin and value of the book must be totally different from that of him who comes to the study of it with an opposite prepossession. Between the outright atheist and the man who has been trained to believe that every word of Scripture is in the strictest sense a direct utterance of a personal God there are many grades of opinion; but every opinion rests on a prepossession of some sort. It may be only a prepossession in favor of the trustworthiness of one's parents; it may be, on the contrary, an antipathy to those by whom one is instructed, leading to a disinclination to accept their opinions. It may be a prepossession derived from the books which have come in one's way, or from the friends that one has chanced to find. But prepossessions of some kind there are and must be in every case.

There is nothing more shallow than the doctrine so often paraded before the public, that every one should be left to choose and formulate his own religious opinions, undetermined by parents or by any other outward influence. Even if it were possible for parents to avoid exerting an influence on the development of their children's minds, an influence would inevitably come from some other source. The infant mind reaches out for guidance and instruction as naturally as a plant seeks the sun. But even if this instinct could be suppressed, and each budding mind could be perfectly guarded against being influenced by other minds, how preposterous it would be to

attach any importance to the conclusions to which such a mind might come, deprived of the light which the experience and reflection of previous generations might have given.¹ Even if under such circumstances the mind could be developed rationally at all (which is more than doubtful), the most that could result would be a multitude of notions which could at the best claim to be nothing better than individual conceits. One could not speak of these conceits as *truthful*; for this epithet implies some commonly accepted standard according to which an opinion is judged. Moreover, unless by this independent method of arriving at opinions all should somehow come to exactly the same (which nobody would expect), then certainly not all of them could be correct; and if the opinions should ever come to be compared, the comparison would disclose disagreement, the disagreement would lead to discussion, and the discussion would result in influencing some minds to modify or reverse their previous opinions. And so we should have at the last what is deprecated at the first, — opinions formed through outward influence. The independently formed opinions which are given up as the result of discussion with other persons would then have to be called prepossessions, so that if all prepossessions are to be abolished, we should have to abolish this same independent method of forming opinions. So suicidal and absurd is the doctrine that religious notions, or any other notions, ought to be formed without biasing influences.

There is no more arrant quackery in the world than that which is seen in the boasted "freedom," or "free-thinking," of those who have broken away from the traditional views of parents and early associates. Whether their change is for the

¹ "It is neither the wise nor the good by whom the patrimony of opinion is most lightly regarded. Such is the condition of our existence that, beyond the precincts of abstract science, we must take much for granted, if we would make any advance in knowledge, or live to any useful end. Our hereditary prepossessions must not only precede our acquired judgments, but must conduct us to them. To begin by questioning everything is to end by answering nothing; and a premature revolt from human authority is but an incipient rebellion against conscience, reason, and truth." — Sir James Stephen, *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography* (on Richard Baxter), 4th ed., pp. 337, 338.

better or for the worse, is a question by itself; but in no case has the change come about independently of outward influences. If it had so come about, if the new opinion were *absolutely* new, — not suggested to the mind by any other person or any book, — then that would itself be generally regarded as presumptive evidence against it. Or if it were able to vindicate itself, then that would mean that it becomes a force which modifies the opinions of others; the others, after that, would not have *independent* opinions; only this one could boast that merit. Universal and absolute independence, in short, in the formation of judgments is an impossibility and an absurdity.¹

It is only a particular application of this general principle, when we remark that —

2. One's critical judgment of the Christian Scriptures must be largely modified by one's antecedent judgment respecting Christ and Christianity. Christianity is at all events a great fact; and according as it is or is not regarded as a divine revelation, men will pronounce it a great boon or a great fraud. And the Christian Scriptures being the product and expression of Christianity, this prejudgment concerning the producer cannot but have a determining influence on one's judgment concerning the product.

But here the objection may be made: A pre-judgment is a pre-judice; and prejudice is an evil, to be avoided or overcome as far as possible. To this the Christian believer may reply: Christianity is not a new thing just beginning to urge its claims on the world. It is nearly two thousand years old. It has passed through storms of opposition. It has not run its course in a dark corner of the earth, but has been exposed to the brightest light. If, then, in spite of the natural human depravity which it everywhere meets and denounces, and in spite of the malicious and subtle opposition of learned foes, it has continued to assert and propagate itself; if it has even survived its own corruptions, and has relaxed no whit of its original claims concerning itself, — then it must be said to have conquered

¹ Cf. E. C. Bissell, *The Pentateuch*, pp. 45 sq. "Prepossessions are inevitable. We can no more get rid of them than of our skins. They are, indeed, an essential part of our mental and moral furnishing."

a right to be; and Christians have a right to treat it as having a presumption in its favor. It is simply impossible for them to regard the truth of the Christian religion as a matter of everlasting doubt.

Now this belief in Christianity as a divine revelation is something anterior to all critical study of the Christian Scriptures. The faith grew up before those Scriptures were written. It rests, primarily, upon the evidence found in the character, words, and works of Jesus Christ. It rests, secondarily, on the historical working of Christianity in the world. It has become one of the great forces and facts of the universe. The Christian Scriptures are only the record of the origin, early propagation, and effects of the new faith. They serve, it is true, to preserve and regulate that faith. They have characteristics which may be used as arguments for the validity of the claims of Christianity to be a genuine revelation. But, in general, their office is to state what Christianity is, and how it came to be; they do not constitute the original ground of the Christian faith.

Now it is simply impossible for a Christian not to be prejudiced in favor of these Scriptures. Belief in their importance and in their essential truthfulness as an exposition of the history and spirit of the Christian system is a part of his Christian faith itself. He cannot hold to the one, and despise the other. And equally it is impossible for an enemy of Christianity to look with favor and confidence on the primitive records of the Christian Church. If he regards the fundamental claim of the religion to be false; if he does not trust the pretensions of the Founder; if he sees no evidence of its divinity in the history of its effects on the world; if, rather, he is convinced that Christianity is a cheat and is a damage to the world, — why, then he must be predisposed to find evidence that the alleged records of primitive Christianity are tainted with delusion and fraud. He cannot hate the one, and love the other. The Christian and the infidel, starting with such opposite predilections, cannot but disagree in their critical judgments. The one will be disposed to find evidence for, the other evidence against, the genuineness and authenticity of

the New Testament books. And what one desires to find he will be likely to find.

But, it may now be said, all this only goes to show that both the friend and the enemy of Christianity are biased, and therefore likely to reach a wrong conclusion. Real candor, it may seem, can be found only in one who is in a state of absolute indifference, — only in one who has no impression whatever as to the truth or falsity of the claims of Christianity. But ignorance is not the chief desideratum in a critic. It would be difficult, in the first place, except in heathen lands, to find any one who has absolutely no opinion about Christianity. But, in the second place, when such a man is found and put upon his critical examination of the Biblical books, he must needs first of all make himself acquainted with the facts which bear upon the question to be solved. And foremost among these facts is the history of the Christian Church from the beginning on. No intelligent opinion of the character of the New Testament can be formed, till one has learned what it was that gave rise to it, — amid what circumstances and under what impulses it was produced. But by the time this stage of intelligence is reached, some impression will have been formed concerning the merits of Christianity. And so we shall have what we set out to avoid, namely, a *prejudice* in one direction or the other.

No doubt, on either side there may be often a lack of candor. Both the believer and the skeptic, under the influence of their prepossessions, may ignore facts or be perverse in their inferences from facts. On the contrary, there may be on both sides a painstaking effort to ascertain the truth, and no conscious desire to reason unfairly. But if the prepossessions, the presuppositions, are in the two cases different, the conclusions will most probably be different. If, for example, one man starts out with the assumption that no miracle is possible or credible, all his interpretation of the phenomena of the New Testament must be colored by this assumption. He feels bound to explain the reported miracles away. The supernaturalist, on the other hand, to whom the miracles are not offensive, but, on the contrary, probable and welcome, cannot but take an entirely different view of the written record. The

difference is a radical one, and the root of it is to be found in difference of view on questions lying at the very foundation of religion. There must on both sides be a bias.

Freedom from bias cannot be attained unless one can attain a state of perfect indifference respecting truth in general. It might seem as if the ideal impartiality would be that of him who is in a state of chronic doubt as to whether there is a God or not, whether sin is a reality or not, whether Jesus Christ ever lived or not, or if he did, whether he was an impostor or not. But such an impartiality would be called, in any other sphere, scientific or practical, the extreme of folly or of madness. It would make doubt and indecision a perpetual duty. It would paralyze all research. Under cover of a desire to get at the exact facts, it would make belief in the reality of any fact impossible; for such a belief would become a determining bias in all future investigation.

The Christian scholar need, therefore, not be disconcerted by the charge that he is biased, when he finds himself inclined in general to defend the genuineness and authenticity and authority of the Scriptures. If he is a Christian in real earnest, he cannot do otherwise.

3. Neither critical research nor Christian insight will ever effect a reconstruction or expurgation of the Canon of Sacred Scripture. Both these forces operated in the original fixing of the Canon. And the decision finally arrived at was not the result of accident; it was not brought about by any arbitrary decrees of Councils. The Councils only gave expression to what had come to be the conviction of the Christian Church in general. We know that the process was a slow, deliberate, and careful one, by which the Canon was formed. The times and the men are now gone that were best able to determine what books deserved to be reckoned in the Biblical Canon. Criticism, however subtle and learned, will never be able to prove the early Church to have been mistaken in its judgment respecting the authorship of any of the Biblical books. The presumption must continue to be in favor of the judgment of those who lived nearest to the time of the origin of the writings, and had the best opportunities of determining the facts concerning them.

But in so far as the fixing of the Canon was determined by

the discriminating tact of the religious sense, there is likewise a presumption in favor of the selection that was originally made. Those who stood nearest to the traditions of the vehicles of divine revelation could best detect what writings most perfectly reflected the spirit of the prophets and apostles.

But it may be asked whether it is not possible for the Christian Church after all to reverse the original decision. Is it not conceivable that, notwithstanding our greater remoteness in time, we may yet have in some respects clearer light or a more delicate spiritual sense, and so be able to form a wiser judgment as to what ought to have been admitted into the Canon? Theoretically, perhaps, such a possibility may be admitted. The original act of determining the limits of the Canon was not controlled by any special supernatural inspiration. The Church followed its own best judgment; we do not know what biasing influences may have co-operated in securing just the selection which has been handed down to us. The Church of the post-apostolic period cannot claim to have had any divine authority to determine for all time precisely what books must be treated as having peculiar divine sanction. Why might not the Church of any subsequent period have exercised, or still exercise, the right of revising that first decision? It certainly might, if it could make it clear that it had better means of settling the Canon than the early Church had. But just here is the difficulty which will never be removed. It may be imagined as *possible* that some new historical evidence should come to light proving clearly that certain books were admitted into the Canon on account of a mistaken impression as to their authorship. If it can be shown that these books—say, Jude or Solomon's Song—would certainly have been excluded, had they been known to be not genuine, and if it can now be *proved* that they are not genuine, does it not follow that they ought now to be ejected? Yes, no doubt. And so we may imagine the *possibility* that all the New Testament books are spurious and unauthentic. But it is practically certain that such a possibility can never be transformed into a demonstrated fact. And so, though not with the same degree of positiveness, we must say that it is practically certain that no new evidence can ever be discovered going to show that

any of the Biblical books were pronounced canonical on the ground of erroneous notions concerning their authorship.

Still, it may be said, it is a fact that the limits of the Canon were fixed only after much division, doubt, and hesitation. What was originally doubtful cannot have grown certain through the mere lapse of time. Canonicity is, therefore, a quality of a rather indefinite sort, and no peculiar sanctity can attach to just those writings which happen to have been called canonical. The Church is to this day divided as regards the canonicity of the Old Testament Apocrypha.

What shall we say to this? Even if a certain degree of doubt may be cherished as to a few of the Biblical books; even though the line between the canonical and the uncanonical is not perfectly sharp and definable, — still this indefiniteness does not do away with the distinction. The border line between animals and vegetables is difficult to fix with precision; but the general distinction between the two kingdoms is marked and unmistakable. Just so, as regards the Canon, even though it may be considered doubtful whether certain books ought not to have been left out, and certain others let in, the essential distinction between the canonical and the uncanonical is not obliterated. At the most, we can only say that whatever valid ground for hesitation existed originally may be held to exist still. We may derive from the course of the early Church a warrant for receiving somewhat doubtfully, and with a certain qualification, a few of the Biblical books. But as to the larger part the original decision is practically binding on us. The evidence of their being genuine and authoritative exponents of the facts and truths of revelation is indissolubly connected with the evidence that we have any correct knowledge of the revelation at all.¹ The same men who transmitted to us the gospel of Christ transmitted to us these Scriptures as the inspired memorials of his gospel.

The Canon of Scripture, then, especially that of the New Testament, practically stands or falls with Christianity itself, for it was the outgrowth and expression of Christianity. This

¹ Cf. Westcott, *History of the Canon of the New Testament*, 5th ed., 1881, pp. 500 sq.

does not preclude the possibility of casting discredit, through critical research, upon certain portions, larger or smaller, of the Canon. It cannot be laid down as an axiom, that no part even of the New Testament is in the slightest degree untrustworthy, or that through interpolation or errors of transcription some parts may not have been more or less corrupted. But the existence of such incidental defects can be effectively made out, if at all, only in so far as the authenticity and authority of the collection as a whole are admitted. It is as impossible to show that the New Testament does not exhibit the genuine religion of Jesus Christ as it is to prove that the writings commonly ascribed to Plato do not correctly represent Plato's philosophy. There is this difference, it is true, between the two cases, that the Platonic writings purport to come from the philosopher himself, whereas the New Testament is the work of various men, and not at all the work of Christ. But this difference only serves to enhance the strength of the Christian case. It is barely conceivable that the treatises ascribed to Plato might be proved to have originated from some other man, just as of late years certain literary adventurers have (in imagination at least) proved that the so-called plays of Shakspeare were after all written by Bacon. But in that case, though the philosophy would still be the same, it could no longer properly be called Platonism. The system of Christian doctrine, however, is essentially connected with the person of Jesus Christ. Even if the books of the New Testament could be shown to have originated at another time and from another source than is commonly supposed, they would still represent the faith of the Christian Church, and the person of Christ would still be the centre of that faith. But though it is *conceivable* that the Christian world may be shown to have been mistaken in regard to the age and authorship of their Sacred Scriptures, it is practically certain that not even this can ever be proved. They will forever remain, in their general extent and drift, the Canon of Christian faith and practice.

Practically, then, the Canon is impregnable. It must remain as it is. No consensus of the Church can ever be expected to revise the general results of the early decision. But another and kindred question here meets us: Though the collection may

be left as it is, and be accepted as conveying to us authentic testimony concerning divine truth and the divine economy, still may not the spiritual insight of the Church detect, as it were, a Canon within the Canon, distinguishing the true Word of God — the kernel — from the enveloping husk of human forms, conceptions, and traditions? Must we not say that the Bible *contains* the Word of God, rather than that it *is* the Word of God?

In an important sense this must be regarded as a correct conception. The term "Word of God" is nowhere used in the Bible as a comprehensive name of the canonical collection; from the nature of the case it could not have been so used before all the books in question were written. But even in the New Testament the Old Testament, though then a finished whole, was never as a whole called the Word of God. Where that phrase occurs with reference to the Old Testament it refers to some particular divine command (Mark vii. 13; 2 Pet. iii. 5) or promise (Rom. ix. 6). In by far the most numerous instances the phrase is used as nearly synonymous with "the gospel," as Acts iv. 31, vi. 7, xi. 1, xii. 24, xviii. 11, xix. 20; 1 Cor. xiv. 36; 1 Thess. ii. 13; 2 Tim. ii. 9; Tit. ii. 5; Heb. iv. 12; 1 Pet. i. 23; Rev. i. 9, xx. 4. This is undoubtedly the meaning of it also in 2 Cor. iv. 2, though this verse is commonly quoted as if referring to the Scriptures. Nowhere is the term "Word of God" used of the collected books of the Old Testament.¹

Too much stress, however, must not be laid on this. Though the use of the phrase "Word of God" as synonymous with "Scripture" is comparatively modern, it does not therefore follow that this use of the phrase is out of keeping with the usage of the Biblical writers. On the contrary, when the Old Testament is as a whole called "inspired of God," we must say that this epithet implies as much as the term "Word of God" would imply with reference to the divine origin of the book, unless this term is taken in its most literal sense, namely, that of words uttered by God and simply recorded by men. But that there is a human element in the Scriptures we now take for granted. When, however, we speak of them as characterized by both a human and a divine

¹ Cf. Ladd, *Sacred Scripture*, vol. ii. p. 503; Warrington, *Inspiration*, p. 273, for a more detailed discussion of this.

element, how do we understand the two to be related? Are they distinguishable, though conjoined? Can we sift out the human, and leave the divine unadulterated? Can we separate the chapters, verses, or words that are purely divine from those that are purely human? Evidently such a conception of the matter is crude. Such a mechanical mixture of the divine and the human is well-nigh inconceivable, and is certainly attested by no evidence. The union of the divine and human must rather be regarded as a blending of the two into one,—an interpenetration which makes a nice dissection impossible. The ability to enucleate the purely divine, to distinguish it infallibly from the human, can at the best be only a divine prerogative. The same limitations and weaknesses of human nature which occasioned the presence of a human element in the word of revelation cannot but make themselves felt in the interpretation and application of that word. We have the treasure of the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, but we have it in earthen vessels (2 Cor. iv. 7). The knowledge will grow more and more perfect as we advance in spirituality; but now we see in a mirror darkly; now we know only in part (1 Cor. xiii. 12).

What, then, will be the effect of a growing apprehension of divine truth in the individual and in the community? Will it lead to a sharper distinction between one part of the Bible and another, according as they are discerned to have respectively more or less of the human element? Will the result be that by degrees certain books of the Bible will be practically detached from the Canon, and no longer recognized as either being or containing the Word of God? Will other books be analyzed and dissected, certain verses or sections branded as containing nothing but human matter, and the rest as being worthy to be called inspired? Will the analysis proceed so far that we shall discern several grades of inspiration, and shall be able to assign each sentence of Scripture to one or to the other, or to relegate it to the class of the wholly uninspired ones? Such a conception is certainly not the correct one. It cannot be carried out practically. No two men would coincide with each other in their analysis. And it involves a mechanical theory of inspiration. To suppose, for example, Paul to have been inspired in

general when writing to Timothy, but to have been left without inspiration when he spoke about the cloak and parchments (2 Tim. iv. 13), is to make a distinction for which there is no warrant. No doubt we may, as Lowth says,¹ "distinguish the mysteries of faith and the rules of practice from a cloke and parchments, or a journey to Corinth;" and no doubt this and other similar references to purely personal, local, temporary, or physical matters are of less consequence than that which relates directly to redemption and sanctification. No doubt, if we were to have a Bible consisting wholly either of 2 Tim. iv. 13 or of John iii. 16, it would be infinitely more important to have the revelation of God's saving love than the information about Paul's transient necessities. No doubt the most extreme sticklers for the plenary inspiration of each and every part of Holy Writ have always practically attached greater weight to some portions of it than to others. But what of that? If inspiration is to be measured and mapped according to the relative importance of the several utterances of inspired men, we shall have to distinguish, not merely two or three grades, but an indefinite number of them; we shall have to distinguish even in separate sentences the more important from the less important, and argue, for example, that, where a different conjunction or preposition would seemingly have answered just as well or even better, the writer could not have been inspired in the use of those parts of speech, though he may have been inspired in his use of the nouns and verbs.

Manifestly this criterion cannot be made to work. Revelation and inspiration have, it is true, moral and spiritual, rather than physical and scientific, ends. But this attempt to analyze inspiration according to the comparative importance of the several utterances of the subjects of it virtually leads to, even if it does not proceed from, a theory of verbal inspiration of the rankest sort. It can logically be made to accord only with the hypothesis of sheer dictation. If inspiration is dynamic rather than mechanical, if it is a force moving on the whole inner and spiritual man, rather than an intermittent prompter of words,

¹ *Vindication of the Divine Authority and Inspiration of the Old and New Testaments*, London, 1821, p. 54.

then it is present, not only when the inspired man is treating of the loftier themes of redemption, but also when he speaks of subordinate religious or moral matters, or even when he touches on topics of a purely temporal character. As an ordinary Christian may be exerting a religious influence, not only when he preaches the gospel from a pulpit, but also by the manner in which he deports himself in his temporal occupations, so the Biblical writer's inspiration may be as real when he treats of the most trivial matters as when he is enunciating the weightiest doctrines of grace.

Nevertheless we may discriminate between the more and the less important. We may find the Old Testament in general inferior to the New. And in each Testament we may find some portions more intimately related to the central truths of revelation than others are. We may believe that in every portion there are traces of human imperfection, that even the doctrines of redemption could not be perfectly set forth by those who knew and prophesied only in part. But yet we shall not find any part destitute of the working of the Spirit of inspiration; and as we make progress towards the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, towards the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, we shall not be led to intensify the distinction between the more inspired and the less inspired parts of the Scriptures, and to find some to be not inspired at all; we shall rather find everywhere more and more of the breathings of the Spirit of truth and of grace, and discover that every Scripture, being inspired of God, is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction.

4. Criticism can never convince Christendom that pious fraud has played an important part in determining the substance or form of the Scriptures. There are few who would now undertake to maintain that wicked and malicious deception was practised in the composition of the Biblical books. But there are many who are ready to believe that a more innocent or even a useful deception can be shown to have been extensively resorted to by the Biblical writers. The Tübingen theory of the origin of the New Testament — the so-called *Tendenz* theory — is founded on this notion that a pious fraud was practised in order

to advance the interests of Catholic Christianity. The kernel of the theory is that at the outset radically opposite tendencies divided the Christian Church, — Pauline Christianity on the one hand, and Ebionitism, or a Judaizing spirit, on the other; that some of the New Testament books, especially the first four Pauline Epistles (the only ones conceded to be genuine), represent the one drift, while on the other hand the Gospel of Matthew, the Epistle of James, Second Peter, and the Apocalypse represent the Judaistic party; and that finally another group of books (such as Luke, John, Acts, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, the Pastoral Epistles, and First Peter) were composed for the express purpose of reconciling the opposing parties.¹

The Tübingen hypothesis has been met on its own ground, and shown to be full of inherent and insuperable difficulties, even when all prejudices in favor of the traditional notion of the Biblical books is laid aside. It exists now only as a ruin, some of its assumptions and some of its conclusions being still held by a few, while the critical structure as a whole has fallen under the attacks of counter-criticism and under the weight of its own extravagance. Apart, however, from the exposure of the intrinsic groundlessness of the fundamental assumption of the school, one thing that has powerfully operated to prevent the theory from gaining any general acceptance in the Christian Church is just this assumption of fraud and forgery which is involved as an essential part of the theory. The whole New Testament, with few exceptions, is made to be the product of *Tendenz*, that is, in plain English, of a conscious falsification of history for a purpose. Stories of Christ's life and teachings and the narrative of early apostolic activity are alleged to have been composed, not for the sake of reporting what actually had happened, but for the sake of making men *believe* that certain things had happened. Epistles are said to have been invented at a late period, and ascribed to Paul or Peter, not for the purpose of

¹ As might be expected, the critical sense of the different representatives of the Tübingen school varies somewhat. Pfleiderer, *e. g.*, admits the genuineness of Philippians, Philemon, and First Thessalonians, and calls Colossians and Second Thessalonians spurious somewhat doubtfully (*Der Paulinismus*, p. 25). Baur acknowledged only the first four.

making known what these apostles really taught, but for the purpose of assuaging the antagonism of the Pauline and Petrine parties by falsely representing that Peter and Paul after all taught substantially the same doctrines.¹ The New Testament in general is made by this theory to be, not the trustworthy record and depository of the original Christian history and Christian doctrine, but the product of a fierce theological war, in which, as in military contests, each party dealt freely in deception in order to gain its ends,—the only difference being that in the ecclesiastical squabble a third party is supposed to have come in and to have practised its deceptions on the other two, in order to persuade them that they have really had no good reason for fighting at all!

Now, no matter with how great a display of learning and ingenuity this conception of the origin of the New Testament books may be set forth, no matter in what euphemistic phraseology the charges of forgery and falsification may be clothed, the plain blunt common sense of Christians will always rebel at any such hypothesis. What is involved in the acceptance of it? One reads, for example, in Eph. iv. 25, "Wherefore putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor; for we are members one of another." Then he reads the higher criticism on this Epistle, and is told that it was written by somebody a hundred years after the time of Paul,² yet falsely ascribed to Paul by the writer. That is, the author who embodies in his epistle this forcible admonition to refrain from all falsehood is guilty of a wholesale falsehood in ascribing this admonition and all the rest of the epistle to a man who did not write it. Now calling this proceeding by the solemn-sounding name "pseud-epigraphy" does not change its essential character, or commend it to the simple conscience of a Christian. And the more he finds the tender and lofty Christian sentiments of the Epistle awakening a response in his own heart, the less will he be able to believe that one who could so well set forth Christian truth

¹ See, e. g., Schwegler, *Das nachapostolische Zeitalter*, vol. ii. p. 4, and *passim*.

² Schwegler, *l. c.*, finds clear evidence that the Epistle was written by a Montanist.

and duty could deliberately make himself guilty of the forgery and deception involved in the repeated ascription of the Epistle to Paul.¹ Now, if it were a demonstrated fact that such a thing had been done, we should have to admit it and make the best of it; and one consequence would be the destruction of the canonical authority of the Epistle. But so long as the proofs of alleged pseudonymousness are pure conjectures and subjective conceits,² they will never be sufficient to outweigh the conviction of the Christian Church, — against which no historic evidence can be adduced, — that an epistle so full as this is of the Pauline spirit, and itself professing to be the work of Paul, cannot have been fraudulently ascribed to him.

What has been said of the Tübingen theory of the origin of the New Testament must be said *mutatis mutandis* of its counterpart, the Kuenen-Wellhausen theory of the origin of the Old Testament. The literary and historical arguments on either side must be allowed free course; and whatever is *proved* must be accepted as true. But here, as in the other case, mere subjective assumptions, and even plausible inferences, can never be sufficient to convince the great body of the Christian Church that the Scriptures in question are to a large extent fraudulent documents designed from the outset to deceive the reader respecting their authorship and respecting the course of sacred history. It must

¹ *Vide* i. 1, iii. 1, iv. 1, vi. 20-22. But indeed the whole Epistle is manifestly constructed with this reference. All the *personal* appeals and allusions (*e. g.*, i. 15 *sq.*, iii. 2-8, 13-19, iv. 17), are pointless and meaningless, unless they are meant to make the impression that Paul was the real author.

² Thus Pfleiderer (*Der Paulinismus*, pp. 432, 433) finds the question of the relation of Jews and heathen to Christ in this Epistle an entirely different one from what it had been in Paul's own time. At first, he says, it was necessary for Paul to contend for the equal rights of the heathen against Jewish exclusiveness; but now, he adds, "it is the unchristian pride and uncharitableness of the Gentile Christians against which the author directs himself, reminding them of the greatness of the divine act of grace to which they owe their reception into the Messianic kingdom." Just as if Paul must *always* be harping on one string; as if the various circumstances and tendencies of his different readers could not lead him to emphasize the different sides of Christian truth; and, moreover, as if in the Epistle to the Romans Paul had not done precisely the same thing which Pfleiderer finds to be a proof that he did not write the Epistle to the Ephesians. *Vide* Rom. xi. 17-25.

be remembered that any result attained by means of critical investigation is at the best only made *probable*, however great the degree of probability may seem to be. And it is not mere bigoted "traditionalism" which sets against some of these alleged results the extreme *improbability* that any important part of the Old Testament became accepted by the Jewish people as authentic history or as divine law through the agency of falsification.

True, we must make discriminations. We cannot say that fiction has no place in the Bible. The parables of our Lord are themselves fictions. We cannot say that no pseudonymous book can have place in the Canon, though at the most there is not more than one book (Ecclesiastes) admitted by anything like the general consent of scholars to belong to that class. It is noteworthy that the great mass of works of this sort, of which there were many, never found their way into the recognized Canon. But it has been asked, "Why should there not be some of these in the Old Testament? . . . If one *pseudonyme*, for example, Ecclesiastes, be admitted in the Bible, then the question whether Daniel and Deuteronomy are pseudonyms must be determined by the higher criticism, and it does not touch the question of their inspiration or authority as a part of the Scriptures at all." "The usage of literature," it is added, "ancient and modern, has established its propriety."¹ Stated in this general form, the question seems very simple and innocent. But there are some important distinctions to be made: (1) If the pseudonymous work is known to be such when it is published, there can be no moral objection to the assumption of a false name. No one is deceived, and no harm is done. (2) If the assumed name is that of a well-known person, it is especially important that it should be known that it is fictitiously ascribed to him. The vast preponderance of pseudonymous works bear names that are themselves fictitious. In this case it is of less importance that everybody should know that the name is feigned. When a novel first appeared as written by George Eliot, it might have been imagined by many that this was the real name of the author. But no harm was done so long as no one knew anything about a person of that name. If, however, the novel had been falsely

¹ C. A. Briggs, *Biblical Study*, pp. 224, 225

ascribed to a well-known personage, there would at once have been a moral question involved. If that person had been living, so that he might possibly have been the author, then, whether the fictitious ascription was made with or without his knowledge and consent, in either case the act would have been morally reprehensible.¹ (3) There is a wide difference between a treatise of an ethical or philosophical character fictitiously ascribed to a well-known person, and a treatise of a legislative or historical character similarly ascribed. In either case the fiction is inexcusable, if the design of it is to secure currency for the work by virtue of the fame of the reputed author. But mere general meditations or disquisitions, since their worth is intrinsic, being the same from whatever source they may have come, are none the less instructive for being attributed to another than the real author. But when the fictitiousness extends so far as to falsify history, and to foist in a new code of laws under the pretext that it is in reality an old code, the case is radically different.

Take the case of Deuteronomy. If it first came into existence in the reign of Josiah, as the critical school in question holds, we have before us something quite else than a mere instance of pseudonymousness. The fiction respecting the authorship of the *book*, though bad enough, is of less account than the fiction respecting the authorship and history of the laws contained in it. If the Book of Ecclesiastes was written centuries after the time of Solomon, then even if (as is not very probable) the author could have made the people believe it to be the work of Solomon, though never heard of before, still the belief in the Solomonic authorship did not have, and was not designed to have, the effect of changing the popular notions concerning past history, or of introducing a new code of laws. No one attempted on the strength of the deception to impose *legal and ceremonial obligations* on the people. Pseudepigraphy may be an innocent

¹ Sir James Stephen (*Essays in Eccl. Biography*, p. 299, 4th ed.) mentions the case of Nicole, who wrote *De la Perpétuité de la Foi sur l'Eucharistie*, but put it out under the name of his friend Arnould, — “on the side of Arnould,” observes Stephen, “a literary and pious fraud which it is impossible to excuse;” — and hardly more excusable, we may add, on the side of Nicole.

thing, if all that is done is merely the assumption of a fictitious name; but if by means of the pseudepigraphy one undertakes to levy a tax, or raise an army, the thing is no longer a harmless freak, but becomes a criminal fraud. This illustrates what the "higher criticism" requires us to believe respecting Deuteronomy. The ascription of the legislation in it to Moses was not a mere literary fiction; it was (on the theory under consideration) a fiction whose object was the accomplishment of a practical end, namely, the introduction and enforcement of a new code of laws. Whoever wrote the book must have given it the form of a Mosaic production for the purpose of securing for it a sanction and a currency which otherwise it could not have had. If that was not the object, it had no intelligible object. And if the object was accomplished by the device of representing the legislation as ancient Mosaic legislation, then the procedure involved the essential elements of forgery and fraud.¹ When, therefore, one asks, Why, if one pseudonyme (Ecclesiastes) be admitted in the Bible, may we not admit that Deuteronomy is another? the answer may be given by asking, Why, if it was a harmless thing for Dickens to ascribe his novels to the fictitious "Boz," would it not also have been proper for him to forge an Act of Parliament and the royal signature ordering the introduction of the decimal system into the English currency? He might have deemed the reform a desirable one; and in view of the improbability that the government would institute it, he might have thought this the only feasible way of bringing it about. Of course we do not need to inquire whether it would have been possible for Dickens to carry such a scheme through, and really make the public and the officials of the Treasury and the Mint believe that such an act had been passed. In the analogous case of the Deuteronomic legislation the critics have decided that the thing was done; we are now only inquiring into the moral character of it.

It is true, the critics undertake to soften down, or explain away, the fraudulent character of the proceeding. Robertson Smith indeed goes so far as to affirm that, though "the new

¹ Cf. DEAN Perowne, *The Age of the Pentateuch* (*Contemporary Review*, 1888, p. 255).

laws of the Levitical code are presented as ordinances of Moses," yet, when they were first promulgated, "every one knew that they were not so."¹ It was, he says, simply a case of "legal fiction." "All law was held to be derived from the teaching of Moses."² Therefore the new law *had* to be *called* Mosaic, though everybody knew that the appellation was a mere form!³ The above-quoted utterance of Professor Smith relates more directly to the *Levitical* code, which is supposed to have been promulgated authoritatively by Ezra. He is not so explicit as to the Deuteronomic laws, though, if the principle is correct with reference to the Levitical code, it must be equally true with reference to the other. Is he less explicit for the reason that Deuteronomy is described as not proceeding from the king, or the priests, or any one in authority, but simply as a code of laws *discovered*? The "legal fiction" theory, however plausible when applied to a new set of laws issued by an acknowledged ruler or leader, somehow has a different look when applied to this code which is described as unexpectedly "found" by the high-priest Hilkiah (2 Kings xxii. 8). According to the critics, no one knows where the book came from. Robertson Smith is sure that Hilkiah did not compose it — not, however, because "I have found" evidently means something else than "I have written;" but because the new law was less favorable to the exclusive privileges of the temple hierarchy than the previous usage had been.⁴ All we can say is that the law turned up.

¹ *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 387.

² *Ibid.*, p. 385.

³ Dr. Dwinell, in his review of Professor Smith's later work, *The Prophets of Israel* (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1884, p. 341), seems to be mistaken, when he represents Professor Smith as implying that the Jews were originally deceived by the attribution of the new laws to Moses. — Warrington (*When was the Pentateuch written?* p. 111) makes a good point against the assumption that Moses' name was so great that all legislation must needs have been ascribed to him: "Was there, in the times when these frauds are said to have been put forth, such a widespread reverence for the name of Moses as would lead to the ready acceptance of any laws bearing his superscription? If there was, it is certainly strange that Moses' name is so seldom found in the writings of the prophets; there being in fact but one passage (Mal. iv. 4) where he is mentioned as giver of the law which the people are exhorted to obey."

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 362. This argument is, however, conclusive only on the assump-

“It was of no consequence to Josiah,” says Professor Smith, and “is of equally little consequence to us, to know the exact date and authorship of the book.”¹ “Though the book had no external credentials, it bore its evidence within itself, and it was stamped with the approval of the prophetess Huldah.” Consequently it “smote the hearts of the king and the people.”² But it produced this effect on the king before it was referred to the prophetess for her opinion; he “rent his clothes” (verse 11) as soon as he heard the book read, and was in great consternation because the fathers of himself and of his people had “not hearkened unto the words of this book” (verse 13). If “it was of no consequence” to him to know when and by whom the book was written; if, so far as he knew, it might have been (as some have conjectured) the work of Hilkiah himself, how should he have thought that Jehovah’s anger was great because the fathers had not obeyed the book, — a book about which they could have known nothing?

It can hardly be doubted that this “legal fiction” theory is a pure invention, designed to make the doctrine concerning the origin of the Mosaic Code less objectionable to the Christian public. None of the other champions of the newer hypothesis seem to know anything about this “fiction.” Kuenen³ is very plain-spoken: “It is certain that an author of the seventh century B. C. — following in the footsteps of others, for example, of the writer of the Book of the Covenant — has made Moses himself proclaim that which, in his opinion, it was expedient in the real interests of the Mosaic party to announce and introduce. . . . Men used to perpetrate such fictions without any qualms of conscience. . . . The author and his party cannot have made the execution of their programme depend upon a lucky accident. If Hilkiah *found* the book in the temple, it was put there by the adherents of the Mosaic tendency. Or else Hilkiah was of their number, and in that case he pretended that he had found the book of the law. . . . It is true, this deception is much more tion that anything like disinterestedness in Hilkiah is to be regarded as altogether out of the question.

¹ *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, p. 363.

² *Ibid.*, p. 351.

³ *Religion of Israel*, vol. ii. pp. 18, 19.

unjustifiable still than the introduction of Moses as speaking. But we must reflect here also that the ideas of those days were not the same as ours, but considerably less strict. 'Now or never' the Mosaic party had to gain their end." Here then it is squarely avowed that the successful introduction of the new code, and the securing of Josiah's adoption of it, were the result of a bold artifice, a "deception," an end gained by "cunning," — a thing not to be wondered at, since "at all times and in all countries faction and intestine quarrels have stifled delicacy in the choice of means."¹

Inasmuch as we find no trace in the Bible itself that either the Deuteronomic or the Levitical legislation was generally *known* to be ascribed to Moses only by a legal fiction; inasmuch as rulers and kings enacted new regulations without ever suggesting that their laws were Mosaic;² inasmuch as it is certain that the laws in question were generally regarded as really the laws of Moses; inasmuch as the narrative in 2 Kings xxii. itself plainly implies that the law there spoken of was either a genuine law of Moses or else one supposed to be such, — it is pretty plain that, if the book "found" by Hilkiah was a new book, it must have owed its successful introduction, not to a "legal fiction" which deceived nobody, but to an illegal fiction which deceived everybody, including the king himself, whose co-operation it was of the utmost importance to secure in carrying out the new "programme."³

¹ *Religion of Israel*, vol. ii. p. 19. Richm (*Gesetzgebung Moses im Lande Moab*, pp. 112–114) likewise calls the procedure a "fiction." He excuses it at first by the citation of the pseudonymy in Ecclesiastes; but he recognizes the difference between this and a fiction whose object was "to secure authority and recognition for the new law-book," and therefore adds. "From our moral standpoint we cannot justify the proceeding of the Deuteronomist; in the light of the 'law of perfect liberty' (James i. 25) it appears after all as somewhat dishonest [*unlauter*]." He excuses the act, however, on the ground that the author undoubtedly regarded the new legislation as in the *spirit* of Moses, "so that Moses, if he had foreseen the future circumstances, would certainly have said the same thing, and instituted the same changes." But Richm had not discovered the "legal fiction" which everybody knew to be fiction!

² Cf. Prof. W. H. Green. *Professor Robertson Smith on the Pentateuch*, in *Presbyterian Review*, January, 1882.

³ Dean Perowne, *The Age of the Pentateuch* (*Contemporary Review*, 1888,

If any further proof of this be needed, it may be found in abundance in the form and setting both of the so-called Priestly Code and of Deuteronomy. They are both made to have all the appearance of laws enacted in the time of Moses himself. Not only are they ascribed to him, but they are interwoven with a history which connects it with that same period. The form of the laws is largely adapted only to the manner of life which Israel led while on the way from Egypt to Canaan.¹ And when, as especially in Deuteronomy, the legislation is adapted to the more settled life of Palestine, it is still represented as a future condition.² At whatever time the books were composed, the intention must have been to give them the *appearance* of having originated under Moses. The "legal fiction" of ascribing the laws to him did not require the invention of a historic setting which to the later generations could have had no use and no meaning, *if it was understood to be fictitious history*. Especially

pp. 255 *sqq.*), forcibly exposes the weakness of Professor Smith's assumption that it was "of no consequence" to Josiah or any one else where the new code came from. "Why did the mere fact of its coming as a Code give it a force which no prophetic utterance had ever possessed? Why should a Book of Law, backed by the prophets, but without any external credentials, work a revolution which centuries of prophetic teaching had failed to work?"

¹ In Leviticus the ceremonial precepts are all connected with "the tent of meeting" and with camp life. Cf. i. 1-5, iii. 2, iv. 4, 12, vi. 11, etc.

² *E. g.*, Deut. xii. 21, 29, xiii. 12, xvi. 2, xix. 1, etc. There is no question that the general coloring of the book is that of the Mosaic times. When Robertson Smith (l. c. p. 352) and others lay stress on the language of Deut. xii. 8, "Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes," as proving that the book must have been composed with reference to the times of Manasseh, they are obliged to assume that such an expression (as this in xii. 8) was not applicable to the times of Moses, and therefore must have crept into the code through an *inadvertence*, since the evident effort and design was to give the laws the *appearance* of having been issued by Moses. These same critics all assume the post-exilic date of Isa. xl.-lxvi., and make short work with the argument of those who oppose to their theory the fact that a few passages (such as xliii. 22-24) seem to imply that the temple worship is not suspended. But if the fact that Isa. xl.-lxvi. in general has the coloring of the time of the exile is made to overbear the force of a few passages which seem to fit an earlier period, why should not the same rule be equally valid as proving that Deuteronomy belongs to the Mosaic period?

monstrous is the supposition which the Kuenen-Wellhausen theory stoutly maintains, that the whole detailed description of the tabernacle is a pure invention of the author or authors of the Priestly Code — no such tabernacle having ever been made. That is, we are asked to believe that, after the return from the captivity, a new ritual was introduced, designed for temple worship at Jerusalem, but studiously worded so as to be strictly appropriate only to the nomadic life of the wilderness and to a house of worship which never existed except in the laboriously idle fancy of the authors of the new code. If “every one knew,” as Robertson Smith would have us believe, that all this elaborate description of the tabernacle was only a part of the legal fiction, it is difficult to say who were the greater fools, the men who spent their time, ink, and parchment in describing this never-existent tabernacle, or the men who so readily submitted to the legislation of those who by this display of senseless ingenuity had effectually proved their unfitness to issue laws for national observance.

But we have wasted too many words on this fiction of a “legal fiction.” It is doubtful whether Robertson Smith himself adheres to it any longer. There is no consistent ground for the advocates of the new hypothesis to take but this: that the promulgators of the new codes studiously gave them the *form* of Mosaic laws in order to secure their acceptance and observance on the part of the people; in other words, that they practised downright fraud in order to gain their “pious” purpose. We will not dwell on the critical difficulties which this theory of the “higher criticism” involves; they are many and weighty, and have been ably set forth.¹ What we here insist on is that,

¹ See especially W. H. Green, *Moses and the Prophets*, and *The Jewish Feasts*; E. C. Bissell, *The Pentateuch, its Origin and Structure*; G. Vos, *The Mosaic Origin of the Pentateuchal Codes*; R. P. Smith, *Introduction to the Pentateuch*, in Comm. on Genesis (Ellicott’s *Old Testament Commentary*), and *Mosaic Authorship and Credibility of the Pentateuch* (*Present Day Tracts*, No. 15); F. Watson, *The Law and the Prophets*; G. Warrington, *When was the Pentateuch Written?*; H. A. Strack, art. *Pentateuch*, in Herzog’s *Realencyclopädie*, 2d ed.; F. Delitzsch, *Pentateuch-kritische Studien in Zeitschrift für kirchliche Wissenschaft und kirchliches Leben*, 1880; F. E. König, *Hauptprobleme der altisraelitischen Religionsgeschichte*, 1884; the same translated:

in any discussion of the question of the age and character of the Old Testament books, the inherent probability or improbability of deliberate deception having been resorted to in order to secure the adoption of certain books of law and history is one of the elements to be taken account of by the higher criticism. This criticism deals very largely in speculations, in probabilities, in combinations; indeed it consists almost wholly in these things. It cannot claim for itself more than that it makes out a high degree of probability for its hypotheses. But if it is legitimate, in defense of their theses, for the critics to indulge in speculations, and to conjecture what under given circumstances must have been inherently probable; if, for example, it is legitimate to argue that it is, psychologically and historically considered, unlikely that the Pentateuchal codes in their fuller form could, if of Mosaic origin, have ever become so neglected or even forgotten as the rare and dubious allusions to them in the historic books would seem to indicate, then it is equally legitimate to reason that, from a psychological and historical point of view, it is in the highest degree unlikely that a new code could have been introduced and enforced on the strength of a false allegation that it was really an old code. If the former argumentation, then surely no less the latter, has a place in the domain of the "higher criticism." It has this place even if we treat Hebrew history as profane history; it has it all the more, if we hold that that history was shaped by special supernatural guidance.

Let us not be misunderstood. It is perfectly proper for scholars to examine the Scriptures, and to investigate the question of their composition, with the utmost freedom and thoroughness. The more of this research there is, the better. Nothing but good can come from whatever *facts* can be discovered respecting the origin and characteristics of the Bible. Even though old impressions may be contradicted, no harm can ensue. No truth is intrinsically injurious. If it is true that Genesis is

The Religious History of Israel, Edinburgh, 1885; C. J. Bredenkamp, *Gesetz und Propheten*, 1881; J. J. S. Perowne, *The Age of the Pentateuch (Contemporary Review)*, 1888). The time has certainly not come for assuming the new hypothesis as established, and attempting to popularize it, as is done by Prof. C. H. Toy, in *The History of the Religion of Israel*, Boston, 1883.

made up of two or more documents woven together; if it is true that not all of the Pentateuch, or even that the smaller part of it, was committed to writing by Moses himself, — what reason is there for hesitating to accept these results of critical research? Nothing of real value is lost by the admission. There is nothing in the Bible itself which would be contradicted by such discoveries. Even though the new doctrine on these points be only made strongly probable, and by no means certain, there is no reason why it may not be adopted. The adoption does not involve any impeachment of the divine veracity; it does not conflict with any statement in the Pentateuch itself. Questions of date and authorship, of editorial arrangement and superscription, of mistakes in transcription, of intentional or unintentional interpolations, and other like questions often can be settled only by critical investigation. Traditional opinions on these matters have at the most only the presumption in their favor; they have no prescriptive right to hold the field against the force of clear evidence. Christians may honestly differ on the question whether the traditional views have in any particular case been really overthrown; but the new views which critics advocate can be successfully opposed only by critical weapons.

And even when the dispute relates to alleged forgery and deliberate falsification of history, the defenders of the genuineness and credibility of the portions of the Bible thus assailed do well to meet critical attack with critical defense. The defense is most satisfactory when it repulses the enemy on his own chosen ground. But it does not follow that if, on that ground, the result of the conflict may at the best appear to be somewhat doubtful, the Christian believer is to yield up his cherished faith. No; there is another weapon which he may and will use, and cannot be made to surrender: he will maintain an unconquerable conviction that God cannot have allowed the record of his revelation to be adulterated and vitiated by fraud and forgery. Christian insight and feeling have a validity of their own. He to whom the Gospel of John has been his choicest spiritual food may rejoice to see the fierce assaults that have been made upon its genuineness and authenticity overcome by critical weapons. But even without these that Gospel

would doubtless hold its position as a genuine and authentic work, by virtue of that Christian judgment which instinctively rejects the allegation that it is a "cunningly-devised fable," skilfully simulating the appearance of being the work of John, though in fact the work of some unknown man living at least half a century after John was dead. By this it is not meant that there is in the ordinary Christian a "critical feeling" which enables him to settle intuitively all questions of authorship and authenticity that may be raised. The meaning simply is that, the truth and divine authority of Christianity being to the Christian world an established fact, hypotheses which explicitly or implicitly involve the rejection of this fundamental conviction must be *a priori* rejected. Christians cannot be forever re-examining the foundations of their faith. It may indeed be held that Christianity is not identical with the Biblical books, and that therefore many of these may be acknowledged to be spurious or unauthentic, while yet the essential truths of Christianity are retained. But no one can ever know what the essential truths of Christianity are, if all the records of its origin are liable to be pronounced, one after the other, a work of the imagination. If the Christian religion is assumed to be divine, then whatever allegations are made requiring us to believe that the Christian Church and the Christian Scriptures owe the commanding position they have acquired to fraud, whether pious or impious,—no matter how ingeniously or plausibly the allegations may be sustained, the Christian may, without bigotry and with the soundest reason, reply, "I will not believe it." For at the most the attacks on the genuineness of the canonical books never have succeeded, and never will succeed, in establishing anything more than a greater or less degree of *probability* that fraud and forgery have played a part in determining the contents of the Scriptural Canon. Over against this probability will always stand, in the Christian mind, the still *greater* probability that God would not have allowed his Church to make the work of deceivers a part of its permanent canon of faith and practice, and that Jesus Christ would not have set upon such fraud the stamp of his endorsement.

For the ugly fact cannot be winked out of sight, or in any

way be got rid of, that if the theory is correct which is often boastfully said to have secured the assent of all the scholars¹ whose opinion is worth anything, then Christ *is* made to ratify, as of divine authority, a book which according to the theory is largely a work of forgery and falsification of history. It makes little difference whether his ratification of the divine authority of the Old Testament is supposed to have been given in ignorance of the facts which the critics think they have brought to light, or whether he endorsed the book as divine, although knowing that it was, to a great extent, fraudulent and fictitious. In either case an assumption is made respecting the Redeemer which the ordinary and healthy instinct of the Christian will unhesitatingly repudiate. The critics themselves may in some cases attempt to combine the holding of their hypothesis with a genuine faith in Christ as the Mediator and Saviour. But they can do so only by a process of mind similar to that of Pomponatius, Cesalpini, and other philosophers of the Italian Renaissance, who are said to have undertaken to distinguish between truths of philosophy and truths of faith in such a way that both could be held, though in direct collision with one another.² The common mind cannot satisfy itself by any such self-mystification. The course of reasoning it will adopt is short, but conclusive: If Jesus was either so ignorant as not to know that the Scriptures to which he ascribed divine authority were vitiated by fraud, or so unscrupulous as to endorse them although he knew of the fraud, then he cannot be the Truth, the Way, and the Life. But we are sure that in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, and that therefore he cannot have been either thus ignorant or thus unscrupulous; consequently we cannot and will not believe any one who pretends to have discovered that the Bible is full of fictitious history, fraudulent legislation, and supposititious homilies. We have not so learned Christ.

¹ All the *younger* scholars, it is often remarked, as if that were a special recommendation of the theory.

² Cf. Cousin, *History of Modern Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 51 (Wight's translation); Ritter, *Die christliche Philosophie*, vol. ii. pp. 35 *sqq.* Ritter, however, questions the justice of the charge that Pomponatius was hypocritical in assenting to the Christian faith.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX.

EXCURSUS I.¹

DR. MAUDSLEY ON THE VALIDITY OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

DR. MAUDSLEY² says, "If you would know what is the positive value of the direct deliverances of an individual consciousness, you must compare with it the deliverances of consciousness in other persons ; it must be supplemented and corrected by these aids in the social organism, as one sense is supplemented and corrected by another sense in the bodily organism." Again he says :³ "A logical inference, the perception of a general law, a mathematical demonstration, the certainty of an arithmetical calculation, the confidence of each daily action among men and things, the understanding of another's language and the certainty that mine in turn will be understood, — all these appeal, as it were, to some certainty in which is more than myself. It is the common mind of the race in me, which belongs to me as to one of my kind, — the common sense of mankind, if you will. Because the *kind* is in me and I am a living element of it, I cannot help silently acknowledging its rules and sanctions. There is no rule to distinguish between true and false but the common judgment of mankind, no rule to distinguish between virtue and vice but the common feeling of mankind. Wherefore the truth of one age is the fable of the next, the virtue of one epoch or nation the vice of another epoch or nation, and the individual that is deranged has his private truth-standard that is utterly false." Again :⁴ "To descant upon the self-sufficiency of an individual's self-consciousness is hardly more reasonable than it would be to descant upon the self-sufficiency of a single sense. The authority of direct personal intuition is the authority of the lunatic's direct intuition that he is the Messiah ; the vagaries of whose mad thoughts cannot be rectified until he can

¹ See p. 11.

² *Body and Will*, p. 40.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 41, 42.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

be got to abandon his isolating self-sufficiency and to place confidence in the assurances and acts of others." This is sufficiently emphatic, and seems to coincide substantially with what we have laid down as to the importance and indispensableness of the corroborative testimony of other men in order to perfect confidence in our individual experiences. But underneath these strong affirmations lies the tacit assumption that the individual has somehow become assured that there *are* other persons, and that these other persons are *trustworthy*. This conviction must be antecedent to the use which is made of the corroborative testimony of these fellow-beings. The individual must first be sure of the reality of these beings before he can accept their testimony. The question, then, cannot but be raised whether here at least we must not hold to the "self-sufficiency of an individual's self-consciousness." If this self-consciousness which makes known to us our fellow-beings is not self-sufficient, but needs to be confirmed or rectified by the consciousness of others, there is absolutely no escape from the circle; there will never be any assured knowledge at all. For according to the supposition, in order to get the needed corroborative or corrective testimony, we must first be assured of the reality of the witnesses; and if we must have the testimony of others in order to assure us of the reality of the witnesses, then we must have what, according to the supposition, we cannot get. There *must* be somewhere an immediate, intuitive, self-sufficient cognition; if not, the child can never get beyond having an experience of sensations about the correctness or the meaning of which he has no knowledge.

This power of coming to the knowledge of other *persons* — a power implied in all psychological theories — is, when distinctly seen and recognized, fatal both to pure idealism and to pure materialism. Maudsley himself puts vigorously the dilemma of the idealist:¹ "If there be a world of consciousness external to me, and if the only reality be in consciousness, then my real existence to another person is in his consciousness, — that is, external to myself; and his real existence to me in like manner in my consciousness, — that is, external to him. But where does he get his consciousness of me, seeing that he can't get at my consciousness, which is the only real me; and where do I get consciousness of him, seeing that I can't get at his consciousness?"

¹ *Body and Will*, pp. 53, 54.

He has got my real existence in him, and I have got his real existence in me, notwithstanding that we have not the least power of getting at one another's consciousnesses, which are the only realities. All which is a triumph of philosophy, or a *reductio ad absurdum*, according to the light in which one elects to view it." All very good, as a refutation of pure idealism. And yet idealism has every way the advantage of pure materialism, and in some relations seems even to have the advantage of every other system. For it rests on the reality of consciousness, as the one absolutely irrefutable fact; the reality of the outward world can be doubted, whereas the reality of the modifications of consciousness cannot be. But idealism rigidly carried out makes it impossible for one mind to recognize the reality of another. For such recognition, as men are now constituted, can take place only through the medium of the body. We can become aware of other *minds* only by becoming aware, first, of bodies external to ourselves. The mind is inferred from the bodily manifestations. If, therefore, these bodies are merely the affections of our minds, their *esse* being only a *percipi*, then *a fortiori* the minds which seem to animate those bodies have no objective existence. And so each man, according to strict idealism, must regard his own consciousness as the only real thing. But this reduces the whole theory to pure absurdity.¹

¹ Berkeley (*Principles of Human Knowledge*, sect. 145) touches very lightly on this point, hardly appearing to anticipate that any one could regard it as involving any difficulty. He says: "It is plain that we cannot know the existence of other spirits otherwise than by their operations, or the ideas by them excited in us. I perceive several motions, changes, and combinations of ideas, that inform me there are certain particular agents, like myself, which accompany them and concur in their production. Hence the knowledge I have of other spirits is not immediate, as is the knowledge of my ideas; but depending on the intervention of ideas, by me referred to agents or spirits distinct from myself, as effects or concomitant signs." But this is a very inadequate explanation on Berkeley's own theory. According to him, *things* are nothing but *ideas*, that is, sensations. Even the brain "exists only in the mind" (*Second Dialogue between Hylas and Philonous*, *Works*, vol. i. p. 301, Frazer's ed.). Whatever we perceive exists only as it is perceived. Consequently what one calls the bodies of other men can exist only in one's own mind. At the best, one can only distinguish between the vague, irregular impressions of dreams or arbitrary fancies and the involuntary impressions which are commonly conceived as produced by external nature. This difference leads Berkeley to argue that the involuntary and orderly impressions, since we are conscious of not producing them, must be produced by another will, namely, God's. So far his argument is valid enough. But it amounts only to this: that the subjective impressions are caused by an external power, or will; it does not prove that there is any

But, on the other hand, how is materialism affected by this same fact of the mutual recognition of minds? The strict materialist comes, only by a different process, to substantially the same result

reality corresponding to these impressions; still less does it prove that these ideas, or things, exist to the mind of God in the sense of being perceived by him. Yet this is Berkeley's constant assumption: Things exist only as perceptions; *esse est percipi*. Consequently, he says, these objects of perception must be perceived by God, and in this sense are real. But obviously there is a fallacy here. Our perception is gained by means of the various senses; Berkeley says that when several ideas accompany one another, they come to be marked by one name, as apple, stone, etc. (sect. 1, *Principles*). Here is a double assumption: (1) A distinction of senses is assumed — of sight, smell, hearing, etc., as if the organs of these senses were distinct realities. Consistency requires him to say, "My eye exists only in my mind; also colors exist only in my mind. All that I know about them is that I have an impression of them. But I have no right to speak as if my eye perceived colors, or even as if my mind *through* my eye, perceived colors." But (2) it is assumed that, though things exist only as they are perceived, it is not necessary to suppose them to go out of existence every time they are unperceived by any finite mind, since God perceives them constantly. But evidently this is a pure assumption. According to the main hypothesis a thing *is* only as it is *perceived*. The persistency and involuntariness of the perception lead to the assumption of an outward, divine power which causes the perception. But that is a very different thing from a divine being *perceiving* the same things, and *perceiving* them *constantly*. The fact that I perceive may indicate that I am *caused* to perceive; but when one says that therefore the *causer* perceives the same things, and perceives them when no other being is perceiving them, there is a manifest *non sequitur*. Moreover, the human perception is inferred not to be a mere illusion only from the fact of its involuntariness. Consistency then would require that the divine perception be also involuntary. But this would imply the absolute existence of the perceived objects.

But to come to the question of other finite spirits. Their existence is *inferred*, says Berkeley, from certain motions, changes, and combinations of ideas. But how are we to determine which of these are caused by finite spirits, and which by the Divine Spirit? His only solution is simply in the assertion (sect. 146) that "though there be some things which convince us human agents are concerned in producing them, yet it is evident to every one that those things which are called the Works of Nature, that is, the far greater part of the ideas or sensations perceived by us, are not produced by, or dependent on, the wills of men. There is, therefore, some other Spirit that causes them." This is quite astonishing. On his ground there is no warrant for distinguishing between different kinds of outward agents. One can only be sure that his own will is not the cause of all his ideas. He can never be sure that other beings like himself, as distinguished from an omnipotent and universal agent, cause those ideas. On his theory no idea, *i. e.* perceived object, can produce effects. Only the will does this. Consequently one cannot at the best know more than that certain motions, etc., are perceived in apparent connection with certain bodies. That a *will* is connected with the body, as the cause of the motions, cannot be inferred. But even if it could be, the perception of other human beings would thus be made a matter of inference of which only a comparatively mature mind is capable; whereas the perception is in fact one of the very earliest experiences of the infant.

as the strict idealist. Instead of positing an immaterial mind as the organ of consciousness, he posits a material organism, and assumes that one of its functions is to think — to conceive of a universe of material objects of various forms and characteristics as existing around it. But Dr. Maudsley himself assures us that this individual conception is of no value until it has been supplemented and corrected by that of other consciousnesses. “My subjective states,” he says,¹ “are to be appraised by another’s objective observation of them in their modes of outward expression, as *his* subjective states are to be appraised by *my* objective observation of them.” The individual organism, therefore, can only be sure of its own impressions; whether an objective reality corresponds to those impressions is, in itself, quite a matter of uncertainty, — until this organism has learned that other organisms have the same experience. But here there presents itself again the same dilemma as before: How is the man in question, in the first place, ever to be sure of the fact that there is another organism like his own? He has certain sensations, certain impressions concerning other beings like himself; but, according to the theory maintained, those are mere impressions, having no authoritative value until confirmed by the impressions of those same other organisms. That is, I cannot be sure that other men really exist, until I know that they tell me that they exist. But how can I ever know that they tell me so, unless I am first convinced that they are real beings? The testimony of a being of doubtful reality must necessarily be testimony of doubtful value. And so on this theory one must be forever precluded from ever coming to a state of assured conviction about anything. But Maudsley calmly assures us,² that “the worth of the testimony of consciousness as to an external world may well be greater than the worth of its subjective testimony, since it is pretty certain that the consciousnesses of other persons, and the consciousnesses of animals, in so far as they are similarly constituted, give the same kind of evidence.” In short, he quietly takes for granted the very thing which his theory makes inadmissible and impossible; he assumes that, in spite of the utter untrustworthiness of the individual consciousness, it has nevertheless, all by itself, become *certain*, not only of the reality of other men, but also of the reality of their consciousness, — and not only this, but also of the fact that their consciousnesses coincide with his own!

¹ *Body and Will*, pp. 40, 41.

² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Here we have precisely the same dilemma into which Maudsley crowds the idealist. In fact, idealism and materialism easily pass into each other. In the one case the individual is conceived as thinking mind, in the other as thinking matter, — in both cases as a conscious unit, able to think of itself and to receive sensations. But in either case there is an impassable gulf between the mere fact of sensation or consciousness and the assurance that there is an external world distinct from the conscious individual. The idealist may be content to *infer* a material world from his conscious sensations, or he may deny that there is any such thing as a material world; in either case he denies that we directly *know* anything about a world of matter. Just so the consistent materialist finds himself debarred from any certain knowledge of anything but his own impressions. It makes no difference with the real problem, when he assumes that the percipient or thinking agent is a material organism, and not an immaterial mind. There is precisely the same difficulty — the same impossibility — which the idealist has in getting over the gulf which separates the conscious individual from the rest of the world. In either case it is only by an illogical leap — a *salto mortale* — that the philosopher comes to his belief and assurance that he is in the midst of a world of beings like himself.

But the materialistic theory has still further difficulties to encounter. There is not merely the preliminary one, that the individual sentient organism has legitimately no way of learning that there is an external world in general, or in particular that there are other material organisms like his own; there is the further difficulty, that he can still less assuredly learn that other organisms are sentient and conscious like himself. Let it be assumed that I can somehow become cognizant of the real existence of an outward world, and, in that world, of organic as distinguished from inorganic, bodies; I am still far from an assured knowledge that any of these organisms think and feel as I do. In order to get such a knowledge, I must be able to communicate with them by means of some sort of *language*.¹ Without this there is an absolutely impassable barrier between the two organisms. Even though they be assumed to be cognizant of one

¹ In this argument it is not overlooked that brutes communicate with one another, though they have no language in the ordinary sense of the word. But they do have a sort of language: by means of sounds and visible signs they make themselves understood to one another.

another, they cannot *compare* their cognitions, and thus corroborate one another's impressions of things, unless they can exchange thoughts in mutually intelligible language. But language is essentially and purely a *mental* product and agent. Whatever our definition of mind may be, even though it be pronounced to be nothing but thinking matter, language has no relation to it except as it is a *thinking* thing. There is no inherent and necessary correspondence between words and things. The same thing is designated in different languages by the most diverse terms; and all alike appear to be entirely arbitrary. Always and everywhere language is the product and expression of *conceptions*, — of mental states. The language may consist simply in physical gestures; but the *meaning* of it concerns that which cannot be discerned by any of the senses. A thought cannot be seen, heard, felt, tasted, or smelt. How does the organism come to recognize the *meaning* of these apparently arbitrary symbols? How can the "hemispherical ganglia" of one body, by means of a word or a visible sign, become aware of what is going on in the "motor centres" of another body? Let it be supposed to have been made ever so clear how a particular organism can come to have mental experiences by virtue of "specialization" and "integration;" let it be conceded that by "the education of the motor centres" the organism becomes able to form mental conceptions ever so refined. Yet the mystery is still unsolved, how these conceptions can be communicated by one organism to another, — how the other organism, which can by no possibility see the "motor nerves" or "the mind-centres" which do the thinking or the willing, can yet learn what the thinking is about. Dr. Maudsley says: "Few persons, perhaps, consider what a wonderful art speech is, or even remember that it is an art which we acquire. But it actually costs us a great deal of pains to learn to speak; all the language which an infant has is a cry; and it is only because we begin to learn to talk when we are very young, and are constantly practising, that we forget how specially we have had to educate our motor centres of speech."¹ Very true; and perhaps it may be added that Dr. Maudsley himself has failed to grasp the true wonderfulness of speech. He recognizes indeed that each word has "no independent vitality," and is even "nothing more than a conventional sign or symbol to mark the particular muscular expression of a particular idea."² The real marvel, however, is

¹ *Body and Mind*, p. 25.

² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

not in the fact that children have to learn language by a laborious process; the marvel is — especially on the materialistic theory — how they ever learn at all, or, supposing that they can learn, as parrots can, that they come to *understand* what these words really represent in the minds of their teachers. They are *conventional* signs, Maudsley says; but how did these mechanical organisms, every motion of which is determined by rigid natural forces, ever come to *agree* to make these arbitrary signs have certain meanings? Maudsley says that these articulate signs came to be so used simply because they are the most “convenient for the expression of our mental states.” This is very true; but it does not explain how they come to be *understood* as the expression of mental states. The real mystery, quite overlooked by the materialistic explanation, is in the possibility of the *communication* between two “mind-centres,” — the possibility of *agreeing* to make certain arbitrary sounds the representatives of mental states. Even though one of the material organisms may be supposed to be determined by some occult natural force to connect a certain sound with a certain object; yet this does not explain how another organism comes to understand what object is represented by that sound. In short, the recognition of *personality* in beings other than ourselves must precede our understanding of their language.¹ Otherwise all their words and gestures would have no more meaning to us than the moaning and swaying of trees in the wind or the dashing and babbling of a brook.

¹ “It may be questioned whether this [power to recognize personality other than our own] is to be accounted for without postulating the existence of a higher kind of instinctive intelligence than that which is needed for the recognition of an external world.” — Murphy, *Scientific Bases of Faith*, p. 150.

EXCURSUS II.¹

THE COSMIC PHILOSOPHY.

MODERN evolutionists cannot all be indiscriminately put into one category. Many of them are genuine theists and Christians. Others are unmitigated atheists and materialists;² while still others, though radically opposed to the characteristic doctrines of Christian theism, yet repudiate with indignation both these names, and are scarcely more willing to be called pantheists.³ It is easy here to fall into logomachy. The distinction between atheism and pantheism is itself hard to draw. But now we have to deal with those who, while holding views which would commonly be called pantheistic, if not atheistic, strenuously insist that they are the only true theists. So, for example, Mr. Fiske,⁴ who emphatically denies that the Absolute Being can be personal (an attribute commonly supposed to characterize the God of the theist), and maintains that every other form of theism than his own is beset with insoluble difficulties. What now is his doctrine? "Our choice," he says,⁵ "is no longer between an intelligent Deity and none at all; it lies between a limited Deity and one that is without limit." The necessary inference from this is that the Deity is not intelligent. An "infinite Person" is expressly declared to be as unthinkable as a "circular triangle." "Anthropomorphic Theism" is the name given to the ordinary theism; but in place of it is put a theism which affirms a Being who, though not a person, is as much higher than Humanity as the heavens are higher than the earth.⁶ In this Mr. Fiske is a faithful follower of Mr. Spencer, who asks us,⁷ "Is it not just possible that there is a mode of being as much transcending Intelligence and Will as these transcend mechanical motion? It is true that we are totally unable to conceive any such higher mode of being. But this is not a

¹ See p. 33.

² Such as Carl Vogt, Moleschott, Büchner. Professor Flint (*Anti-theistic Theories*, Lect. iv.) calls Mr. Spencer and his followers materialists.

³ E. g., John Fiske, *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 423.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 408.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 451.

⁷ *First Principles*, § 31.

reason for questioning its existence; it is rather the reverse." But further: Mr. Fiske¹ is very sure that, "if goodness and intelligence are to be ascribed to the Deity, it must be goodness and intelligence of which we have some rudimentary knowledge as manifested in humanity; otherwise our hypothesis is unmeaning verbiage." And then he goes on to affirm that it is impossible to ascribe goodness to a Being of infinite power and foreknowledge who should have created such a world of suffering as our world is. "As soon as we seek to go beyond the process of evolution disclosed by science, and posit an external Agency which is in the slightest degree anthropomorphic, we are obliged to supplement and limit this Agency by a second one that is diabolic, or else to include elements of diabolism in the character of the first Agency itself." Plainly all this means that the Absolute Being is not intelligent, and is not moral in any sense that would not be "unmeaning verbiage." But in the same book, at a later point,² he says that the "Inscrutable Power" may "be possibly regarded as quasi-psychical." In another book he leaves sometimes the "quasi" off, and calls the Infinite Power simply "psychical,"³ and moreover affirms that "we know, however the words may stumble in which we try to say it, that God is in the deepest sense a moral being."⁴ Accordingly we are to understand that God is not intelligent, but is psychical; he is not good, but he is moral!⁵ To be sure, the author takes pains to say that God's psychical nature is not, and cannot be, just like ours — in which all Christian philosophers will cordially agree with him. But what then becomes of his assertion that, if we retain the slightest degree of anthropomorphism, we cannot help making God either diabolic or finite? For he now says expressly that "we can never get entirely rid of all traces of anthropomor-

¹ *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. pp. 406, 407.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 448, 449.

³ *Idea of God*, Preface, p. xxiv, and p. 155.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁵ It is to be presumed that, in ascribing psychicalness, and denying intelligence, to the Unknown Force, Spencerians mean something; but it would be well if they would tell what they mean. If we are to judge from etymology and usage, the term "psychical," if it is to be applied to any unintelligent being, must denote a constitution somewhat like that of the lower animals, which have life (α ψυχή) and a sort of unconscious impulse which faintly resembles intelligence. Is then the Deity really conceived as intellectually a sort of magnified polyp? If not, and if yet the Absolute Power is declared to be without consciousness (*vide* H. Spencer, *Ecclesiastical Institutions*, § 658, where this is elaborately argued), then to call that Power "psychical" is to use phraseology which has a philosophical sound, but which is absolutely meaningless.

phism,"¹ and that "to every form of theism . . . an anthropomorphic element is indispensable.² Furthermore, while the teleological arguments of Paley are scouted as entirely fallacious, he yet says that the "craving after a final cause" is "an essential element in man's religious nature," and "that there is a reasonableness in the universe, that in the orderly sequence of events there is a meaning which appeals to our human intelligence."³ He avows his belief in the immortality of the soul "as a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness of God's work," and because to deny this persistence of the spiritual element in man "is to rob the whole process [of evolution] of its meaning."⁴ So then God's work has a "*meaning* which appeals to our intelligence;" yet God is himself not intelligent!

Now, when we have to judge of the theory of a man who thus states it in contradictory propositions, it is somewhat difficult to be sure of the correctness of our judgment. If, when he calls the Absolute Power "psychical" and "moral," he means what the words seem necessarily to mean, then he holds to the personality of God; and we have no further controversy with him. But if he means by these terms nothing at all which implies a conscious personality working with a conscious purpose; if his real meaning is that God is not intelligent in any intelligible sense, that he is not good in any human sense of goodness, — why, then we must deny to him the name of theist in any sense that would not be "unmeaning verbiage."

But without undertaking to solve these contradictions, let us consider the implications and consequences of the system in general, in so far as it relates to our main purpose. One thing is certain: Evolutionists of the Spencerian type do not believe in a creation, — in an absolute commencement of the material universe. "The Doctrine of Evolution is throughout irreconcilably opposed to the Doctrine of Creation;"⁵ so that, although the

¹ *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 449.

² *Idea of God*, p. 135.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁴ *Destiny of Man*, p. 115. It might be, and indeed has been, thought that in these later works Mr. Fiske has made an advance towards belief in a personal God; but he himself, in the preface of the one last published (*Idea of God*), expressly denies that in that respect he has any new view. He only acknowledges that in the *Cosmic Philosophy's* theistic theory he did not adequately evolve what was involved, namely, the teleological element indicated by man's place in nature (p. xxii).

⁵ Fiske, *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 376.

notion of the eternity of matter may be called unthinkable,¹ yet there is no alternative but to believe that matter never had a beginning. This is the assumption that underlies the system. The persistence of Force, which is assumed as an axiom, is only another expression for the same idea. Matter indestructible, Force persistent,—this means that there never has been, and never will be, any diminution in the amount of the material universe. A sort of distinction may be made between Force and Matter,—Force being called “the ultimate of ultimates,” and Matter “the differently conditioned manifestations of Force.”² That is, Force is the really objective thing; Matter is the phenomenal form which Force assumes to the cognitive individual. Force is the Unknown Cause, Matter the perceived effect. But a distinction is again made, and “Force, as we know it,” we are told, “can be regarded only as a certain conditioned effect of the Unconditioned Cause. . . . We are irresistibly compelled by the relativity of our thought vaguely to conceive some unknown force as the correlative of the known force.”³ That is, matter and known force are one and the same thing; but we are obliged to postulate an unknown force as corresponding to the phenomena, or as producing them.

Now it makes no essential difference, whether we say, with Spencer, that this unknown Force is the ultimate producer of the visible universe, or, with Tyndall,⁴ that Matter itself is “the promise and potency of every form and quality of life.” The upshot is the same: An unintelligent, unconscious agent is made the ultimate cause of all the palpable world of things, events, and persons. So long as the Absolute Force is assumed to be without intelligence and will, the difference between Force and Matter is a mere metaphysical difference; it is only the difference which divides physicists into the two groups of atomists and dynamists. If, as the latter hold, matter is nothing but force, then to hold that Force is the Ultimate and Absolute Reality is no less correctly to be called materialism than that doctrine which pronounces Matter to be the Fundamental Reality, provided in both cases this Absolute or Fundamental Reality is declared to be unconscious and impersonal. If the Spencerian sticks consistently to this ground, then, though he may repudiate

¹ H. Spencer, *First Principles*, p. 31.

² *Ibid.*, p. 169.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁴ Belfast Address on the *Advancement of Science*, p. 77.

the name of materialist, or even declare that materialism is "irretrievably doomed,"¹ he can have no just ground for complaint, if the name is still applied to him. If he holds, with Spencer himself,² that mental action is nothing but transformed physical force, the "result of some physical force expended in producing it," quite analogous to the transformation of physical forces into one another, it avails nothing to deprecate the name of materialist. He who makes mind and mental action the simple result of physical forces, and absolutely dependent on a physical organism, makes mind by implication cease with the physical organism itself.³

But putting aside questions of personal consistency and mere terminology, let us come down to more vital matters. How does this Evolution theory leave the question of the cognition of truth? Stated in brief, the theory is that knowledge is relative, which doctrine (correct enough if properly defined) is here made to mean that in strictness "we know nothing directly save modifications of consciousness." The theory is Idealism, with the exception that there is assumed or inferred an Unknown Something which "causes the changes."⁴ But it is also assumed that the Unknown Something "might generate," in a different being from man, "some state or states wholly different from what we know as the cognition of a material object."⁵ Practi-

¹ *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 440.

² *First Principles*, § 71.

³ *I*de B. P. Bowne, *Philosophy of Herbert Spencer*, p. 18. Mr. Spencer, in his *Principles of Psychology*, vol. i. part ii. chap. i., does indeed seem sharply to distinguish between Mind and Matter, and even says that it would be easier to translate physical phenomena into mental phenomena than *vice versa* (p. 159). But the conclusion is that with reference both to the units of external force and to the units of feeling we only know them as presented in their symbols, and "no translation can carry us beyond our symbols" (p. 161). Ultimately "the conditioned form under which Being is presented in the Subject cannot, any more than the conditioned form under which Being is presented in the Object, be the Unconditioned Being common to the two" (p. 162). Thus, after all, mind and matter are finally identified in the Unconditioned Being. They are only phenomenally distinct. Mr. Fiske (*Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 444) quotes Spencer (p. 158), as arguing against the possibility of identifying a unit of feeling with a unit of motion. He finds it necessary to change Spencer's "nervous shock" into "psychical shock," adding that Mr. Spencer authorizes him to say that he (Mr. Spencer) "thoroughly approves of the emendation." It is noticeable, however, that in the third edition of the book, published seven years after the *Cosmic Philosophy*, the passage is left absolutely unchanged.

⁴ *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. i. pp. 86, 87.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

cally the Cosmic Philosophy has all the strength and all the weakness of Idealism. Mr. Fiske¹ repudiates Berkeley's assumption of a divine will as producing in us these various states of consciousness, on the ground that "it is a hypothesis which can be neither proved nor disproved." But in place of God Mr. Fiske puts an Unknown Reality, the existence of which is also a pure hypothesis, which can be neither proved nor disproved, — certainly not on the principles of the Cosmic Philosophy. For, according to those principles, causation is something which we come to believe in simply through experience. Where an experience is absolutely uniform, we are unable not to think that the same conditions will be attended with the same experience. If fire always burns, so far as our experience goes, then we are compelled to believe that it has always burned, and always will burn, simply because we cannot "transcend our experience."² But how, then, do we come to know anything about the Unknowable Something which is at the bottom of all our various states of consciousness? Certainly, according to the theory in question, we have no *experience* of that Unknown Something whose existence is postulated. If the empirical theory of the notion of causation contains the whole truth, then there is no ground whatever for inferring the existence of this Absolute Being, nor even for inferring the *universality* of a connection of events, simply from the fact that we individually never experienced an exception.

But Mr. Fiske does not long stick to his own explanation. When he asks the question, "What is the belief in the necessity and universality of causation?" he answers, "It is the belief that every event must be determined by some preceding event, and must itself determine some succeeding event."³ *Must* be determined? Why *must* be? We never have had any *experience* of such a *necessity*. But, we are told, an event "is a manifestation of force. The falling of a stone, the union of two gases," and every other event, up to "the thinking of a thought, the excitement of an emotion, — all these are manifestations of force."⁴ Of *force*? What force? One force? or various forces? And what is meant by force? It is that which *manifests* itself in an event, — which is simply another way of saying that the force *causes* the event. And so the important result of the whole

¹ *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. i. p. 76.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 146-149.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 147, 148.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

matter is that our belief in the necessity and universality of causation is the belief that every event must have a cause! If the author had propounded this as an ultimate dictum of consciousness, we might accept it as substantially a correct statement of the truth. But when it comes from one who can speak in no terms too contemptuous of those who pursue the "subjective" or *a priori* method of philosophizing, we are compelled to ask what else this is than an *a priori* assumption. But Mr. Fiske may reply that he discards the metaphysical notion of cause as implying an *occulta vis* "which operates as an invincible nexus between it and the effect." "Viewed under its subjective aspect," he tells us, "our knowledge of causation amounts simply to this, — that an experience of certain invariable sequences among phenomena has wrought in us a set of corresponding indissolubly coherent sequences among our states of consciousness; so that whenever the state of consciousness answering to the cause arises, the state of consciousness answering to the effect inevitably follows." And then we are further told that "the proposition that the cause constrains the effect to follow is an unthinkable proposition; since it requires us to conceive the action of matter upon matter, which . . . we can in no wise do." "What we do know is neither more nor less than what is given in consciousness; namely, that certain coexistences invariably precede or follow certain other coexistences."¹

Now to all this it might be replied that what is here affirmed as the essential element in the notion of causation, namely, the experience of an *invariable* sequence in consciousness corresponding to an invariable sequence in phenomena, is precisely *not* the essential thing. The burnt child dreads the fire, and assumes that the fire causes the burning after *one* experience, and does not go on indefinitely experimenting till it has satisfied itself that the experience is invariable; moreover, that it is *absolutely* invariable could *never* be determined by mere experience.² But letting this pass, how is it that, if we cannot conceive of matter as acting on matter, we not only can, but must, according to this

¹ *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. i. pp. 154, 155.

² "This belief in the uniformity of the order of nature is an ultimate fact of mind. It is not produced by experience; on the contrary, it anticipates experience." — J. J. Murphy, *Scientific Bases of Faith*, p. 96. Cf. J. Buchanan, *Faith in God and Modern Atheism Compared*, vol. i. p. 224; G. H. Lewes, *History of Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 341 (5th ed., 1880).

same authority, conceive of an Absolute Reality as causing these changes in our consciousness? Mr. Fiske does not deny the intrinsic possibility of matter acting on matter, but simply affirms that we have no consciousness of it.¹ Very well; but does he have any *consciousness* of this Absolute Power as generating within him his changes of consciousness? The only ground he has for postulating this Unknown Something is that we *must* assume some such thing as the *cause* of the changes in us.² And yet this Something, he says, is "beyond consciousness."³ There is certainly a great lack of luminous self-consistency in all this. But this is not all. What is it, according to this Cosmic Philosophy, which produces these changing states of consciousness in us? At one time⁴ we are told that they are "wrought" by an "experience of certain invariable sequences among phenomena;" at another time,⁵ that these changing states of consciousness are "caused" by the "noumenon," the Absolute but Unknown Something. The two representations may indeed be reconciled, if the meaning is that the Something *directly* produces the phenomena, while the phenomena directly produce the states of consciousness. This seems to be implied in the statement elsewhere⁶ made, that "there is a single Being of which all phenomena, internal and external to consciousness, are manifestations." But what are we to understand by phenomena "external to consciousness"? Inasmuch as all we know is "modifications of our consciousness,"⁷ what ground is there for distinguishing between the internal and external phenomena? They are all internal; and we therefore have no right to talk about "an experience of certain invariable sequences among phenomena" working "in us a set of corresponding indissolubly coherent sequences among our states of consciousness." "What we mean by a tree," we are told, "is merely a congeries of qualities. . . . If we were destitute of sight, touch, smell, taste, hearing, and muscular sensibility, all these qualities would cease to exist, and therefore the tree would cease to be a tree."⁸ Here is pure Idealism, but less tenable than that of Berkeley; for Berkeley consistently held that our intuitive belief in causation necessitates the assumption of an

¹ *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. i. p. 155.

² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 84, quoted approvingly from Spencer's *Principles of Psychology*, vol. i. p. 208.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 86, 93.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 80, 81.

Intelligent Being who causes our sensations, whereas, when the Cosmic Philosophy assumes an "Unknown Reality which causes in us these groups of sensations," it is in open contradiction with its own theory of the notion of causation; since, as has been shown, to assume such an Unknown Reality, *outside* of consciousness, as the *cause* of the subjective phenomena, while at the same time causation is affirmed to be merely an experience of a certain constant correspondence in the phenomena *inside* of consciousness, is a most flagrant inconsistency. If the philosophy is to be made consistent with itself, we must retain what is fundamental in it, namely, the empirical theory of cognition, and abandon the assumption of an Absolute Reality about which we know nothing.

But the point to which we are coming is this: What evidence have we that any one of these states of consciousness really *answers* to anything distinct from itself? In other words, Is there any *truth* in these phenomena of the conscious mind? When the fundamental postulates of the Development philosophy are divested of all illicit accretions, it is found to be an assertion that our states of consciousness are an ultimate fact, and that, strictly speaking, we know nothing else than that we have such and such thoughts and sensations. That they represent, or correspond to, any *reality*, we have no right to assert. Reality is nothing but "inexpugnable persistence in consciousness." What, then, is the test of truth? Or, we may perhaps rather ask, what is truth? The common conception of it is the agreement between our conceptions and objective fact. But when it is expressly maintained that we can know nothing about objective facts, how are we ever going to learn whether our conceptions do correspond to the objective facts? Mr. Fiske says the above definition is a definition of Absolute Truth, whereas "the only truth with which we have any concern is Relative Truth;"¹ and for relative truth he lays down the criterion: "When any given order among our conceptions is so coherent that it cannot be sundered except by the temporary annihilation of some one of its terms, there must be a corresponding order among phenomena." But why *must* there be? "Because," it is added, "the order of our conceptions is the expression of our experience of the order of the phenomena."² But inasmuch as, on the theory in question,

¹ *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. i. p. 70.

² *Ibid.*, p. 71.

phenomena are nothing but subjective experiences, this amounts only to saying that the order of our conceptions is what it is. Mr. Fiske illustrates the point by the case of the conception of iron as being that of something which will not float in water. "If the subjective order of my conceptions is such that the concept of a solid lump of iron and the concept of a body floating in water will destroy each other rather than be joined together, and I therefore say that a solid lump of iron will not float in water, what do I mean by it? Do I intend any statement concerning the unknown external thing, or things, which when acting upon my consciousness causes in me the perception of iron, and water, and floating or sinking? By no means. I do not even imply that such modes of existence as iron or water, or such modes of activity as floating or sinking, pertain to the unknown external reality at all. . . . By my statement I only imply that whenever that same unknown thing, or things, acts upon my consciousness, or upon the consciousness of any being of whom intelligence can be properly predicated, there will always ensue the perception of iron sinking in water, and never the perception of iron floating in water."¹ But if the thing that acts on my consciousness is absolutely unknown, how can I legitimately speak about "that *same* unknown thing," as acting at different times and on different persons? How can I *identify* this unknown thing at all? How do I know, in case I have a repeated experience of the same sensation, that it is the *same* unknown thing that produces it? If the thing itself is unknown, then I cannot know enough about it to make any affirmation about it. I do not know but that different unknown things may make the same impression, or that the same unknown thing may make different impressions. In fact, on the theory under consideration, I really know nothing about the whole matter at all, except that I have such and such impressions, perceptions, conceptions, or whatever else my states of consciousness may be called. The sole test of truth, according to this philosophy, is our inability to "transcend our experience." "We cannot conceive that a lump of iron will float in water. Why? Because our conception of iron, formed solely by experience, is that of a substance which sinks in water; and to imagine it otherwise is to suppress the conception, either of iron or of water, and to substitute some other conception in its place."²

¹ *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. i. pp. 69, 70.

² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

And this is all that is meant when the general test is laid down, that "a proposition of which the negation is inconceivable is necessarily true in relation to human intelligence."¹ Experience determines, with respect to mathematical as well as physical truths,² what we can conceive. To the Indian prince who had never seen water frozen it was inconceivable that water should ever become hard. Why? Because his conception of water, formed solely by experience, was that of a substance which always remains liquid. This conception of water was *true to him*. It was "*relative truth*," indeed; but as relative truth is "the only truth with which we have any concern," it was genuine truth, — just as true as the conception of the Laplander, to whom frozen water is very familiar. Neither the one nor the other is capable of "transcending his experience," and each must abide by it. So with regard to iron. Other men than Mr. Fiske *have* seen solid pieces of iron float on water. An ordinary needle, if carefully dropped on a smooth surface of water, so that it strikes horizontally, will remain floating on the surface. But Mr. Fiske has evidently never had an "experience" of this. Until he himself sees it, he will be unable to believe it. To him the proposition that a solid mass of iron will always sink in water is one "the negation of which is inconceivable" — just as inconceivable as the proposition that two straight lines cannot inclose a space.³

Now, if this is so, then it follows that one man's conceptions are just as true as another's. Whatever one experiences, or thinks he experiences, is true. The only kind of untruth possible would be that of a man who should report his own experience falsely. If, for example, one should say that to him all objects are of one color, or that the whole of an apple is no greater than a half, we might say that the man is telling lies, that he does not correctly report his own experience and belief. But, after all, even this cannot be made certain. What he affirms may be unintelligible or incredible to us; but how do we know but that his mind works differently from ours? How do we even know what he means? We only hear certain sounds, which to *us* have a certain meaning; but even if it is certain that those sounds are the product of his mind, we cannot be sure that they mean to us what they mean to him. Identity of experience in different men

¹ *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol i. p. 60.

² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 67.

proves nothing with respect to objective fact. It only proves a similarity in the different minds. It is still possible that oysters on the one hand, or Voltaire's Micromegas on the other, may have minds of such a different order from ours, that what is truth to us is falsehood to them. The human race, in the present stage of the general evolution of things, happens to have, in many things at least, a similar or identical mode of thinking; but in the distant past or distant future an entirely different condition of things from that which now exists may determine mental action.

Some curious results follow as regards the main purpose for which such books as those under consideration are written. Mr. Spencer and Mr. Fiske, for example, denounce various theories of physics and metaphysics as being incorrect. They reason as if they thought that these theories were really *untrue*. They use, in fact, very strong language in their condemnation of them. Who would think that, after all, they really hold that all theories are relatively true, and that none can be called absolutely true?

But again: These evolutionists labor hard not only to show what they and others do or must experience now, but more especially to show what has been the history of things in the indefinite past, anterior to all intelligence. But we must ask, if knowledge comes simply from experience, and has to do only with phenomena, what right has one to make affirmations or even hypotheses respecting the course of things in the inaccessible past? We have been told over and over that the "thing-in-itself" is utterly unknowable, that nothing can be cognized but phenomena, and that phenomena are non-existent except to a cognizant mind. A tree, we are told, "would cease to be a tree," if we were destitute of all our senses.¹ Of course, therefore, in the geologic ages of the distant past, before intelligent creatures existed, there were no trees, nor flowers, nor water, nor rocks, nor air, nor earth. These phenomena are real only in a cognitive consciousness; before the development of such a consciousness, accordingly, these things did not exist. Of course, therefore, it is absurd to undertake to tell about the history of these non-existent things. To argue, for example, that a primeval mist condensed into solid worlds, and that in these, or at least in one of them, various changes took

¹ *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol i. p. 81.

place, till at last the human race was evolved, — all this implies that there really *was* such a mist, and that there were afterwards various *real* forms of minerals, that in those distant ages there really were fire and water, and all the chemical substances which men now talk of. Large volumes are written to tell us about the slow processes by which these substances gradually assumed the shapes and qualities which the visible world now presents. What does all this mean? There could have been no trees nor plants, we are assured, till there were animals able to see them; but on the other hand there could have been no intelligent animals till there had first been a long history of inorganic and vegetable objects out of which the animals were evolved! This is no caricature. It is simply putting side by side two aspects of the philosophy under consideration. If the two are inconsistent with each other, that is not our fault. The only relief for the philosopher who presents us with this conglomeratè as the final science of the world, is to hope for such a further process of evolution as will develop beings capable of seeing that these contradictions are no contradictions at all.¹

But still another interesting corollary may be drawn. We have no knowledge, it is said, of any truth but relative truth. Things are true to us, or false to us, simply according as they agree or disagree with our experiences. We have no right, it is said, to affirm that any proposition is absolutely true. Now, then, what follows? When it is asserted that no proposition can be pronounced absolutely true, is this assertion itself *absolutely* true, or only *relatively* true? If it is *absolutely* true, then we get this edifying result: The proposition, that no proposition can be called absolutely true, is an absolutely true proposition! This of course will not do. It is a worse muddle, if possible, than the old one about all the Cretans being liars. But what is the alternative? If we cannot say that the proposition in question is absolutely true, then we must say that it is *not* absolutely true. But if it is not absolutely true, then it is false. There is no half-way place between truth and falsehood. The euphemism “relative truthfulness” may serve to obscure the confusion of thought of which the author of it is guilty, but it can serve no other purpose. If it has any meaning in itself, it can be only another way of expressing doubt: to say that a statement is relatively

¹ Unfortunately, however, for this hope, Mr. Fiske is quite sure (in his *Destiny of Man*) that evolution has reached its acme in the human race.

true may be equivalent to saying that *perhaps* it is not true, after all. And if the doctrine of the relativity of truth is made general, it can mean only that nothing is certain, that no proposition can be *known* to be either true or false. Consequently the affirmation that any one is in *error* can be only relatively true,—relatively, that is to say, to those who for any reason think that he is in error. The difference between truth and error is a relative difference only. Anything is true—at least relatively true—to one who believes it to be true. To be sure, Mr. Fiske tells us very positively—so positively that one might think he means it as *absolute* truth—that men often profess to believe what they cannot conceive. Thus he says that the scholastic Realists, who pretended to be able to conceive a generic horse, as distinct from all particular horses, did not in fact conceive of such a horse at all, but deluded themselves with the conceit that they thought what in reality was unthinkable.¹ So he says that those who profess to believe in a creation or annihilation of force do the same thing, since they attempt “the impossible task of establishing in thought an equation between something and nothing.”² “Until men have become quite freed,” he says, “from the inveterate habit of using words without stopping to render them into ideas, they may doubtless go on asserting propositions which conflict with experience; but it is none the less true [*relatively* true, of course] that valid conceptions wholly at variance with the subjective register of experience can at no time be framed. And it is for this reason that we cannot frame a conception of nitrogen which will support combustion, or of a solid lump of iron which will float in water, or of a triangle which is round, or of a space enclosed by two straight lines.”³ In all this he is speaking not merely for himself, but for all men. “So long as human intelligence has been human intelligence,” he says, “it can never have been possible to frame in thought an equation between something and nothing.”⁴ Well, we quite assent to this proposition, and even believe it to be *absolutely* true, though of course we do not for that reason agree that this is a correct statement of the doctrine of creation. But the philosopher who maintains that experience is the only test of truth has no right to be so sweeping in his affirmations. The doctrines which he rejects cannot be consistently called by him erroneous;

¹ *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. i. p. 67.

² *Ibid.*, p. 148, cf. p. 65.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

for he cannot know what the experience of other minds may be. Error and truth are both relative, according to his philosophy; what is error to one may be truth to another. It being impossible to know anything about objective facts, nothing can certainly be affirmed to be erroneous. For if it were *certain* that any opinion is erroneous, then we should have an *absolute truth*; but this is something which we are not allowed to postulate. Such is the hopeless absurdity into which this evolutionary doctrine of the relativity of knowledge necessarily runs.

EXCURSUS III.¹

PERSONALITY AND THE ABSOLUTE.

PROBABLY there will never be a perfect agreement as to the value of the ontological and cosmological arguments. The view we have expressed seems to us at least not unfair, and one which the general history of the discussion bears out.² It is noteworthy that the prevalent tendency of non-Christian thinking at the present time (as seen especially in Herbert Spencer and his school) is to insist on the necessity of assuming the reality of an Absolute Something as the *ens realissimum*. It is true, as we have shown, that this conclusion is reached at a considerable expense of logical consistency. The Spencerian philosophy agrees substantially with Hume and Mill in making the causal judgment nothing but a result of the experience of invariable sequence.³ The notion of *cause* is, properly speaking, evacuated of its meaning. The *necessity* of thinking that every event has a cause is not recognized, — a necessity which is as imperative at the first observation of a certain sequence as at the thousandth repetition of it. In short, causation, in the ordinary sense of the word, is flatly denied. Yet causation, in precisely that ordinary sense, is assumed as an explanation of our experience of the phenomenal world. The only evidence of an Absolute Something is the necessity of a *cause* for the experiences which we have. So Mr. Fiske in fact seems to conceive the matter. “Suppose now we grant,” he says,⁴ “for the sake of argument, that the only real existence is mind with its conscious modifications. The question at once arises, What is the cause of these modifications? Since consciousness is continually changing its states, what is it that determines the sequence of states?” Again: “There can be no changes in our consciousness unless there exist something

¹ See p. 54.² Cf. Dorner, *Christian Doctrine*, §§ 18–22.³ Mr. Spencer himself nowhere, so far as we know, takes up this question as a speculative one. There is good reason for assuming, however, that he would substantially agree with Mr. Fiske's exposition of the subject.⁴ *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. i. pp. 75, 76.

which is changed, and something which causes the changes. . . . Abolish the noumenon, and the phenomenon is by the same act annihilated.”¹ Here, as frequently elsewhere, the necessity of a cause is assumed, and the cause is regarded as that which “*determines*” the effect. And it is only from this assumed necessity of a determining cause that the existence of the Absolute Something is inferred. When he discusses causation, however, more formally, he affirms that it is nothing but “the unconditional invariable sequence of one event, or concurrence of events, upon another.”² “The hypothesis of an *occulta vis* . . . straight-way lands us in an impossibility of thought. The proposition, that the cause constrains the effect to follow, is an unthinkable proposition. . . . What we do know is neither more nor less than what is given in consciousness, namely, that certain coexistences invariably precede or follow certain other coexistences.”³ Now it may be that the author might make some subtle distinction by which it would appear that there is here no contradiction. But to the ordinary mind it would seem to be a matter of comparative indifference whether a cause is defined as that which “determines” an effect, or as that which “constrains an effect to follow.” How the one should be the orthodox conception of cause, and the other “an unthinkable proposition,” is itself unthinkable.

But the salient point here is that in spite of its theoretic empiricism this philosophy recognizes and even emphasizes the *a priori* conception of causality, and thence deduces the reality of a First Cause. In a general way, then, we may say that the Spencian, as well as the Idealist, the Sensationalist, and the Natural Realist, assumes the existence of a Something distinct from the conscious mind. In the definition of this Something they may disagree; but all agree that there is a Reality — an ultimate Substance, or Force, or Energy, or Person — of which the palpable universe of things is an effect, or outflow, or expression. In the Anselmic form the ontological argument can hardly have much weight, in so far as it gives itself out as a real argument. But it is certainly valid when one argues that, if there is any real existence, there must be an ultimate, eternal, and necessary reality. The alternative is plain: The universe either must have begun to exist, or it must have existed eternally. But it could not have

¹ *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. i. pp. 86, 87.

² *Ibid.*, p. 154.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

begun to exist without a cause outside of itself. This cause, then, must itself have been eternal, or in turn the effect of another cause; and so on. But an infinite series is impossible, and would afford the mind no relief even if it were possible. We must assume an Ultimate Cause, a First Cause, which must be also an eternal, self-existent Cause. This argument, however, only amounts to this: that *something* has existed eternally, that something is absolute and self-existent. This something, so far as the argument goes, may however be a blind and unconscious Force. It cannot even be proved to be absolutely necessary to assume that this eternal something is in any strict sense a unit. The argument does not demonstrate but that a multitude of things may have been eternally existent, although it may easily be made probable that there has been some single or unifying principle underlying all the phenomenal world. It is, therefore, not clear how one can go so far as to affirm, as Professor Harris does,¹ that "in the knowledge of rationality we necessarily postulate absolute Reason." That the phenomena of rational minds suggest a Supreme Being possessed of reason; that the existence of a universe of rational beings leads the mind to favor, or even almost irresistibly leads it to adopt, the hypothesis of a Supreme Rational Being, may be freely admitted and even insisted on. But all this falls short of saying that in the knowledge of rationality we *necessarily* postulate absolute Reason. There is no self-contradiction — nothing strictly inconceivable — in the hypothesis, that human reason is the product of an unreasoning force. Dr. Harris's proof of his proposition seems to be substantially only a mere repetition of it. "The possibility of concluding reasoning in an inference which gives knowledge rests on universal truths regulative of all thinking." This, of course, is true. But when there follows the statement, "The validity of these universal truths involves the existence of Reason unconditioned, universal, and supreme, the same everywhere and always," one may ask, How does this appear? In geometrical reasoning certain universal and regulative truths are assumed. But does it necessarily follow that there is a Supreme Being in whom these truths are realized, or by whom they are constituted truths? Would not mathematical axioms be true even if there were no Supreme Rational Being? Would it not still be true that a thing cannot at once be and not be? If so, how can one conclude, with Dr. Harris, "If absolute

¹ *Self-Revelation of God*, p. 155.

Reason does not exist, no reason and no rational knowledge exist"? By "absolute Reason" is evidently meant an absolute personal Being endowed with reason; otherwise the phrase would have no intelligible sense.¹ But the argument, however forcible as the analysis of an instinctive theistic impulse, can hardly be urged as a conclusive demonstration. Even though it be made certain that without the assumption of a personal God the universe and human history become an impenetrable mystery and a wretched farce, still no one can say that this cannot possibly be the correct description of the actual state of things. One does not like to think that everything has been and ever must be a farce; but this dislike does not disprove absolutely the proposition that it is one.

On the other hand, the agnostic doctrine that the Absolute Being cannot be personal is still less tenable. The Ultimate Substance is first defined in such a way that personality cannot belong to it; and then a solemn argument is constructed to show that we cannot properly conceive it as personal! "The definition of the Absolute," says Mr. Fiske,² "is that which exists out of all relations." In like manner Dean Mansel³ says, "The Absolute, as such, is independent of all relation." Herbert Spencer quotes this approvingly; and all three deduce the inference that the Absolute cannot be conceived, though Spencer argues, against Hamilton and Mansel, that the notion of the Infinite and the Absolute is not a pure negation. He speaks of the Absolute as the "Irrelative"⁴ or "Non-relative."⁵ He compares the antithesis with that between the correlative concepts of Whole and Part, Equal and Unequal, Singular and Plural, and says that, as there can be no idea of equality without one of inequality, so "the Relative is itself conceivable as such, only by opposition to the Irrelative or Absolute."⁶ Now this is mere word-jugglery. It is true that, to us at least, clear knowledge implies distinction of one thing from another, and especially of things from their opposites. Some conceptions necessarily imply others. Thus

¹ This is more distinctly avowed at a later point, where the argument is more expanded, pp. 366 *seq.*

² *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. i. p. 9.

³ *Limits of Religious Thought*, 5th ed., p. 53. On page 31 he defines it as "that which exists in and by itself, having no necessary relation to any other being."

⁴ *First Principles*, 2d ed., p. 89.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

“husband” has no meaning except as “wife” is implied. Mr. Spencer, however, would apparently find the true antithesis to be “husband” and “not-husband.” Well, we can, if we choose, so treat every conception: “sweet” may be contrasted with the “not-sweet,” “long” with “not-long,” “cat” with “not-cat,” etc. But this is not the way in which we come to these conceptions. A child learns to distinguish a cat from a dog, or from a hen, or from a horse; but no one undertakes to help the infantile cognitions by contrasting the cat with the non-cat. So with the Relative. The natural antithesis is between the *relative* and the *correlative*. A parent is a parent only as related to a child; a son is a son only as related to a parent. Each term is relative; each is related to the other; there is an antithesis, not of contradiction, but of relation. Now, when one speaks of the Relative in the abstract, he is speaking of what has no substantial existence; and it is mere word-play to set it over against a Non-relative that has as little substantial existence.¹ If one speaks of a particular thing, as, say, of the Mediterranean, one may describe it by setting forth its relations, — its length and breadth, as related to a conventional standard of measurement; its constitution, as related to other material substances; its position, as related to continents and oceans, etc. Any one concept is thus defined by a multitude of relations. But if any one should define the Mediterranean as the Relative, or a Relative, to be conceived and defined as contrasted with the Absolute, we should have doubts of his sanity. Now, what we know of relations has to do with these *mutual* relations, — correlations. In a general way, it may be said that every individual object is related to every other more or less intimately. The cosmos is a network of correlated things. But by what right do we lump all these things together and dub them “the Relative”? There is no ground for doing so, and no meaning in it, unless we know of some object which is to be distinguished from the totality of the cosmos, and which yet sustains a relation to it. But if there is such an object; if for this purpose the

¹ A little child once asked his mother, “Does God know everything?” “Yes, certainly,” she replied. “No,” was the retort, “there is one thing he does not know; he does not know what ‘gookie’ means.” This “gookie,” which the child had invented as meaning nothing, may not inaptly be likened to the philosophers’ Relative, being about equally shadowy and unmeaning; and the setting of the Relative and the Non-relative over against each other, with the philosophical subtleties that are connected with the process, is about as instructive as it would be to discourse about the “gookie” and the “non-gookie.”

cosmos may be conceived as a unit, and the other object as another unit, — then the two objects are related to each other; they are *correlatives*. If, for example, the universe of animate and inanimate things is as a whole conceived to have been created by a Divine Being, then this Being and the Universe are *related* to each other as Creator and Creation. Mr. Spencer himself cannot avoid implying this. He speaks repeatedly of the “relation” between the Relative and the Non-relative.¹ Now, if one chooses to call the world as a whole the Relative, he can do so; albeit the expression conveys no clear sense. Also, if he chooses, he can conceive the world as distinguished from and related to the Deity, and can call the Deity the Absolute. But if, after thus naming these *correlative* objects, he adds that the proper definition of the Absolute is that which is independent of all relations, and goes on to entangle himself in metaphysical snarls growing out of this gratuitous self-contradiction, it is difficult to have patience with the process, or to have much respect for the logical acumen of the reasoner.

Yet this is precisely what these writers do. The existence of the Absolute is inferred from the essential relativity of human knowledge. “There can be no impressions unless there exist a something which is impressed and a something which impresses. . . . Abolish the noumenon, and the phenomenon is by the same act annihilated.” Consequently, it is said, we must postulate a First Cause. But such a cause “can have no necessary relation to any other form of being;” for if it had, it would be partially dependent upon that other form of being, and would not be the First Cause. Consequently the First Cause must be complete in itself, independent of all relations; that is, it must be absolute.² And so the result is that, since the phenomenal world cannot be conceived except as related to a cause (which cause must then of course be *related* to the world), this cause must be one that has *no* relations, and consequently cannot be the cause of the world! It needs but a small modicum of clear thought to enable one to say: If (as is affirmed) the Relative and the Absolute imply one another, that is, are *correlatives*, then *both* the Relative and the Absolute are relatives; consequently, to define the Absolute as the Non-relative is a simple piece of stupidity and superfluous self-contradiction.

¹ *First Principles*, vol. i. p. 91.

² This is given almost verbatim from Fiske, *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. i. pp. 8, 9, 87.

So with regard to the conception of the Infinite. No doubt there are difficulties in framing this conception. From the time when Zeno proved the impossibility of motion, down to the time when Kant and Hamilton set forth their antinomies, the speculative mind has amused or vexed itself with metaphysical puzzles growing out of the conceptions of the infinite and the infinitesimal.¹ If the Infinite is conceived as the sum total of reality — as the All — then there is no Finite that can be contrasted with it, unless we conceive of the Infinite as a whole, made up of finite parts. But such an Infinite would not be truly infinite, unless we assume the finite parts to be infinite in number; and even then the conception is not pure. The parts may be conceived as smaller or larger. Would an infinite number of large parts make a *larger* Infinite than an infinite number of small ones? Now, when one simply defines God as the Infinite, and (consciously or unconsciously) cherishes this quantitative conception of infinity, and yet desires to distinguish the material universe and the human race from God, he can involve himself in inextricable tangles. But why, in the name of common sense, should one manufacture a maze to get lost in? What is the necessity for attaching to the Deity this mathematical notion of quantitative boundlessness? If he is thought of as Spirit, such a physical conception of him is incongruous. If the term Infinite is applied to him at all, it must be so defined as to be consistent with what is really thought about him. He cannot be thought of as occupying infinite space; and as to infinite duration, whatever difficulty may inhere in the conception, it is no greater as related to God than as related to any single atom, or the universe of atoms,

¹ The puzzles are real; and it is not a full solution to argue, with Spencer and many other critics of the Hamiltonian doctrine, that we have a positive though inadequate, as distinguished from a negative, conception of the Infinite. All men can have only an inadequate notion of the distance between the earth and Sirius; but it can be expressed in figures which have a definite relation to distances of which we do have a very positive conception. But when it is said that 100 forms no larger proportion of an infinite number than 10 does, we are introduced into an altogether different order of relations. We can after a sort conceive of half the distance to Sirius; but when it is said that an infinite distance is not divisible into parts, while we may still retain the positive conception of distance, the infinity, *qua* infinity, is certainly not positively conceived. But this does not imply that we may not have a positive notion of something of which infinity is predicated. We have a positive notion of space; and when we say that space is infinite, we still retain the positive notion of space, though we do not have a positive conception of the infinity.

provided they are conceived as eternal. When infinity is predicated of his knowledge or his power, it can properly mean no more than that he can know all that there is to know, and do all that can be done consistently with his other attributes and with the nature of things.

When, now, we are loftily told that personality is utterly inconsistent with infinity and absoluteness, we can receive the dictum with great equanimity. Personality, it is said, involves limitation. Consciousness, we are reminded, is formed of successive states, whereas such a succession is irreconcilable with the unchangeableness and omniscience ascribed to the Deity. Volition in like manner is declared to be quite inconceivable in an infinite being. "The willing of each end excludes from consciousness for an interval the willing of other ends, and therefore is inconsistent with that omnipresent activity which simultaneously works out an infinity of ends." Likewise, inasmuch as intelligence, as alone conceivable by us, presupposes existences independent of it and objective to it, "to speak of an intelligence which exists in the absence of all such alien activities is to use a meaningless word." The conclusion, then, is that our conception of the First Cause is not pure, till it has sloughed off all these anthropomorphic limitations, and "becomes a consciousness which transcends the forms of distinct thought, though it forever remains a consciousness."¹

After having established this point, Mr. Spencer proceeds to meet an objection naturally raised against his ghost theory of the origin of religious conceptions. Since the savage's notion of "the material double of a dead man" is baseless, how, it is asked, can a purification of this conception lead to anything better founded? "If the primitive belief was absolutely false, all derived beliefs must be absolutely false." To this it is replied that there is, after all, a germ of truth in the primitive conception, "the truth, namely, that the power which manifests itself in consciousness is but a differently conditioned form of the power which manifests itself beyond consciousness." That is, it is explained, every voluntary act yields to the primitive man proof of a source of energy within him. His "sense of effort, being the perceived antecedent of changes produced by him, becomes the conceived antecedent of changes not produced by him." He conceives the

¹ H. Spencer, *Ecclesiastical Institutions*, 2d ed., pp. 835-837 (Part VI. of *Principles of Sociology*).

“doubles of the dead” to be the workers of “all but the most familiar changes.” In course of time the idea of force “comes to be less and less associated with the idea of a human ghost,” and “the dissociation reaches its extreme in the thoughts of the man of science who interprets in terms of force not only the visible changes of sensible bodies, but all physical changes whatever.” Nevertheless even the scientist “is compelled to symbolize objective force in terms of subjective force from lack of any other symbol.” And so, “the final outcome of that speculation commenced by the primitive man, is that the Power manifested throughout the Universe distinguished as material is the same Power which in ourselves wells up under the form of consciousness.”¹

It is difficult not to think that Mr. Spencer feels the force of the objection more keenly than he confesses. If not, his composure is not creditable to his perspicacity. Observe the position: Personality, as implying self-consciousness, volition, and intelligence, is declared to be quite inconceivable in the Absolute Being. The process of “deanthropomorphization” (to use Mr. Fiske’s term) has gone so far as to abolish all the characteristics of personality from the First Cause and leave it nothing but pure Force or Energy as its essential feature. “The last stage reached is recognition of the truth that force as it exists beyond consciousness cannot be like what we know as force within consciousness; and that yet, as either is capable of generating the other, they must be different modes of the same.”² Here are several strange things: (1) Two forms of force are declared to be “different modes of the same,” and yet not “like.” Just before we are told that the internal energy of which external changes are the consequents “is the same energy which, freed from anthropomorphic accompaniments, is now figured as the cause of all external phenomena.” The same energy, and yet not like! But (2) this sameness is inferred from the fact that the two forms are capable of generating each other. The conscious person generates force. Good; let this be granted. And the conscious person is led by the principle of causality to infer a power outside of him as the cause of his conscious personality. Good again; but how does it appear that the two forces are necessarily the same? All that consciousness testifies to is at best only that there is causation in the two cases. But if they are the same because both are the

¹ *Ecclesiastical Institutions*, 2d ed., pp. 837-839.

² *Ibid.*, p. 839.

result of energy, why not conclude that both kinds are *conscious* energy rather than that one is conscious and the other unconscious? All that we are directly conscious of is the exercise of force in ourselves. If this is the primitive source of our notion of power, then how does it come to be so defecated as to lose the one characteristic (volition) which originally marked it? But our perplexity is increased, when we compare all this with what Mr. Spencer elsewhere¹ says. Speaking of the First Cause, he says, "Can it be like in kind to anything of which we have sensible experience? Obviously not. Between the creating and the created there must be a distinction transcending any of the distinctions existing between different divisions of the created. That which is uncaused cannot be assimilated to that which is caused, the two being, in the very naming, antithetically opposed. . . . It is impossible to put the Absolute in the same category with anything relative." But now we are assured that the two kinds of force generate each other; each is both creator and created; instead of arguing that the creating and the created must as such be utterly unlike, he assumes them for that very reason to be only different modes of the same power! (3) Another difficulty appears when we ask why the distinction between the Absolute and the Relative is so fatal to *personality* in the Absolute, but is not also fatal to *power* in the Absolute. Consciousness, will, etc. in finite man, we are told, are known only as concerned with succession, with correlated existences, etc. Therefore, it is said, these attributes of personality cannot belong to the Absolute, since they would annul the absoluteness. Well, then, what about the *power* of which the finite person is conscious? Does not every exertion of power imply an objective something on which it is exerted? Does it not imply succession in time? Each exertion can be conceived as real, only as distinguished from others. Finiteness and relativity belong to the exertion of power as much as to the phenomena of consciousness. How then can there be an Absolute Power, but not an Absolute Person? Every metaphysical difficulty which may be brought against the one may be equally well brought against the other; and the upshot, if one allows himself to be frightened by the bugbear of the Absolute at all, is that it must be pronounced to be without any definable character whatever. It can only be called Something, unless the

¹ *First Principles*, 2d ed., p. 81.

Hegelian designation, Nothing, may be thought preferable. Mr. Spencer, to be sure, resents the imputation that in making the Absolute unknowable he makes it a mere negation, and takes offense at Mr. Harrison for calling his Absolute the "All-nothingness."¹ But he does not satisfactorily meet the charge that his doctrine of the Absolute is self-contradictory. He has no right to call it unknowable, if he knows it to be a power at all. But according to his premises respecting the absolute, he has no right to predicate power or any other conceivable attribute to it.

We can, therefore, afford to listen with great composure to these oracular utterances respecting the impossibility of predicating personality of the Absolute. Even though we may concede that for us conscious personality involves a constant succession and change of conscious states,² we are not therefore obliged to assume that there can be no form of consciousness, in which there is no such change and succession. But even if it could be proved that consciousness necessarily implies change and succession, what shall the theist say? Why, simply that God, then, is not unchangeable in any such sense as to exclude consciousness. If any scholastic notions of the divine attributes lead to a doctrine of God which involves such a limitation of him, there is no law of the Medes and Persians which prohibits us from abandoning such a self-fettering method of conceiving the Deity.³ Absolute and rigid changelessness is neither a more precious, nor a more necessary, element in our conception of the Deity than conscious personality. Least of all need we to be frightened from the current notion of the divine Personality by a philosopher who tries to frighten us from it by a process of argumentation which swarms with self-contradictions.

¹ *Nineteenth Century*, 1884, p. 502.

² As argued by Mr. Spencer, *Principles of Psychology*, chap. xxvi. *et passim*.

³ Cf. the *New Englander*, 1875, my article on the *Metaphysical Idea of Eternity*.

EXCURSUS IV.¹

LELAND AND WATSON ON THE PRIMEVAL REVELATION.

PROFESSOR FLINT (*Theism*, ed. 5, note iv, p. 338) quotes and endorses Dr. Fairbairn on this point. He makes the additional argument, that the theory of primeval revelation is inconsistent with the Protestant rejection of tradition, besides being "wholly untenable in the light of modern science." He does not explain how either of these considerations conflicts with the theory. Such an explanation is especially needed, inasmuch as he has immediately before (p. 21) distinctly emphasized that "we owe our theism in great part to our Christianity, — that natural religion has had no real existence prior to or apart from what has claimed to be revealed religion." His view, then, apparently is the very defensible one, that religion is both natural and revealed, that man has a natural tendency to believe in a God, and that God also has from the beginning specially revealed himself, thus confirming the natural tendency. It is not obvious what especially new light has been thrown on this problem by the wider study of ethnography which, Dr. Flint intimates, has overthrown the theory of a primitive revelation as a source of religious belief. Whatever difficulties may be found in the multiplicity and diversity of human religions, these do not disprove the theory of a primitive revelation which may have become corrupted or obscured. Professor Flint refers with approval to Professor Cocker's discussion of this question in his *Christianity and Greek Philosophy*. Cocker holds that "the universal phenomenon of religion has originated in the *a priori* apperceptions of reason and the natural instinctive feelings of the heart, which from age to age have been vitalized, unfolded, and perfected by supernatural communications and testamentary revelations" (p. 97). He refers (p. 86) with condemnation to Leland, Watson, and others as holding that "all our religious knowledge is derived from *oral revelation alone*." The difference between the two views is, however, too much emphasized. Thus Leland (*Ad-*

¹ See p. 69.

vantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation, chap. i. p. 35) starts with the proposition that "man is a religious creature." He says (p. 36) that "men have faculties capable of contemplating the great Author of their being, and (pp. 38, 39) that God "originally formed and designed him for religion. . . . He put him at his first creation into an immediate capacity of answering this end of his being and entering on a life of religion." He then adds that we must suppose, either that God left man to himself "to acquire the knowledge of religion and his duty by the mere force of his own unassisted reason and experience, or . . . that the wise Author of his being, at his first creation, communicated to him such a knowledge of religion as enabled him immediately to know his Maker and the duty required of him." The argument is that it is not probable that God would leave the first man without adequate religious knowledge. And to the suggestion that man "by the force of his own reason might soon acquire a sufficient knowledge of God and of his duty, and consequently of true religion," he replies that, "though the main principles of all religion, . . . when clearly propounded to the human mind, . . . are perfectly agreeable to the most improved reason and understanding of man, yet it can hardly be supposed that the first man or men, if left to themselves without any instruction or information, would have been able to have formed in a short time a right scheme of religion for themselves founded upon those principles. It would probably have been a long time before he raised his thoughts to things spiritual and invisible, and attained to such a knowledge and contemplation of the work of nature as to have inferred from thence the necessary existence of the one only true God and his infinite perfections" (p. 40). It is here clearly implied that man, as originally created, not only had the capacity for understanding a revelation, but also had faculties by which he might in course of time have come to a knowledge of God and duty. There is in reality only the slightest difference between Leland and Cocker. The latter emphasizes that religion must have *originated* in the apperceptions of reason, that a revelation could not have been apprehended or believed without a previous belief in the reality of God. Leland urges that God could not have left man to himself, and must therefore at the very outset have made himself more particularly known. The one lays stress on the one side, the other on the other; but both admit both; and they are substantially at one.

The case is nearly the same with Watson. He concludes indeed (*Theological Institutes*, vol. i. p. 303) that "we owe the knowledge of the existence of God and of his attributes to revelation alone." But he not only follows this statement with the other, that these being now discovered, "the rational evidence of both is convincing and irresistible," but he also says, when first arguing for the necessity of a revelation: "The whole of this argument is designed to prove that, had we been left, for the regulation of our conduct, to infer the will and purposes of the Supreme Being from his natural works and his administration of the affairs of the world, our knowledge of both would have been essentially deficient; and it establishes a strong presumption in favor of a direct revelation from God to his creatures, that neither his will concerning us nor the hope of forgiveness might be left to dark and uncertain *inference*, but be the subject of an express *declaration*" (p. 12). Here again it is plainly implied that, left to himself, man might have *inferred*, by the use of his natural faculties, the existence and the will of God; it is, however, argued that this inference would have been uncertain, and would have fallen short of positive *knowledge*. Watson does not deny, but asserts, that one's natural constitution predisposes him to inquire concerning God and his will. He only insists that man's full knowledge of God comes from revelation, whereas without the revelation men would have been able, at the best, only to infer and conjecture the existence and character of a Divine Being.

EXCURSUS V.¹

THE CERTAINTIES OF THE AGNOSTIC.

THE demand which is made by the author of *Supernatural Religion*, that, before any testimony for the occurrence of a miracle can even be listened to, the existence of a personal God must first be demonstratively established, provokes one to a retort the validity of which, on the ground assumed by him, ought not to be questioned. The argument against miracles rests upon the assumption that certain laws of nature are incontestably ascertained to be facts. But suppose one should question the certainty of this assumption. The very existence of a material world has been plausibly denied by many philosophers; and many others, if not the most, admit that the existence of such a world is a mere inference from certain mental phenomena. And even if one adopts the common-sense doctrine of the direct perception of matter, yet he is soon nonplussed by the allegation that what seems to be directly perceived is only seemingly perceived, — that matter is made up of invisible atoms *probably*; or, if not of atoms, of forces which answer the same purpose; and that atoms, in order to unite in the formation of concrete objects, must further be assumed to be supplemented by ether, which is also invisible and still more hypothetical than the atoms. Matter, therefore, being something inferred, but never perceived, of course all propositions concerning the *laws* of matter must be equally hypothetical, or even more so; for our notion of laws depends on induction; the laws must come as a secondary inference. The fact of matter must be more certain than the special qualities of it. Consequently the laws of matter must be more hypothetical than the fact of matter; there is an uncertainty of the second degree. But this overthrows the whole argument against the reality of miracles. The argument rests on the assumption that the laws of nature are known and are absolutely uniform; but if the very existence of the natural world is philosophically dubious, if it is problematical whether matter itself is a reality, of course no solid conclusion can be founded on the supposed inviolability of the *laws* of matter. It is true,

¹ See p. 100.

this skeptical conclusion invalidates the argument *for* miracles as much as the one *against* them; it brings us to the point at which all argument and all belief are annulled. But it shows that the boasted argument against the credibility of miracles is a gun which is as destructive at the breech as at the muzzle. He who in so lordly a manner treats theism as a mere hypothesis not deserving any consideration, unless it can be established by a mathematical demonstration, may well be required to consider how deficient his own argument is in the rigid conclusiveness which he demands of others.¹

The author's faith in natural law is so great that he sees no need of any special interference on the part of God, even if there be a God. After giving a representation, not to say caricature, of the Christian doctrine of the creation, the fall, and redemption, he remarks that the theory of a depravation, and the consequent need of a redemption, of man is entirely disproved by "the constitution of nature," which, he says, "bears everywhere the record of systematic upward progression." The Christian theory, he goes on to say, "is contradicted by the whole operation of natural laws, which contain in themselves inexorable penalties against retrogression" (p. 49); and he then fortifies this statement by a quotation from Herbert Spencer (*Social Statics*, p. 64), who gives a demonstration of this proposition, and invites any one who demurs to it to point out the error. The argument is in brief that, all imperfection being "unfitness to the conditions of existence," and this unfitness consisting in a deficiency or excess of faculties, both the deficiency and the

¹ An interesting instance of the adventurousness of scientists with respect to things unknown is found in an author (Philipp Spiller, *Die Entstehung der Welt*, 1870, and other works), who makes ether the primeval source of all being and development (p. 508 *et passim*). Yet the very existence of any such ether is an unproved hypothesis; the conception is one which it is impossible to carry out without self-contradiction. The existence of ether is assumed in order to account for effects apparently produced by one body on another at a distance from it (action at a distance being assumed to be impossible); but the ether itself being conceived to be extraordinarily rarefied, its particles must (in proportion to their size) be at a considerable distance from one another; and so we have, after all, action at a distance; and even if we assume a still finer and more gaseous substance to fill up the still empty space between the several ether particles, and so *ad infinitum*, we still do not get away from the assumption of action at a distance. Yet the pressure and movements of this ether are made by Spiller to explain gravitation, electricity, life, and everything else. This is called science — sure knowledge. Herbert Spencer forcibly states the metaphysical difficulty involved in the hypothesis of an ether (*First Principles*, § 18).

excess will in time be removed by the very fact that the circumstances of life always tend to exercise and strengthen those faculties which are most needed, and to weaken those not needed. Consequently "all excess and all deficiency must disappear; that is, all unfitness must disappear; that is, all imperfection must disappear." One might be the more tempted to have confidence in Mr. Spencer's logical substitute for Redemption, if he himself had not furnished the refutation which he triumphantly challenges the world to produce. In chap. xxiii of his *First Principles*, he demonstrates with equal cogency that it is the law of things, after evolution has reached a certain point, that a process of dissolution shall take place, — a dissolution which does not even wait for absolute perfection to be reached before it begins, but takes place when an "equilibrium" has been reached (p. 519), whatever that may mean. This social and national dissolution, he says, often takes place; such dissolutions may be occasioned by "plague or famine at home, or a revolution abroad" (p. 520); this is a sort of premature dissolution; but dissolution must at any rate begin "where a society has developed into the highest form permitted by the characters of its units" (p. 521). Ultimately, he concludes, the whole solar system will be dissolved into the primeval nebulosity, and then begin again a new process of evolution, and so on *ad infinitum* (pp. 527-537).

Now, Mr. Spencer can hardly mean to say that the nations which have undergone the process of dissolution had previously reached the stage of absolute perfection; and the question arises, What in this case becomes of this law of his, according to which all imperfection must ultimately disappear? The puzzle is increased by the very illustration which Mr. Spencer uses in the argument itself which is said to demonstrate that evolution necessarily leads to perfection. He says, we infer that all men will certainly die, because all men have died, and that with the same certainty we must infer that organs and capacities grow by use and diminish by disuse, simply because all observation shows that they have thus grown and diminished in the past. But this example of death is a wondrously unhappy illustration to make use of; for what is death but the culmination of a *weakening* process which the organs undergo *in spite of* exercise? This is enough to say in reply to the wonderful argument. It *might* indeed be urged that the whole of it is vitiated by an utter ignoring of the facts of the moral and spiritual world.

EXCURSUS VI.¹

BEYSCHLAG ON THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES.

IF Rothe were now living, he would find occasion still to be surprised at the efforts of believing critics to explain miracles and make them intelligible. Among these efforts may be mentioned the treatment of the question of miracles by Beyschlag in his *Leben Jesu* (1885, vol. i. pp. 34 *sqq.*). He says that nature is in a state of disorder caused by sin, as Paul represents it (Rom. viii.), and that the supernatural may be regarded as a restoration of the truly natural. He then asks: "What if *this* were the law of the Biblical miracles, that the Spirit of God, who fills the bearers of revelation, releases in them (especially in certain moments of their official life) those slumbering higher natural forces, in order, in individual, and as it were prophetic, cases, to produce that abolition of evil [of which Paul speaks] and the restoration of ideal naturalness?" This view he enforces by the consideration that the best attested miracles are those of healing, which is simply a restoration of the normal and natural conditions.

It is not clear what is meant here by the suggestion concerning "slumbering forces." Evidently it is not what would be understood by such a phrase in common life. The divine act of "releasing" the slumbering forces in the cases of the Biblical miracles is clearly not analogous, say, to that conjunction of natural agencies by which electricity is discharged, and what is ordinarily unperceived and appears to be inactive becomes a most effective and terrific agent. Beyschlag in his definition of miracles (p. 30) likens God's miraculous intervention to the act of a man whose will modifies, though it does not violate, the forces of nature. Very well; but human agency can make use only of the known and ordinary forces; it is no part of man's province to awaken slumbering (that is, unknown) forces. The hypothesis of such forces is manifestly resorted to in order to explain the rare and exceptional character of miraculous events. It is another way of saying that God intervenes at certain periods, and produces

¹ See p. 111.

startling effects which the ordinary forces of nature could not have produced. We must object, however, to this theory of "slumbering forces," in the first place, that the conception is vague and fanciful. What is a slumbering force? Natural science certainly knows nothing of natural forces which in any proper sense can be called slumbering. Beyschlag's notion appears to be that these forces are occult and unknown to natural science. But if so, what right has one to postulate them? Where is the evidence that there are such forces? The assumption that they exist is, moreover, not only purely imaginary, but entirely gratuitous and useless, unless it is assumed that God cannot act except through natural forces. These slumbering forces are evidently conceived to be natural forces. But we now meet with a second and still more serious objection to this hypothesis, namely, that it is self-destructive. For if God cannot act on the world except through natural forces, then he cannot act by way of *releasing* the slumbering forces except through *other* natural forces. This act of releasing, then, according to the hypothesis, must be either simply a regular normal action of natural forces — in which case of course the result of it (the release) must be normal and regular, and therefore *no miracle*; or else the act of releasing must be an irregular, abnormal action of the natural forces — in which case the *cause* of the *irregularity* must be looked for in an immediate *direct* exercise of divine power. But if God may act directly (that is, without the use of a natural force) in releasing the slumbering force, why not just as well act directly in producing a miraculous effect without the use of the slumbering force? There is no escape, after all, from the hypothesis of a direct divine intervention, unless (what no one would dream of doing) we resort to the absurd supposition of an infinite series in the business of releasing slumbering forces. There is, in short, no middle ground between the theory that there are no miracles in the proper sense, and the theory that God acts directly, in the exercise of supernatural power, for the production of miraculous effects.

The practical application of this hypothesis is, in case of the more striking miracles, the explaining away of the miraculous element altogether. Beyschlag's elucidation of the miracle of the loaves is an instructive illustration of this remark. He can do no better than to dress up Paulus's explanation (*Leben Jesu*, vol. i. pp. 349 *sqq.*). He differs from Paulus in admitting that the

narrative, as it stands, implies that the narrators *regarded* the loaves as miraculously multiplied. But the substance of the explanation is the same. It makes the miracle to be a miracle of faith on Jesus' part, the outward act consisting in nothing else than in his inducing those who had secretly brought provisions to allow their supplies to be distributed for the general benefit! (vol. ii. p. 254 *sqq.*) Yet he would still call the event a miracle. "We do not see," he says, "why the glory of God and the glory of Christ would in this case be less than if it had continually supplied loaves and fishes out of itself" (vol. i. p. 311). He refers to Weiss as substantially agreeing with him. The latter (*Life of Christ*, vol. ii. pp. 385 *sq.*) does favor a similar explanation, though he does not conceive the food as concealed. He represents the miracle as one of "divine providence." Jesus exercised, as it were, a miracle of faith in being assured that the needed supply would come somehow. But he says that this theory is a hypothesis to which no one is committed. "Simple faith," he adds, "is not interdicted from keeping to the idea of a creative miracle." In Beyschlag's case this attempt to explain the miracle is part and parcel of a systematic explaining away of the supernatural in instances where a direct exertion of supernatural power on irrational nature seems to be affirmed. Christ's stilling the waves, walking on the water, turning water into wine, etc. are called "unnatural," as these events are reported to us, and are consequently all explained away. The real truth he assumes to be that, in some cases, as, for example, the walking on the water, the disciples were mistaken in regard to the fact, and that Jesus, not knowing of their error, had no occasion to correct it. But a more sober criticism will be likely to find these explanations more "unnatural" than the miracles themselves would have been. Beyschlag (vol. i. p. 310) says: "It is a contra-natural notion that the baked loaves and the roasted fishes should have grown under his hands. That is not the manner in which God helps or creates. When he vouchsafes to an August Hermann Francke to found an orphan-house with five dollars, he does it by causing the remainder of the money to be contributed to the man who in courageous faith has engaged in the enterprise. Why should we not conceive Jesus' act of faith and love in the wilderness as crowned with success in the same way?" The obvious answer to this question is: Because the narrative gives no hint of any such explanation of the event. The narrative distinctly tells us that there were only

five loaves and two fishes with which to supply the multitude. The critics imagine that in the crowd there is enough, and more than enough, to satisfy the whole five thousand. The narrative tells us that Jesus took these five loaves and two fishes and gave *them* to the multitude. The critics imagine that he somehow learned about *other* supplies, and got hold of them and really gave *these* to the multitude. The narrative tells us that when the people saw this "sign" they called Jesus a prophet and wanted even to make him a king (John vi. 14, 15). The critics tell us that there was no "sign" at all, and that the transaction could have been so regarded only through a delusion. But even if this were so, still the apostles must have known where the supply really came from, and the puzzle is to explain how the event could have been called a miracle by the Evangelists. Beyschlag seems to trace the origin of the notion to the enthusiasm of the people who had been fed, and who imagined that the supply had been miraculously furnished. But this delusion could not have been transfused into the minds of the more immediate disciples; and it is still unexplained how in the Fourth Gospel (whose genuineness Beyschlag defends) the occurrence could have been so unequivocally described as a miracle. Beyschlag endeavors to find in the Gospels themselves positive intimations that his theory is correct. He quotes Mark vi. 52, where it is said that the disciples "understood not concerning the loaves, but their heart was hardened," as evidence that they did not originally take the occurrence as miraculous. Mark writes this, he says, from the standpoint of one who did regard the event as miraculous. But then the question arises, How did the disciples ever come to regard this occurrence as miraculous, if it did not make this impression at the outset? Beyschlag gives as the reason that they had witnessed miracle upon miracle wrought by Jesus, so that their faith in his miraculous power was unbounded. Very well; then the most natural thing was that they should regard the occurrence as miraculous *at the outset*, as the Evangelists all evidently imply. To say that Mark in one breath narrates what he conceives to have been a palpable miracle, and in the next affirms that the disciples did not understand it to be one, is to make him guilty of the strangest confusion. Mark makes the statement in question as an explanation of the disciples' surprise at seeing Jesus walking on the water. That is, he means to intimate that, although they had just witnessed a great miracle,

they were not prepared to witness another. Inasmuch as Beyschlag regards both accounts as legendary, it requires the faith of a critic to detect in this observation of the Evangelist the one truthful statement which unlocks the mystery of the whole affair, and reveals (what there is not the faintest hint of) that there was food enough "concealed" by the multitude, notwithstanding that Mark himself (in the narrative of the second miraculous feeding) makes Jesus say expressly (viii. 2) of the multitude that "they have nothing to eat."

All this straining and discrediting of the narrative in order to avoid the assumption of a miracle — and that on the part of one who strenuously defends the reality of miracles in general! It is a wonder, however, if the fear of believing in something "magical" must drive one to some method of explaining the miracle away, that our author should not have adopted an explanation similar to the one by which he solves the problem of the miracle at Cana. The hypothesis that by a sort of mesmeric influence the water was made to *taste* like wine involves only two difficulties, neither of which appears to be any stumbling-block to Beyschlag, namely, that the narrator evidently conceived it otherwise, and that Jesus is virtually accused of practising deception. Otherwise everything is very simple. Now, instead of such large draughts on the imagination in regard to the supply of food, why not suppose that Jesus exerted his mesmeric power here with regard to food as in the other case he did with regard to drink? Why not suppose that he ordered *grass* to be plucked and passed around to the multitude, and by his mesmeric power made it *taste* like bread and fish? Is there not a hint of this in the express statement made, that there was "much grass" in the place?!

EXCURSUS VII.¹

RITSCHL ON MIRACLES.

RITSCHL'S doctrine of miracles is further expounded in the *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie*, 1861, where he propounds the following definition: "The religious conception of a miracle is, in its most general sense, nothing else than that of an experience of God's special providence" (p. 442). Again (*Ibid.*), "In this sense to declare miracles impossible is as much as to say that positive religion is an illusion. . . . In this sense the religious man is continually and necessarily experiencing miracles, and does not need merely to believe in miracles which others have seen." Furthermore, he says that the early Christians had "no conception of natural laws," and that therefore "historical investigation is utterly unable to make out from the narratives before us what took place *objectively*" (p. 440). And in Sybel's *Historische Zeitschrift* (1862, p. 97) he says, "Most certainly natural events which contradict natural laws are for us scientifically inconceivable," and adds (p. 98), "Since now both Jesus and Paul are not conscious of working in opposition to the laws of nature, it follows that confidence in the truth of their consciousness has nothing to do with the principle that, because a contradiction of the laws of nature is inconceivable, miracles are impossible." All this is found in a discussion in which, in opposition to Zeller (who disbelieves all miracles), he is undertaking the defense of the historic credibility of the evangelical narratives. He says that Jesus, the Evangelists, and Paul are credible witnesses, and that, though there may be doubt about the authenticity of some parts of the history, yet there is no sufficient reason for denying the stories of the miracles in general. But such a defense is worse than open attack. To affirm that the miracles narrated really occurred, and yet to affirm that we do not know what "took place objectively," is to affirm and deny the same thing in the same breath. Everything is referred to a purely subjective standard. A miracle, according to him, is anything remarkable in so far as it has a bearing on one's religious life. He speaks indeed of extra-

¹ See p. 145.

ordinary events ; but inasmuch as he denies that these events in any way conflicted with natural laws, he practically denies that real miracles occurred. When Zeller retorts (*Ibid.*, p. 110), "If they [the violations of natural law] are unthinkable, then they are also impossible ; for thinkableness is for us the only mark of possibility," his reply is conclusive. For Ritschl, in distinguishing miracles from violations of natural law, does not define them as events wrought by special operation of divine power independently of natural law. His conception of them is apparently as much opposed to the latter as to the former conception. In short, an event is a miracle to him, not because of any opposition to, or independence of, natural law, but it is such simply by virtue of the subjective state of the man who witnesses or experiences it. It is manifest that this is a radically different conception of the miraculous from the ordinary one. It is only one instance of the characteristic tendency of Ritschl and his school to use the old terms with the old meaning emptied out. Practically this school is, so far as miracles are concerned, at one with the purely naturalistic school. And when Professor Ladd associates Ritschl with Nietzsche, Müller, and Dorner, as a defender of the reality of the evangelical miracles (*Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. pp. 3, 318), he puts Ritschl into company with which he is far from belonging.

EXCURSUS VIII.¹

THE BOOK OF JONAH.

THE Book of Jonah will doubtless long continue to exercise the ingenuity and perplex the faith of many good Christians. Let us consider some of the ways in which a Christian may evade the apparent significance of Christ's reference to the history.

1. One may suppose Christ to have been mistaken as to the trustworthiness of the Old Testament records. That is, he may be supposed to have believed the story to be true, though it was not true. Christ's veracity is saved at the expense of his intelligence. This theory is the least admissible of all those which profess to be consistent with faith in Christ. Yet it is possible for one to have a very exalted view of Christ's personal character, to acknowledge him as a divinely commissioned mediator of spiritual light and salvation, although limited in his knowledge of matters respecting which perfect accuracy requires an acquaintance with scientific and critical questions such as he cannot be supposed to have possessed. If Christ could declare himself to be ignorant of the day of his own second coming (Mark xiii. 32), may it not be allowable to imagine him to have been also ignorant of the exact truth concerning the story of Jonah? Not to enter in detail on the Christological question thus raised, it is obvious to say that in the case just referred to Christ did not profess to know the thing he was ignorant of. He knew the extent of his own ignorance, and was careful not to commit himself to any assertion beyond the limits of his own knowledge. In the case of Jonah, on the contrary, the hypothesis under consideration requires us to suppose him to have made an assertion on a point beyond the limits of his knowledge, while yet he did not profess any ignorance whatsoever. The declaration in Mark xiii. 32, whatever view one may take of it, is remarkable as the only one in which Christ directly avows his ignorance. It comes in connection with other assertions which imply a very high degree of knowledge. Christ puts himself here not only

¹ See p. 264.

above all other men, but above the angels, and makes declarations concerning the future which nothing but supernatural knowledge could warrant. The confession of ignorance, therefore, strikes one with surprise; and it is no wonder that in various ways commentators have endeavored to explain away the apparent meaning of it. These explanations may be unsatisfactory; but the more stress one lays upon Christ's declaration of ignorance, the more necessary is it to accept the truth of what he implicitly and explicitly says respecting his altogether unique knowledge. If he is thus trusted, then he must be assumed to have been at least conscious of the limitations of his knowledge. And we cannot easily conceive such a being to have undertaken to make declarations concerning matters of which he knew himself to be ignorant. If he did not know whether the story of Jonah was true or not, it is derogatory to the simplicity and sincerity of his character to suppose him to have intended to vouch for the truthfulness of the story.

2. Again, one may suppose that the passage (Matt. xii. 40) in which Christ is said to have referred to the story of Jonah and the fish is not genuine. This is a view held by many. Stress is laid on the fact that in the parallel passage (Luke xi. 29-32) Christ only speaks of Jonah as preaching to the Ninevites, and makes the "sign" consist only in that. The passage in Matthew's Gospel is therefore supposed not to belong to the original work, but to have crept in as a later interpolation. Textual criticism has shown that interpolations did sometimes take place. It is certainly *possible* that the verse in question is an unauthentic addition to the genuine Gospel. But it is certain that there is no critical authority for such a conjecture. The passage is not omitted in any of the codices of Matthew's Gospel. There is no reason for questioning the genuineness and authenticity of the passage except such as would be equally valid in the case of every other reference made by Christ to Old Testament miracles.¹ The process of mind which leads to the hypothesis of interpolation is this: First, one doubts the Old Testament story; next, one dislikes to see Christ apparently endorsing it; and therefore, finally, one searches for evidence that he in fact did not endorse it. If in the search for evidence one should find positive external and internal indications of

¹ See Meyer's Commentary *in loc.*

spuriousness in the passage, such as have weight with those who find no intrinsic objection to it, then the case would be different. But as the case is, it is not a critical investigation, but a critical bias, which finds the evidence of interpolation.

3. Again, it may be supposed that the passage in Matthew is genuine, but that the story of Jonah there referred to is not to be understood as authentic history, but rather as a mere allegory or parabolic story. This theory may assume different forms.

(a) One may conjecture that the story of Jonah is wholly fictitious, and was understood to be fictitious both by Christ and his hearers. In that case the reference to it would be analogous to that which we often make to characters and incidents in well-known works of imagination. But the objections to this view are insuperable. In the first place, there is no reason for supposing the story of Jonah to have been regarded by Jesus' contemporaries as a fable or allegory. All the evidence is to the opposite effect.¹ In the next place, it is inconceivable that Christ could have spoken as he did about Jonah's preaching at Nineveh, if both he and his hearers had held the whole story to be fictitious. He solemnly declared (Matt. xii. 41; Luke xi. 32) that the men of Nineveh had repented at the preaching of Jonah, and would rise up in the judgment and condemn the Jews who had rejected the gospel. If both he and the Jews addressed held the Book of Jonah to be a fictitious work throughout, such a comparison would have been solemn mockery. Fictitious characters will certainly never rise up in the judgment; and the appeal to the Ninevites could have excited in the Jews no other emotion than that of ridicule, if they regarded the story as really fictitious.

(b) One may conjecture that the Book of Jonah was regarded both by Christ and his hearers to be in part historical and in part fictitious. In this case the reference to the repentance of the Ninevites may be considered as honestly meant, it being supposed that Jonah really did go and preach to the Ninevites, but that the story of the fish, and other parts of the narrative, belong to the poetic drapery of the book. This hypothesis avoids the second objection to the first form of the allegorical expla-

¹ Tobit xiv. 4, 8, and Josephus, *Ant.* ix. 10, 2, refer to the story as historic. Davidson (*Introduction to the Old Testament*, vol. iii. p. 271), while he denies the authenticity of the story, yet says, "It was the current belief of the Jews, however, that the events narrated respecting Jonah were literally true."

nation, but it is still exposed to the other one: There is not the slightest evidence that the Jews held any part of the Book of Jonah to be fictitious. Besides, this hypothesis is exposed to an objection that does not lie against the other, namely, that it requires us to suppose Jesus to make reference to two incidents in the history of Jonah,—to both in the same way, as if equally authentic,¹—whereas the two are supposed to be as different as fiction and fact. Such a juxtaposition is possible, but exceedingly improbable. Furthermore, it ill comports with the general style of Jesus' address to suppose him to call anything a "sign" of his resurrection, which both he and his hearers knew to be a merely fictitious event.

(c) It may be thought that Jesus regarded the story of Jonah as fictitious, though his hearers regarded it as true. In this case his reference to the story must be taken as an instance of accommodation, or of *argumentum ad hominem*. So Davidson,² who says, "Where he does not assert a thing on his own independent authority, but merely to confound or confute the Jews of his day, he should not be quoted as a voucher for the historical truth of facts or events." That in some cases Jesus may have used this kind of argument may be admitted, though this method of interpretation can be only very sparingly resorted to. In the case before us it is quite unwarrantable. The allusion to Jonah was not first made by Jesus' hearers; his reply, therefore, was not a retort provoked by them. He himself introduces the subject, and asserts "on his own independent authority" that the prophet preached at Nineveh, and that the

¹ Professor Ladd (*Doctrines of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 67) thinks it "perhaps worth noticing, that the part of the narrative of Jonah which may belong to the historic basis of his book is assumed in categorical statement (see Luke xi. 29-32), while a certain part which plainly [?] belongs to the allegorical and poetic attachment of the book is given by Matthew as alluded to merely in a figure of comparison." But surely this is a subtlety that can hardly be expected to carry much weight. So Christ alludes to the brazen serpent (John iii. 14) and to the antediluvians (Matt. xxiv. 37-39) merely in a figure of comparison. But do we therefore infer that he regarded either of the narratives referred to as fictitious? In a categorical statement one affirms the truth of a thing; in a comparison one assumes the truth of a thing.

² *Introduction*, etc., vol. iii. p. 270. Davidson, however, is disposed to admit that some elements of real history form the basis of the book, though he does not undertake to say what they are (p. 279). He says (*Ibid.*) that "Jonah may have preached to the Ninevites," though on the next page he says, "We cannot believe that he prophesied against Nineveh;" and on pages 272 *sq.* he argues that the whole story of Jonah's going to Nineveh is very improbable.

Ninevites repented. If this reference to the story of Jonah does not imply Christ's belief in the historical character of it, then the same can be said, if one will, of every reference which he makes to Old Testament history. When he spoke of the Deluge (Matt. xxiv. 37, 38; Luke xvii. 26, 27); when he referred to Abraham as the progenitor of the Jewish race (Luke xiii. 16; John viii. 37); when he called Moses the lawgiver of the Jews (John vii. 19), and replied to the people concerning Moses' law of divorce (Matt. xix. 7, 8); when he argued concerning the resurrection on the ground of what Moses heard out of the burning bush (Luke xx. 37); when he quoted the conduct of David in eating the shew-bread (Matt. xii. 3, 4); when he referred to the prophets Isaiah (Matt. xiii. 14, xv. 7) and Daniel (Matt. xxiv. 15); when he spoke generally of the prophets (Matt. v. 12; Luke xviii. 31, xxiv. 25; John vi. 45), or of the law and the prophets (Matt. v. 17, vii. 12, xxii. 40; Luke xvi. 16, 29), — in all such cases one may, if he choose, assume that he was only using the *argumentum ad hominem*, not meaning to imply that he had any belief in the existence of Abraham, Moses, David, or the prophets, or in the written history of God's dealings with the Jewish race in general.

It is obvious that there must be a very strict limit to the application of this hypothesis of accommodation. If, when Jesus, without direct provocation, introduces a reference to some incident of Old Testament history, speaks of it as if it were a fact, and makes a practical application of it, we may yet assume that he really means only to imply that his hearers *thought*, though erroneously, that the history was an authentic one, why, then the door is open for unlimited license. If this principle is good for Christ, it must be equally good for his disciples. All Paul's discourse and argumentation about the Mosaic law and Hebrew history may be regarded as not implying that he believed there was anything historically true in what he referred to; he may have been only using the *argumentum ad hominem*. The apostles may be supposed to have received esoteric instruction from Jesus in the department of higher criticism, as the result of which they came to hold the Old Testament to be, generally, a collection of myths and fables; but inasmuch as the common people held the history in great reverence, they may have been instructed to speak and write as if they themselves shared the popular belief. Since the object was to introduce a better religion in the

place of the Jewish superstition, it might have been thought easier to accomplish the object by treating the current belief as well founded, and the new doctrine as a fulfilment of the old, than by attacking the old religion as resting on a false foundation. By adopting such a view of the attitude taken by Christ and his disciples towards the Hebrew religion and history, criticism gets a very wide field of operation. Any theory of the origin and meaning of the several Old Testament books which the "critical feeling" may select can then be freely promulgated, and all that, without surrendering faith in the authority of Jesus Christ and his apostles.

But this would evidently be going too far. When one has come to look upon the founders of Christianity as such adepts in simulation, recommending their doctrine as being a new and improved edition of the old, when in reality they regarded the old as a fabulous and worthless mass; in other words, when wholesale deception is supposed to have been employed in order to secure the adoption of the new religion, one's faith in the immaculate truthfulness of this new religion can hardly be very firm.

The foregoing may seem to be a caricature of the principle of interpretation in question. Doubtless no one ever carried it to this extreme; yet, if it can be applied to such a case as Christ's reference to the history of Jonah, it is difficult to see where the limit can be drawn. For, be it remembered, the prime question in this connection is not whether the narrative alluded to is intrinsically improbable or not; it is rather a question concerning the manner in which the narrative is alluded to, and the purpose for which the allusion is made. If, whenever one for any reason regards an incident of Old Testament history as legendary or fictitious, he quietly assumes that every reference to it in the New Testament is a case of accommodation to popular prejudice, there is manifestly no method of deciding what the cases of accommodation are. Each man will have his own standard of application for the convenient hermeneutical rule. But this would be making Christ and the New Testament writers waxen figures capable of being moulded according to the caprice of every critic.

What criterion, then, is to be adopted in determining how far the language of Christ or of his apostles is to be explained as an accommodation to prevalent opinions rather than as an expression of their own?

i. The *presumption* is against every alleged instance of such accommodation. The burden of proof rests with those who make the allegation. There must be positive evidence adduced that in this case the general rule does not hold. The general rule is that every speaker and writer must be presumed to mean what he seems to mean, and to believe what he seems to affirm. It is only by means of cogent reasons that a particular case can be shown to be an exception to this rule. We are not here dealing with ordinary cases of rhetorical figures. In most instances it lies on the surface whether such a figure is used or not. It is not often difficult to see when a speaker or writer is making use of irony, or paradox, or hyperbole, or metaphor, or metonymy. The connection generally indicates clearly enough whether the language is to be understood in the strictest literalness. The question now before us is whether, when all due allowance has been made for tropes of this sort, the language used expresses the opinions and beliefs of the speaker, or is adopted out of compliance with the sentiments of those addressed. This is not one of these figures of speech, whose object is to enliven or intensify an obvious meaning; it is using language without meaning what the language says. Against interpreting language in this way the presumption is always immensely strong.

ii. It is not an instance of accommodation, in the sense here spoken of, when words and phrases are retained in use, after the progress of knowledge has shown that the original use of them rested on a mistake. Thus, when we talk about the sun's rising, or the dew's falling, or about a lunatic or a splenetic person, we do not mean to affirm what the phraseology, literally interpreted, would imply. Though a "lunatic" originally denoted a man struck mad by the moon, we may still use the word in the general sense of "madman," it being understood that the etymological sense of the word has, on account of the progress of scientific knowledge, given place to another. So long as this change of meaning is clearly and generally understood, there is no "accommodation" in the sense of the word now under consideration.

iii. It is a sort of accommodation, when, in cases analogous to the above-mentioned, the original error which gave rise to a certain phraseology still generally or widely prevails, and the few who have attained a more accurate knowledge still use the phraseology, even at the risk of appearing to share the popular error. For example, an astronomer might speak of "fixed stars,"

and thus seem to affirm the truth of a common notion that the stars are motionless, though he really believes quite otherwise. But this he would do only when the reference to the stars is incidental, and when it would turn him aside from his main point, to correct the vulgar error. Otherwise, if for convenience' sake he still used the current phrase, he would yet take pains to explain that he uses it in a different sense from that which implies that the stars are motionless.

It *may* be an instance of such accommodation, when Christ spoke of *demoniacs* as if he agreed with the common opinion that the unfortunates so named were really possessed by demons. The mere word "demoniac" might be used as we now use "lunatic," to denote a certain well-known disordered state of a person, without committing one's self to any opinion as to the cause of the state. If it were clear, first, that he merely used the term as a current and convenient one, and, next, that he did not unnecessarily confirm the popular impression by the manner in which he spoke of the persons in question, it might be argued that this was a case in which there was no need of his undertaking to correct an error of the prevalent psychology. There are difficulties in the way of this view, growing out of the fact that, as his language is reported to us, he appears to endorse the popular opinion by the use of expressions which he would hardly have used, if he had not shared the current notion, and if he was only refraining from a direct attempt to uproot it. If he went out of his way, as it were, to confirm the people in their theory of the cause of the so-called demoniacal possessions, then the only conclusion consistent with reverence for his simplicity and veracity is to suppose that he agreed with the people in their conception of the cause of the demoniacal phenomena.

iv. But it is an essentially different case when Jesus makes reference to historical events and institutions for purposes of illustration or instruction. Here there is no question about mere phraseology which may have originated in a mistaken notion of physical or spiritual causation. It is rather a question of historical fact. Any voluntary, unprovoked reference to such facts, or supposed facts, on Jesus' part must have been understood as implying his own belief in their genuineness, unless he in some way guarded or qualified his remarks. When he was accused of casting out demons through Beelzebub (Matt. xii. 24), his reply might not improperly be taken as a case of *argumentum ad homi-*

nem. The accusation was made by his enemies; and he takes them on their own ground: "If I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out?" (verse 27). This passage by itself might leave us in doubt whether he believed in the existence of Beelzebub or not. But certainly we could not infer from it that he did *not* believe in such a being. We must go to other passages for fuller light. But when Jesus, without being especially challenged, himself introduced references to incidents in Hebrew history, he must be presumed to have referred to them as historic facts. The case is not like that of speakers or writers who illustrate their remarks by reference to characters or incidents in classical mythology or in well-known works of fiction. In such cases both the speaker and the hearer understand that the things referred to are fictitious. In referring to Hebrew history, on the contrary, Jesus appealed to what was understood to be real history, and no mythology or fiction.

It may, however, be argued that by rhetorical license Christ might have used such a story as that of Jonah by way of illustration, even though he himself regarded it as allegorical. The *possibility* of this may perhaps be conceded. But against assuming it to be a fact must be insisted (1) that, if he did regard the book as allegorical, it would hardly be consistent with his straightforward truthfulness to refer to it as if he thought it to be real history, when he knew that he would be understood to endorse it as such; (2) that there is no evidence that he did regard it as allegorical; and (3) that there is no proof that the author of the book meant it as allegorical. There is, therefore, an immense presumption in favor of regarding Christ as implicitly endorsing the truthfulness of the book.

Still, it is urged by some that there are clear indications in the Book of Jonah itself that it was not meant to be taken as authentic history, but rather as an allegory or parabolic fiction. "A critical examination of the Book of Jonah," it is said,¹ "seems to show that it is a composition designed by its author as allegorical and didactic upon a certain basis of historic facts." And this being so, it is asked, "Shall it be claimed that Jesus could not quote from an allegorical book, provided it be proved by criticism that such a book exists?"² No, we answer, "provided it be proved." What, then, are the proofs which criticism

¹ Ladd, *Doctrine of Sacred Scripture*, vol. i. p. 67.

² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

brings, that the book was not intended to be understood as authentic history? They are such as these: The strange character and conduct of Jonah himself, in trying to flee from Jehovah, and in repining at the non-fulfilment of his prophecy; the improbability of a solitary Hebrew prophet making the long and toilsome journey to Nineveh; the extraordinary effects attributed to his preaching; the lack of details in the account of Nineveh and its king; the story of the miraculous preservation through the fish.¹ The argument, in short, is that the story is intrinsically improbable, that it is therefore not real history, and was not intended to be understood as history.

Now the first reflection which this argument suggests is that the author of the book seems to have made a bad failure, if his intention was to be understood as writing allegory. To be sure, Davidson tells us,² "The story speaks for itself; and he who will not see the fabulous in its character and form may remain ignorant." Yet the fact is that the world generally has failed to see what is here declared to be so patent. Davidson admits³ that the Jews believed the events narrated respecting Jonah to be literally true. It certainly is unfortunate that the author of the book succeeded so poorly in making his intention clear.

A second reflection suggested by the argument is that the same considerations which are urged to prove the book to be unhistorical bear also against the assumption that its object is didactic. Yet these two propositions are usually conjoined. But a fictitious narrative, strictly speaking, teaches nothing at all. The most impressive teaching is the narrative of instructive facts.⁴ Fiction may indeed be designed to convey a moral lesson, but it can do so only in so far as it is true to nature, that is, in so far as it is supposed to be *like* that which really does happen. A narrative may be judged to be fictitious because of the inherent improbability of the events narrated, as, for example, in the case of the stories of Jules Verne. But in proportion to the extravagance and incredibility of the narrative it must necessarily fail to instruct. This self-contradiction of the critics in their judg-

¹ These are the points urged by Davidson, *Introduction*, etc., pp. 272 *sqq.* The argument for an allegorical interpretation of the book is presented in greater detail and with much force by Dr. C. H. H. Wright, *Exegetical Studies*, pp. 34 *sqq.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 280.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

⁴ Cf. F. Watson, *The Law and the Prophets* (Hulsean Lectures for 1882), p. 52.

ment of the Book of Jonah is very obvious. The book is conjectured, for example, to have been composed in order to justify God for not having fulfilled the prophecies against the heathen,¹ or to have been written after the time of Ezra, as a protest against the "particularism" of the priestly party.² Now, even if this were admitted to be true (though there is not a particle of evidence of it), still the question arises, How did the writer expect to accomplish his object? If his contemporaries cherished narrow conceptions concerning God's feelings and purposes towards the heathen, how did he expect to correct such conceptions by a *fictitious* story about the prophet Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites? His narrow-minded contemporaries might well have retorted: "If you can furnish no better proof of your proposition than a confessedly false story, then you could not more effectually proclaim the weakness of your doctrine." And if the writer, in order to prove his pious doctrine, not only invented his facts, but invented especially extravagant and incredible facts, a bad case would have been made only so much the worse. No; an erroneous conception of the character of God could have been corrected by such a story only in case the story had been *supposed to be true*.³ This is a proposition whose correctness is especially obvious with reference to attempts to *alter current notions*. A fictitious work may be able to illustrate and enforce moral notions *already prevalent*; but it would be absurd to en-

¹ Hitzig, *Die zwölf kleinen Propheten*, p. 161.

² Kuenen, *Religion of Israel*, vol. ii. p. 242; Davidson, *t. c.*, p. 277. Numberless other more or less fantastic interpretations have been propounded, which may be found in Maurer's *Commentarius*. Cf. Delitzsch, *Etwas über das Buch Jona*, in Rudelbach und Guericke's *Zeitschrift für die gesammte Lutherische Theologie*, 1840.

³ Professor Briggs, however (*Biblical Study*, pp. 238, 239), speaking of the books of Esther and Jonah, says, "The model of patriotic devotion, the lesson of the universality of divine providence and grace, would be still as forcible, and the gain would be at least equal to the loss, if they were to be regarded as inspired ideals rather than inspired statements of the real." No doubt fictitious narratives may powerfully excite the moral and religious feelings, when those feelings already exist. But a disbelieved or doubted truth cannot be made an undoubted truth by means of fiction. If, for example, Cæsar Borgia is wrongly held to have been a moral monster, the error may be corrected, and the public opinion altered, by a historical investigation of *facts*. But an avowed *fiction*, which should portray him as a model of virtue, would leave his reputation just where it is. But even with reference to motives and emotions and convictions already existent, the proposition of Professor Briggs cannot be maintained. Would a *fictitious* Paul, or Huss, or Wilberforce make the **same impression** on the world as the *real* man?

deavor to *reform* the moral or religious sentiments of a people by a fiction confessed to be fiction. If, for example, the Book of Deuteronomy was composed in the reign of Josiah, and if its object was to secure the enforcement of certain new political and ceremonial regulations, and if, further, the legislative book was fictitiously ascribed to Moses, the object of this fictitious ascription must have been defeated, if it had been *understood* to be fictitious. The people might have stood in awe of the real Moses whose law was reported to have been brought to light; but if they had been told that the law did not really emanate from Moses, but only from somebody who thought it would have been well if Moses *had* promulgated it, and who therefore *called* it the law of Moses, it is manifest that such a trick would have met with well-merited ridicule; it would be like nothing else so much as Snug the joiner's careful explanation that, in acting the part of a lion, he was really not a lion at all. The theory of Kuenen, Wellhausen, and their adherents, that religious reforms were brought about by the introduction of supposititious books, is transparently foolish, unless it is meant that by means of these books the people were successfully *deceived*. And the same must be said respecting the Book of Jonah. If its author had such a didactic purpose as is above spoken of, he must have meant to be *understood* as writing a true history; else he would have defeated his own purpose.

The theory of a didactic purpose, and the theory that the book is a pure and acknowledged fiction, are, therefore, destructive of each other. We must adopt one of the three views: either that the author had a moral aim and accomplished it by an intentional deception; or that he had no moral aim, but was amusing himself by a flight of his fancy; or, finally, that he had a moral aim which he accomplished by telling a narrative which is substantially true.

Substantially true, we say. For it may well be that a constructive fancy worked up the facts into the form which they have. As in the prologue of the Book of Job, the incidents are woven together in a poetic way; there is a crowding together of remarkable things such as in real life seems improbable. There is plausibility in the hypothesis that the author used a certain art in dressing up the story of the prophet's experiences. But, after all, the intrinsically most improbable thing in the book is just that which Christ most directly attests, namely, the mission of a

Hebrew prophet to a great heathen city. It is contrary to all analogy; yet it is the one leading thought of the book. The book opens with Jehovah's command to Jonah to go to Nineveh; it is made up of incidents connected with the prophet's attempt to evade the command, and with his final execution of it; it ends with Jehovah's lesson to the repining prophet founded on his treatment of the repentant city. It is, therefore, consistent when critics like Hitzig¹ pronounce this feature of the book purely fictitious. The miraculous incidents in the history are not without parallel in other parts of the Old Testament; the really strange and seemingly improbable thing is this sending of a lone man to an immense foreign city with a threatening message.

When, therefore, less radical critics admit that Jonah's preaching in Nineveh and the effects of his preaching "may belong to the historic basis of his book,"² the chief intrinsic improbability of the narrative is conceded not to be insuperable. Why, then, should we question the authenticity of the details? So strange a mission, it might be expected, would have strange accompaniments. Yet, strictly speaking, there is only one outright miracle reported, namely, that concerning the fish. If this miracle gives offense, it must be either because *any* miracle is offensive, or else because there is something *peculiarly* offensive in this miracle. But as Prof. R. A. Redford³ well remarks, "If Jonah was to be preserved alive, when cast out of the vessel into a raging sea, what more fitting form of the miracle can we imagine than that he should be cast out by a great fish on the neighboring shore?" At all events, if the story of the fish, as a fiction, could serve any useful purpose, then, as a fact, it must have served that purpose still better. Undoubtedly the author did design to convey certain lessons by the story of Jonah. It teaches that God's paternal government is not confined to the Jews, but extends to the Gentiles as well; that it is futile to try to escape from the divine authority; that God can deliver one from the extremest peril; that he can use even unwilling instruments for the accomplishment of his great ends; that the granting of mercy to the penitent is better than to gratify the pride of reputation. These truths are taught; for they lie in the things that are written. They are not taught in the form of didactic propositions; but they

¹ *Die zwölf kleinen Propheten*, p. 158.

² Ladd, *Sacred Scripture*, p. 67.

³ *Studies in the Book of Jonah*, p. 24. An excellent monograph.

are implied in the story, especially *if the story is true*. It is a singular notion of some men, that if a book appears to contain a moral, it must needs be fictitious. This notion is carried so far that the same narrative, when regarded as a fiction, is pronounced more instructive than when regarded as a true history. Thus Kuenen remarks, concerning the Book of Jonah, "The whole of this writing — which, interpreted historically, so justly gives offense — breathes a spirit of benevolence and universal humanity which is very attractive."¹ That is, if God had *really* by his providence brought about such occurrences as are narrated in the book, it would have been justly offensive; but if the occurrences are only *imagined* to have taken place, they convey a most attractive lesson! In the name of common sense and right reason we must protest against this absurd and preposterous conception of things. If Biblical history is to be accounted authentic just in proportion as it conveys no determinable lesson,² then there is not only an end of the doctrine that God has revealed himself in and through history, but there is an end of all solid foundation of religious truth and Biblical science. We are introduced into a world in which worth and truth have no relation to each other, in which fiction is more instructive than fact, and imagination more to be trusted than experience. No wonder that, with such a principle for a guide, the critics find the Bible abounding in *Tendenzschriften*, — writings whose aim is to establish a theory of theology or of history rather than to set forth the truth. No wonder that, with such a keen appreciation of the value of the imagination in the production of didactic fiction, they should make diligent use of their own imagination in assigning authorship, dates, and fictitiousness to the books of the Bible.

In the third place, we remark concerning the allegorical interpretation of the Book of Jonah, that it is opposed to the healthy tendencies of Biblical exegesis. The drift among scholars of all classes is decidedly against the theory of allegory in the interpretation of the Bible. Even the one book (Song of Solomon)³

¹ *Religion of Israel*, vol. ii. p. 244.

² A view naïvely expressed by Hitzig (*Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, vol. i. p. 47), when, concerning the incident narrated in Gen. xxxv. 22, he observes that it is to be regarded as "an actual event, because not adapted to have reference to the nation as a whole, nor to involve any other far-reaching significance"!

³ The allegorical interpretation of this book has much more to say for itself than that of the Book of Jonah. (1) It is poetry, making no pretense to being history. (2) There are suggestions of such an interpretation in the frequent representations of

which has longest resisted this tendency is now, even by many, if not by most, orthodox interpreters, regarded as not having been composed as an allegory conveying an occult meaning concerning the Divine love, or the relation between the Messiah and his Church. It is remarkable that orthodox men should nowadays be inclined to resort to this method of interpretation in the case of the Book of Jonah, which has usually been accepted as a statement of historic fact. Now the theory of allegory is never plausible unless there is some positive evidence, internal or external, that the author of the work in question designed it to be understood as an allegory. In the case of the Book of Jonah all the positive evidence we have points to its being intended and understood as history. The mention of a prophet Jonah the son of Amittai in 2 Kings xiv. 25, the allusions in Tobit and Josephus to Jonah's going to Nineveh, the general belief of the Jews that the story was an account of facts, and Jesus' reference to the repentance of the Ninevites, are the chief items of external evidence; and they all point to the historical character of the book. And as to internal evidence, if the one or two miraculous incidents in it are to be regarded as indicating its allegorical character, then by parity of reasoning nearly every historical book of the Bible must come into the same category. If, further, the moral and spiritual suggestions of the story are to be regarded as evidence that it is allegorical, then for a like reason all of the Bible history which is morally instructive is to be esteemed not really history, but only religious instruction in parabolic form. So long as no more cogent reasons than these can be given for the notion that the book was meant as allegorical, it is a misnomer to speak of the notion as the result of "criticism," unless by this term is meant subjective fancy or unfounded conjecture.

The case then is this: The Book of Jonah purports to be a veritable history. It was, according to all the evidence before us, so regarded by the Jews of the time of Christ. There is no proof that it was originally designed, or has generally been understood, to be anything else. Jesus confessedly refers to the central feature of it (Jonah's mission to Nineveh) as a historical fact. In immediate connection with this reference he refers also to the account of the miraculous preservation of the prophet. There is not the slightest internal evidence for thinking that he regarded God as being the husband of his chosen people. (3) The allegorical interpretation has been the prevalent one amongst both Jewish and Christian scholars.

this as less a fact than the other. The question, then, recurs, Does Christ's reference to the story of Jonah imply that he regarded it as historical? And the answer can no longer be doubtful. If there were evidence (as there is not) that the story was designed by the author to be understood, and generally was understood, as an allegory; or even if there were evidence (as there is not) that Christ regarded the story as allegorical, while his hearers did not, then it might be admitted that his reference to it is no authentication of the miraculous event. But in default of this evidence the conclusion is unavoidable that he spoke of the event as a fact. He, no doubt, "spoke in perfect freedom from the ties of mere criticism."¹ This may mean, however, not only that he refrained in popular discourse from uttering his critical judgment respecting the allegorical character of the Book of Jonah, but that he was quite indifferent to the opinions which after eighteen centuries certain critics would propound concerning it. If it is true that "the commentator may not help out his dulness by the support of Christ's infallible authority,"² it is no less true that the critic may not help out his acuteness by the support of Christ's imaginary authority.

¹ Ladd, *Sacred Scripture*, p. 68.

² *Ibid.*

TOPICAL INDEX.

	PAGE
Absolute and Relative, the	415 <i>sqq.</i>
Absoluteness of God and personality	54, 412 <i>sqq.</i>
Acceleration theory of miracles	104 <i>sq.</i>
Accommodation in revelation	345 <i>sq.</i> , 439 <i>sqq.</i>
Adam and Eve, the story of	265
Agnostic view of miracles	131 <i>sqq.</i>
Agnosticism and theism	415, 426 <i>sqq.</i>
Allegorical interpretations	266 <i>sqq.</i> , 438 <i>sqq.</i> , 449 <i>sqq.</i>
Anthropomorphism	53, 397 <i>sqq.</i>
Apoerypha, the	290
Apostolic authority	308 <i>sqq.</i> , 325
inspiration	305 <i>sqq.</i> , 321
Arnold, Matthew, on miracles	157 <i>sqq.</i>
Atheism and morality	39 <i>sqq.</i>
general consequences of	30 <i>sqq.</i>
not a mere negation	30
Authority of the Bible	318 <i>sqq.</i>
Authorship of Old Testament Books, Christ's testimony on	274
Berkeley on the cognition of other persons	391 <i>sq.</i>
John Fiske on	402
Beyschlag on miracles	105 <i>sq.</i> , 429 <i>sqq.</i>
Bible, authority of	318 <i>sqq.</i> , 329 <i>sqq.</i>
infallibility of	319, 342, 347
and the "Word of God"	367
Bruce, Prof. A. B., on evidential value of miracles	186 <i>sq.</i>
Brutes and men, difference between	17
Canon, the Biblical	290, 336, 363 <i>sqq.</i>
Causation, Berkeley on	404
Fiske on	402 <i>sq.</i> , 412 <i>sq.</i>
Hume on	98 <i>sq.</i> , 412
Christ, authority of	59 <i>sq.</i> , 93 <i>sqq.</i> , 141 <i>sqq.</i> , 210 <i>sq.</i> , 333
as a leader	94 <i>sq.</i>
his relation to miracles	157, 160, 179 <i>sqq.</i> , 186, 221
his moral perfection	134, 142, 153 <i>sq.</i> , 182, 216
his miraculous power	179 <i>sqq.</i>
his attitude towards the Old Testament	231 <i>sqq.</i> , 263, 296, 436 <i>sqq.</i>

	PAGE
Christ, his resurrection	196 <i>sqq.</i>
his uniqueness	140 <i>sq.</i> , 168, 183, 210 <i>sq.</i>
various views of character of	156
Christian experience and the Bible	327, 337
Christianity, alleged Aryan origin of	229 <i>sqq.</i>
as a moral power	192 <i>sqq.</i>
skeptical view of origin of	168 <i>sqq.</i>
presumption in favor of	360
a revelation	324, 352
Church and the Canon, the	363 <i>sqq.</i>
Cognition, individual, precedes instruction	10 <i>sqq.</i>
of mind	10 <i>sq.</i> , 391
Common sense, the Christian	337 <i>sqq.</i>
Conscience, the aboriginal	75 <i>sqq.</i>
and theism	39
evolutionary theory of	40 <i>sq.</i>
Consciousness, the Christian	317, 319
the individual and the common	359 <i>sqq.</i>
Maudsley on the validity of	359 <i>sqq.</i>
and the divine personality	419
Cosmic Philosophy, the	397 <i>sqq.</i>
Cosmological argument, the	53
Creation, story of the	265 <i>sqq.</i> , 272 <i>sqq.</i>
Credulity of critics	208
Criticism, Biblical, right of	330, 355
of miracle stories	220 <i>sq.</i>
affected by prepossessions	155 <i>sqq.</i> , 360 <i>sqq.</i>
the higher	374 <i>sqq.</i>
limitations of	363 <i>sqq.</i> , 370 <i>sqq.</i>
Darwinianism	73
Deism, weakness of	62
Demoniacs	443
Dependence, feeling of	22, 27
Design, instinctive demand for	49, 56 <i>sq.</i>
Deuteronomy, critical views of	375 <i>sqq.</i> , 447
Discrepancies in the Bible	331, 339 <i>sqq.</i>
Double sense of Scripture	241
Duty, sense of	39 <i>sq.</i>
Ecclesiastes, authorship of	374 <i>sq.</i>
Education, importance of, in formation of opinion	5, 39, 358 <i>sq.</i>
Empiricism	402 <i>sq.</i>
Ephesians, Epistle to the, and the higher criticism	372 <i>sq.</i>
Error, significance of the fact of	12, 34, 410
Essential and non-essential in the Bible	337 <i>sqq.</i>
Evidences of Christianity now and at first	164 <i>sqq.</i>
Evil, moral, Mr. Royce on	35
Evolution, eternal series of	48 <i>sq.</i>

	PAGE
Evolution philosophy, the	399 <i>sqq.</i>
Experiece, Christian, and the Bible	327 <i>sq.</i>
evidential force of	191 <i>sqq.</i>
Fairbairn, A. M. on the primeval revelation	65 <i>sqq.</i>
Fiction in the Bible	374 <i>sqq.</i> , 438 <i>sqq.</i>
Fiske, John, on the Absolute and personality	412 <i>sqq.</i>
his philosophy considered	397 <i>sqq.</i>
Foree, the agnostic Deity	419 <i>sqq.</i>
Fraud, as an agency in producing the Bible	370 <i>sqq.</i> , 441, 447
Free will and atheism	31 <i>sq.</i>
Freedom of thought	359
Genius, religious	134 <i>sq.</i>
Gloatz on miracles	115 <i>sqq.</i>
God, notion of, not an intuition	7, 26 <i>sq.</i>
innate tendencies to believe in a	26, 49 <i>sqq.</i>
theories of origin of belief in a	21 <i>sqq.</i>
personality of	397, 412 <i>sqq.</i>
Gospels, the, <i>vs.</i> the other New Testament books	333 <i>sqq.</i>
Greek philosophy and Christian dogma	230
Haeckel on nature	42
Harmonizing function of the Christian judgment	339 <i>sq.</i>
Herrmann on Christ and revelation	144 <i>sqq.</i>
History, Old Testament, how far endorsed by the New Testament	265 <i>sqq.</i>
Hume on miracles	98 <i>sq.</i>
Idealism <i>vs.</i> materialism	391 <i>sq.</i>
Ignorance, human, as proof of divine existence	34
Illusions in cognition	4, 12
Individual, as related to common, beliefs	16
Infallibility of the Bible	319, 342 <i>sqq.</i>
Infant cognition	8, 17
Infinite, the, and God's personality	418
metaphysical puzzle concerning the	418
Inspiration and revelation	280, 287 <i>sqq.</i>
definition of	283 <i>sqq.</i>
mechanical theory of	284 <i>sqq.</i> , 369
of the Biblical writers	287
of Paul	312, 368 <i>sq.</i>
proof of Biblical	293 <i>sqq.</i>
of words	287
Intelligence, origin of	36
Interpretation of the Bible	328, 337 <i>sqq.</i> , 342
Intuitive truths	7, 14

	PAGE
Jesus, <i>see</i> Christ.	
John, Gospel of, authorship of	207, 384
his testimony on Christ's resurrection	207
the Baptist	158 <i>sq.</i> , 187 <i>sq.</i>
Jonah, Book of	436 <i>sqq.</i>
Judaism and Christianity	229 <i>sqq.</i>
Jugglery and miracle-working	101, 176
Kaftan on origin of theism	22 <i>sq.</i>
Knowledge, a product of individual and general cognition	16
reality of	12, 356, 406 <i>sqq.</i>
in general communicated	4 <i>sqq.</i>
Kuenen on Deuteronomy	378
Ladd, Prof. G. T., on inspiration	291 <i>sqq.</i>
on miracles	106 <i>sqq.</i> , 114, 179
Language, importance of, in cognition	5, 11, 18, 394
primeval	66 <i>sqq.</i> , 71 <i>sq.</i>
Laws of nature and miracles	106, 111 <i>sqq.</i> , 218, 429 <i>sqq.</i>
Leland on primeval revelation	423 <i>sq.</i>
Lessing on the pursuit of truth	356 <i>sq.</i>
Luther's prayer for Melancthon's life	121
Materialism and morality	41-47
and idealism	391 <i>sq.</i>
and immortality	43 <i>sq.</i>
Mathematical truths	8
Matter, belief in the existence of	12, 426
Maudsley on the validity of consciousness	389 <i>sqq.</i>
Messianic notions of the Jews	161, 184
prophecies	234 <i>sqq.</i> , 256 <i>sqq.</i>
Miracle of the loaves	108 <i>sq.</i> , 212 <i>sq.</i> , 429 <i>sqq.</i>
of the leper	211
of water made wine	104 <i>sqq.</i> , 185
Miracles, absolute and relative	114 <i>sqq.</i>
acceleration theory of	104
agnostic view of	132 <i>sqq.</i> , 426
Arnold, M., on	157 <i>sqq.</i>
Beyschlag on	429 <i>sqq.</i>
criticism of narratives of	219 <i>sqq.</i>
criteria of	224
definition of	97 <i>sqq.</i> , 146 <i>sq.</i>
evidential value of	124 <i>sqq.</i> , 225 <i>sq.</i>
faith in, relation of, to Christian faith	173 <i>sqq.</i>
considered as obstacles to faith	167
of healing	214 <i>sqq.</i>
Jesus as a worker of	157, 160, 179 <i>sqq.</i> , 186
Jewish conception of	102 <i>sq.</i>
relation of, to natural law	100, 106, 111 <i>sqq.</i> , 114 <i>sqq.</i> , 147 <i>sq.</i> , 218, 429 <i>sq.</i>

	PAGE
Miracles, mesmeric theory of	105, 433
Moses' injunction concerning	177
narratives of, and criticism	155 <i>sqq.</i> , 219 <i>sqq.</i>
of the O. T., how far authenticated by the N. T.	259 <i>sqq.</i> , 436 <i>sqq.</i>
preconceptions concerning, effect of	362
proof of	196 <i>sqq.</i> , 209 <i>sqq.</i>
proved by the doctrine	179 <i>sqq.</i> , 188 <i>sq.</i>
effects of questioning the	169 <i>sqq.</i>
Ritschl'on	145 <i>sq.</i> , 431 <i>sq.</i>
true, how distinguished from false	175 <i>sqq.</i>
Moral argument for the divine existence	50
law as immutable, sense of	40 <i>sq.</i>
order of the universe	46
sense	39 <i>sqq.</i>
Morality, atheistic	32, 42, 193
and Christianity	192 <i>sq.</i>
and theism	37 <i>sqq.</i>
in the Deity	33 <i>sq.</i> , 398 <i>sqq.</i>
of the Old Testament	345 <i>sqq.</i>
Moses as a legislator	447
and the Pentateuch	274
Mystical Christianity	226
Nature, laws of	102, 111 <i>sqq.</i>
Necessitarianism	38
New Testament, authority of	325
Old Testament and the New	232 <i>sqq.</i>
miracles of the	259 <i>sqq.</i>
New Testament interpretation of	335
prophecies of Christ	234 <i>sqq.</i>
Ontological argument	53, 413
Pantheism	47
Pantheistic tendencies of rationalism	62, 133
Paradise, Biblical story of	267 <i>sqq.</i>
Paul and the other apostles	334
his apostolic authority	289, 310
on the resurrection of Christ	199 <i>sqq.</i>
his attitude towards the Old Testament	232
Tübingen theory and	372
Pentateuch, authorship of	274, 373 <i>sqq.</i>
Perception of the outward world	12
Perfection of the Bible	347 <i>sqq.</i>
Personality, cognition of other men's	10 <i>sqq.</i> , 390 <i>sqq.</i>
of God	397 <i>sqq.</i> , 412 <i>sqq.</i>
Peter, his testimony on Christ's resurrection	208

	PAGE
Pfleiderer on the primeval revelation	79 <i>sqq.</i>
Pfleiderer on revelation in general	133 <i>sqq.</i>
Prayer, answers to	121 <i>sq.</i>
relation of, to theism	23
Prepossessions in criticism	355 <i>sqq.</i>
Primeval man, uniqueness of his condition	70 <i>sqq.</i>
Prophecy concerning the Jews	250
evidential use of	243 <i>sqq.</i>
minuteness in, not desirable	251 <i>sqq.</i>
oriental features of	247
shaped by conceptions of the time	249, 254 <i>sq.</i>
Prophets, their general office	245 <i>sq.</i>
Providences, special	120 <i>sqq.</i>
Pseudonymy in the Scriptures	374 <i>sqq.</i>
Psychicalness of God	398 <i>sqq.</i>
Rabbinical interpretations in the New Testament	335
Rabinowitz, Joseph, reference to	350
Rationalism, former and present	132 <i>sq.</i>
Reason, the absolute	414
a collective possession	18
Relative and the Absolute, the	415 <i>sqq.</i>
Relativity of knowledge	13, 405 <i>sqq.</i> , 416 <i>sq.</i>
Religion and morality	51
natural and revealed	136
theories of origin of	21 <i>sqq.</i> , 419
transmitted	2 <i>sq.</i> , 138
Religious impulse, the	138
opinions, formation of	358
Resurrection of Christ, fact of	196 <i>sqq.</i>
M. Arnold on	163
Herrmann on	148
Revelation, alleged impossibility of	79
natural expectation of	59, 62
the Christian, general features of	87 <i>sqq.</i>
marks of	96, 132 <i>sqq.</i>
antecedent probability of	79
primeval	65 <i>sqq.</i> , 423 <i>sqq.</i>
the record of	279 <i>sqq.</i>
transmission of	89 <i>sq.</i>
Revelations, multiplicity of alleged	64
Ritschl on miracles	145 <i>sq.</i> , 434 <i>sq.</i>
on Christ's character	142 <i>sq.</i>
Satan as miracle-worker	177
in Paradise	269 <i>sq.</i>
Senses, testimony of	4, 12
Sibylline Oracles quoted	252
Sin, relation of, to revelation	91 <i>sq.</i>

	PAGE
Sinlessness of Christ	153 <i>sqq.</i> , 182
Skepticism of the present time	1
Smith, W. R. on "legal fiction"	377 <i>sqq.</i>
Solomon's Song	449
Spencer, Herbert, on personality of God	397 <i>sqq.</i> , 412 <i>sqq.</i>
philosophy of	400 <i>sqq.</i>
Stuart, Moses, on typical interpretation	235 <i>sqq.</i>
Supernatural, the, in revelation	96
in the New Testament	161
Taylor, W. M., on evidential value of miracles	174 <i>sqq.</i> , 189 <i>sq.</i>
Teleological argument, the	49 <i>sq.</i>
<i>Testimonium Spiritu Sancti</i>	320
Thaumaturgy and miracle-working	157 <i>sq.</i>
Theism, theories of origin of	21, 69 <i>sqq.</i> , 419
presumption in favor of	29
Theistic belief, grounds of	20 <i>sqq.</i>
origin of	1 <i>sqq.</i> , 424
sense	22
Tradition as a source of theism	2 <i>sqq.</i>
as transmitting Christianity	332
Traditions, Jewish, in the New Testament	275 <i>sqq.</i>
Trees of Paradise	270 <i>sq.</i>
Trench on miracles	127, 177, 222
Truth, absolute	35
absolute and relative	405-411
Lessing on the pursuit of	356
Tübingen theory, the	370 <i>sqq.</i>
Typical character of Old Testament prophecy	234 <i>sqq.</i>
prophecies not evidential	243
Uniqueness of Christ	140 <i>sqq.</i> , 168, 183, 210 <i>sq.</i>
Unknown Reality, the	402
Visions, the Biblical	200 <i>sqq.</i>
Watson on the primeval revelation	425
Westminster Confession referred to	342
"Word of God" <i>vs.</i> "Bible"	367
Words, in what sense inspired	287

INDEX OF AUTHORS REFERRED TO IN THIS
VOLUME.

	PAGE		PAGE
Abbot, Ezra	207	Bushnell, H.	98, 113, 129, 152
Abbott, E. A.	129, 202, 212	Butler, Bishop	316
Alford	205	Caird, J.	25, 35
Argyll, Duke of	25, 71, 77, 86	Cairns, J.	98
Arnold, Matthew	47, 105, 129, 136, 141, 157 <i>sqq.</i>	Calderwood, H.	3, 8
Arnold, Thomas	127, 179	Calovius	285
Athanasius	150	Calvin	299
Athenagoras	286	Carpenter	214
Atkinson, H. G.	38	Chalmers	122
Augustine	112	Christlieb	128, 208, 260
Baier	285	Chrysostom	299
Bannerman	301	Clarke, J. F.	111, 126
Barnes, A.	220	Clemens, Alexandrinus	229
Bascom, J.	53 <i>sq.</i>	Clifford, W. K.	193
Baur, F. C.	217, 371	Cocker, B. F.	423
Beek, J. T.	298	Coleridge, S. T.	127, 179
Bender, W.	22, 130, 188	Conder, E. R.	2, 54
Berkeley	391 <i>sq.</i>	Conybeare	299
Beyschlag	105 <i>sq.</i> , 429	Coquerel, A. J.	130
Biedermann	130	Cousin	385
Birks, T. R.	100	Cowper	221
Bissell, E. C.	360, 381	Cremer	299, 313
Boardman, G. N.	316	Curteis, G. H.	112, 131
Bowne, B. P.	13, 30, 101	Czolbe	38
Brace, C. L.	192	Darwin	21
Braid	214	Davidson, S.	438, 439, 445 <i>sq.</i>
Bredenkamp, C. J.	382	Davidson, J.	245
Briggs, C. A.	67, 234, 245, 374, 446	Delitzsch	234, 242, 270 <i>sq.</i> , 381, 446
Bruce, A. B.	90, 112, 186 <i>sq.</i> , 222	DeWette	299
Buchanan, J.	403	Diman, J. L.	2, 55
Büchner	397	Dorner, A.	112
Burgon	238, 286, 335	Dorner, I. A.	33, 39, 114, 124, 127, 182, 223, 229, 318, 352, 412
Burnouf, Emile	66, 69, 86, 229 <i>sq.</i>	Drummond, J.	162
		DuBois-Reymond	72
		Dwinell, I. E.	377

	PAGE		PAGE
Ellicott	299 <i>sq.</i>	Josephus	277, 438
Elmslie, W. G.	273	Justin Martyr	229, 286
Ewald	212, 245		
Fairbairn, A. M.	65 <i>sqq.</i>	Kaftan, J.	22 <i>sq.</i>
Fairbairn, P.	234, 239, 245, 256, 299	Kahnis	315, 324
Feuerbach, L.	21, 53	Keim	130, 199, 202 <i>sqq.</i> , 212
Fichte, J. G.	46	Kleinert	245
Fisher, G. P.	33, 127, 128, 155, 160, 200, 204	König, F. E.	381
Fiske, J.	21, 43, 397 <i>sqq.</i> , 412 <i>sqq.</i>	Köstlin, J.	107, 126
Flint, R.	2, 397, 423	Kuennen 245, 251, 373, 378 <i>sq.</i> , 446, 449	
Flügel, O.	115	Küper	245
Frank	318	Ladd, G. T. 106 <i>sqq.</i> , 114, 179, 220, 234, 245, 258, 277, 290 <i>sqq.</i> , 298, 313, 367, 435, 439, 444, 448, 451	
Gaussen	285	Lange, F. A.	21
Given, J. J.	331	Lange, J. P.	105, 214
Gloatz	115 <i>sqq.</i>	Lecky	192
Goltz, Von der	111	Lee, W.	281, 293, 313
Gould, E. P.	323	Leland	424
Gray, Asa	56	Lessing	88, 90, 131, 205, 356
Green, T. H.	42	Lewes, G. H.	403
Green, W. H.	379, 381	Lightfoot, J. B.	126
Greg, W. R.	83, 129, 141, 201, 206	Lipsius, R. A.	129 <i>sq.</i> , 132, 142
Haeckel	42	Lotze, H.	36, 47, 51
Haley, J. W.	331	Lowth	369
Hamilton, Sir Wm.	357, 415	Lubbock	21, 25, 73
Harnack, A.	230	Lucretius	21
Harris, S.	13, 39, 45, 54, 109, 414	Luthardt	62
Harrison, F.	422	McCosh	17
Haweis, H. R.	105	Mair, A.	127, 280
Hedge, F. H.	130	Mansel	54, 415
Herrmann, W.	144 <i>sqq.</i>	Marsh, Bishop	235
Hilgenfeld, A.	162, 302	Martineau, H.	38
Hirzel, J.	164	Martineau, J.	43, 298
Hitzig	245, 258, 446, 448 <i>sq.</i>	Matheson, G.	30
Hollaz	285	Maudsley	389 <i>sqq.</i>
Holtzmann	210, 299	Maurer	446
Hooker, R.	286	Maurice, F. D.	127, 179
Hopkins, M.	190	Meyer	223, 437
Horst, G. C.	244	Mill, J. S.	37, 87, 98
Hume	21, 98	Moleschott	397
Huther	299	Morison, J. C.	193
Jackson, W.	55	Mosheim	298
Janet, P.	55	Mozley	100, 171, 186, 347
		Mulford, E.	8

	PAGE		PAGE
Müller, Julius	115	Rousseau	129
Müller, Max	66, 86	Row, C. A. 103, 155, 182, 197, 287,	313
Murphy, J. J.	4, 396, 403	Royce, J.	34 <i>sq.</i> , 94, 317
Neander	105	Rückert	164
Newman, F. W.	82, 154	Rudelbach	286
Newman, J. H.	98, 125, 128, 217	Savage, M. J.	21, 97
Nitzsch	253	Schaff, P.	182
Oehler, G. F.	245	Schelling	77
Oehler, V. F.	258	Schenkel	157, 202
Olshausen	104	Schleiermacher	22, 111, 131, 197
Orelli	245	Scholten	211 <i>sq.</i>
Origen	235, 298	Schöttgen	276
Paley	174	Schultz, H.	245, 252
Park, E. A.	97	Schwegler	372
Parker, Theodore	82 <i>sq.</i> , 88	Seeley, J. R.	130, 167
Patton, F. L.	318	Seelye, J. H.	124
Paulus	212, 430	Smith, R. P.	245, 381
Peabody, A. P.	111	Smith, R. T.	6
Pecaut, F.	130, 244	Smith, W. R.	245, 377 <i>sq.</i>
Perowne	234, 376, 379, 382	Smyth, N.	27, 347
Pfleiderer, O.	79, 81, 85, 129 <i>sq.</i> ,	Speneer, H.	21, 27, 33, 39, 44, 48,
133 <i>sq.</i> , 141, 232, 371, 373		54, 397-401, 412-422, 427 <i>sq.</i>	
Philippi	287	Spieß, E.	229
Philo	266	Spiller, P.	427
"Physicus"	55	Stephen, Sir J.	359, 375
Porter, N.	39	Sterling, J.	128
Potter, A.	114	Storrs, R. S.	192
Powell, Baden	128, 130	Stoughton, J.	179
Pressensé	25, 220	Strack, H. A.	381
Quarry	266 <i>sq.</i>	Strauss 159, 170, 197 <i>sq.</i> , 204, 212	
Quenstedt	285	Stuart, M.	235-237, 239
Redford, R. A.	448	"Supernatural Religion" 1, 99, 426	
Renan	128, 160, 219	Taylor, W. M. 98, 102, 174 <i>sq.</i> , 189	
Renouf	86	Teichmüller	23, 147
Richm, E.	234, 245, 379	Temple, Bishop	112, 215
Ritschl, A.	22, 102, 130, 142 <i>sq.</i> ,	Tertullian	229
145, 150, 168, 434		Thayer, J. H.	155, 224, 277, 300
Ritter, H.	385	Tholuck	128, 234, 246, 247, 251
Rogers, H.	83, 164	Thomas Aquinas	114
Röhr	136	Thomassen, J. H.	48
Rothe, R.	28, 100 <i>sq.</i> , 107, 110,	Tindal, M.	88
299, 302 <i>sq.</i> , 315		Toy, C. H.	382
Rougemout	314	Trench, R. C. 126 <i>sq.</i> , 177, 179, 222	
		Tuke	214
		Twining, K.	196

	PAGE		PAGE
Tylor, E. B.	21	Watson, F.	275, 381, 445
Tyndall	400	Watson, R.	425
Uhlhorn	192	Weiss, B.	302, 431
Ullmann	182	Weisse, C. H.	100, 168, 213 <i>sq.</i>
Ulrici	24, 33	Weizsäcker	202, 213, 217
Urwick, W.	258	Wellhausen	373, 381
Vogt, C.	397	Westcott	104, 365
Vos, G.	381	Whiston, W.	238
Wace, H.	298	Wiesinger	299
Warrington, G.	98, 109, 125, 287, 300, 367, 377	Wright, C. H. H.	445
		Wright, G. F.	277, 313, 347
		Zeller	85, 434

BIBLICAL INDEX.

PAGE		PAGE		PAGE	
Gen. i.-iii	267, 272, 273	1 Kings xxii. 13	254	Isa. xliii. 22-24	380
i. 3	272	2 Kings i. 9-12	260	xliv. 1, 21	257
i. 27	266, 272	xiii. 21	260	xlix. 1-6	257
ii. 9	267, 271	xiv. 25	450	l. 10	257
ii. 24	266	xxii.	379	li. 17-liii. 12	246
iii.	265	xxii. 8	377	lii. 13-liiii. 12	257, 258
iii. 15.	256	xxii. 11, 13.	378	liii.	257, 258
iii. 22.	267, 268, 271	2 Chron. xxvi. 22	290	lxvi. 19	255
iii. 24.	267	Job i. 1	344	lxvi. 20-23	249
vi. 9	344	Ps. ii	236, 242	Jer. iii. 1-18	246
ix. 20	277	ii. 7	236	iii. 16	249
xxv. 27	344	xvi.	236-238, 275	iii. 18	251
xxxv. 22	449	xviii.	242	vii. 25, 26	247
xliv. 10	256	xix. 7	344	ix. 16.	250
Exod. xxxiv. 6	260	xxii.	236	xv. 4	250
Lev. i. 1-5	380	xxii. 1	241	xxiii. 5	249
iii. 2	380	xxiv.	242	xxiv. 9	250
iv. 4, 12	380	xl.	238	xxv. 4-7	247
vi. 11	380	xlv.	236	xxix. 18	250
xi. 44	346	lxvii.	242	xxix. 19.	247
xix. 2	346	lxviii.	242	xxx. 9	249
xix. 18	346	lxix.	236	xxxi. 10-14	251
Num. xxii. 28	260	lxix. 5	236	xxxi. 15	238, 250
xxiv. 17	256	lxix. 21	236	xxxi. 31-34	249
Deut. iv. 27	250	lxix. 21-28	345	xxxiii. 15, 17	249
vi. 5	346	lxxii.	242	xxxiii. 18-22	249
xii. 8	380	lxxvi.	242	xxxv. 15	247
xii. 21, 29	380	lxxviii. 2	238	xlvi. 27	251
xiii. 1-5	177 sq.	lxxxiii.	242	Ezek. ii. 3-5	247
xiii. 12	380	xcv. 7, 8	275	v. 10	250
xvi. 2	380	cviii. 4-9	212	xi. 16	250
xviii. 15, 18	257	cx. 236, 242, 275, 302	302	xi. 17	251
xviii. 22	245	cx. 4	257	xii. 15	250
xix. 1	380	Isa. ii. 2-4	249	xx. 23	250
xxv. 4	237	viii. 16-ix. 7	246	xxvii. 13, 19	255
xxviii. 25	250	ix. 1-7	242, 248, 257	xxxiv. 23, 24	249
xxx. 11-14	238	ix. 7	249	xxxvi. 16-36	246
xxxii. 2	277	x. 24-xi. 16	246	Dan. iii. 27	98
Josh. x. 11	261	xi. 1-9	257	viii. 21	255
Judg. iv. 4 <i>sqq.</i>	247	xi. 10-16	251	ix. 6	247
vi. 7-10	247	xi. 14.	249	ix. 26	257
2 Sam. vii. 2 <i>sqq.</i>	247	xiv. 1-3	251	x. 20	255
i. 1-15	247	xxvii. 12, 13	251	xi. 2	255
xxiv. 11-14	247	xxxiv. 11-16	248	Hos. iii. 5	249
1 Kings xi. 29-35	253	xl.-lxvi.	255, 257, 380	vi. 2	203
xiii. 2	251	xli. 8-14	257, 258	ix. 17	259
xvii. 7 <i>sqq.</i>	212	xlii. 1-7	257	xi. 1	238, 250
xviii. 1	277	xliii. 19	257	xi. 11	251
xviii. 17	254	xliiii. 10	257	Joel ii. 15-32	246

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
Joel ii. 28-32	242, 247	Matt. xii. 41	438	Mark xii. 36	302
iii. 1-8	251	xiii. 14	440	xii. 40	437
iii. 6	255	xiii. 35	238	xiii. 11	305
Amos ix. 7-15	246	xv. 7	440	xiii. 32	436
ix. 8, 9	250	xv. 32-39	213	xiv. 49	240, 300
ix. 11	249	xvi. 4	157	xvi. 8	205
ix. 14, 15	251	xvi. 5-12	213	xvi. 9-20	204
Obad. 17-21	251	xvii. 3	201	Luke i. 3	234
Jonah iv. 2	260	xvii. 24-27	222	i. 11	201
Micah iii. 1-iv. 5	246	xviii. 18	308	i. 32	239
iii. 8	247	xix. 4	272	i. 54-56	223
iv. 10	251	xix. 4-6	266	iv. 22	177
v. 1-5	242, 257	xix. 7, 8	440	iv. 25, 26	261, 277
v. 2-10	248, 251	xix. 8	344	iv. 27	261
v. 5	249	xxi. 4, 5	248	v. 1-11	222
Zeph. ii. 14	248	xxi. 13	301	v. 18 <i>sqq.</i>	212
iii. 8-20	251	xxi. 18-20	223	v. 23, 24	181
Zech. iii. 8	257	xxi. 42	300, 303	v. 24	157, 186
vi. 13	257	xxi. 29	300, 302	vi. 5-10	181
vii. 12	247	xxii. 40	440	vi. 17	206
ix. 9, 10	242, 248, 257	xxii. 41-46	335	vii. 18-22	157
x. 13	255	xxii. 43	302	vii. 48	211
x. 10	251	xxii. 43-45	275	viii. 46	181
xii. 10	257	xxiv. 15	440	ix. 1, 2	181
xiii. 7	257	xxiv. 27-39	439 <i>sq.</i>	x. 13	157, 221
xiii. 8, 9	250	xxiv. 38	277	x. 38-42	206
xiv. 16-21	249	xxiv. 39	261	x. 40	184
Mal. iv. 4	377	xxv. 31-46	211	xi. 20	157, 180, 216
Matt. i. 18	223	xxvi. 54-56	240, 303	xi. 29	157
ii. 15	238, 239, 250	xxvii. 52, 53	222	xi. 29-32	437, 439
ii. 17, 18	238, 250	xxviii. 10	204	xi. 32	438
iv. 4, 7, 10	301	xxviii. 19	308, 309	xii. 11, 12	305
iv. 17	210	xxviii. 20	305, 309	xiii. 16	440
v. 12	440	Mark i. 21 <i>sqq.</i>	217	xiii. 32	157
v. 17	240, 440	i. 40-45	211	xvi. 16	440
v. 18	302	i. 44	274	xvi. 17	302
v. 21-48	210	ii. 3 <i>sqq.</i>	212	xvi. 29	274, 303, 440
v. 38-46	345	ii. 9, 10	216	xvi. 31	157, 303
v. 42	338	ii. 10	157, 186	xvii. 10	142
vi. 15	185	iii. 15	181	xvii. 26, 27	440
vii. 12	440	iii. 20-30	157	xvii. 27	261, 277
vii. 21-27	210	iv. 38	184	xviii. 30	210
vii. 29	177	v. 30	181	xviii. 31	301, 440
viii. 28-33	223	vi. 7	181	xx. 28	274
viii. 33	220	vi. 34	212	xx. 37	261, 440
ix. 2-6	211, 212	vi. 52	432	xx. 37, 38	335
ix. 5	181	vii. 10	274	xx. 41-44	275
ix. 6	157, 186	vii. 13	367	xxi. 14, 15	305
x. 1	181, 308	viii. 1-9	213	xxi. 22	240, 301
x. 19, 20	305	viii. 2	433	xxii. 37	258
x. 34-39	210	viii. 12	157	xxiv. 21	185
xi. 2-5	157	viii. 14-21	213	xxiv. 25	440
xi. 5	216, 219	viii. 32	184	xxiv. 27	240, 300, 303
xi. 11	159	ix. 13	159, 241	xxiv. 32	300
xi. 28	210	x. 5	274	xxiv. 44	240, 274, 301
xi. 46-48	185	x. 6	272	xxiv. 45	300, 335
xii. 3, 4	274, 440	x. 6-9	266	xxiv. 47-49	308
xii. 24	443	xii. 19	274	xxiv. 49	204, 205, 305
xii. 27	444	xii. 24	302	John i. 41	185
xii. 39	157	xii. 26	261, 274	i. 45, 49	185, 231
xii. 40	239, 241, 261, 437	xii. 35-37	275	ii. 7-10	104-107

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
John ii. 9	107	John xix. 28	236, 240, 345	Acts xiii. 17	261
ii. 11	185	xx. 9	231, 301	xiii. 30	181
ii. 19	181	xx. 21	308	xiii. 33	236
ii. 22	301	xx. 22, 23	305, 308	xiii. 34-37	237, 241, 275
iii. 2	216	xx. 31	180, 231	xiv. 8-10	181
iii. 14	239, 261, 439	xxi. 15-17	308	xiv. 14	311
iii. 16	369	Acts i. 4	204	xv. 1-29	309
iv. 25, 26	231	i. 8	308	xv. 8	306
iv. 34	182	i. 13	311	xv. 15	301
iv. 48	157	i. 16	240, 300	xv. 28	305
v. 5 <i>sqq.</i>	212	ii. 1-4	306	xvi. 6, 7	305, 306
v. 36	182	ii. 3	201	xvi. 9	199, 201
v. 38	303	ii. 4	305	xvii. 2	300
v. 39	231, 210, 300, 302	ii. 14-21	247, 306, 309	xvii. 3	240
v. 40	303	ii. 22	186, 216, 219	xvii. 11	300
v. 45-47	231, 274, 303	ii. 24	181	xvii. 31	186
vi. 14, 15	432	ii. 24-36	186, 237, 275	xviii. 9	199
vi. 15	185	iii. 1-8	181	xviii. 31	367
vi. 30 <i>sqq.</i>	157	iii. 15	181, 186	xviii. 11	300
vi. 31, 45	301	iii. 16	181	xix. 6	306
vi. 31, 32, 49	261	iii. 24	240	xix. 20	367
vi. 35	211	iii. 26	181	xx. 24	309
vi. 38	182	iv. 8	306	xxii. 9	202
vi. 45	301, 440	iv. 10	186	xxii. 17	284
vi. 47-58	211	iv. 13	309	xxiii. 3	314
vi. 66	183	iv. 31	305, 367	xxvi. 16	310
vii. 19	274, 440	iv. 35	309	Rom. i. 1	305
vii. 23	274	v. 30	181	i. 2, 3	232
vii. 31	184	vi. 1-4	309	i. 4	181, 186, 211
vii. 39	313	vi. 5	306, 310	i. 17	301
viii. 12	210	vi. 7	367	i. 19, 20	231
viii. 29, 46	182, 210	vi. 8	310	ii. 14, 15	231
viii. 37	440	vi. 10	310	iii. 2	232
x. 18	181	vi. 2	201	iii. 4	301
x. 25	157	vii. 2, 3	261	iii. 5	312
x. 32	221	vii. 26	201	iii. 25	211
x. 34-36	335	vii. 30	201, 261	iv. 1-18	232
x. 35	300, 303	vii. 36	261	iv. 3	301
x. 38	157	vii. 53	276	iv. 6	275
x. 41	159	vii. 55	306, 310	iv. 19-21	261
xi. 26	237	viii. 5-7	310	iv. 23	301
xi. 40-42	181	viii. 13	310	v. 5	307
xi. 42	157	viii. 17	306	v. 12-21	265
xi. 46-48	185	viii. 29	306, 310	v. 14	241
xii. 13	231	viii. 32	301	vi. 19	312
xii. 14, 15	248	viii. 39	310	viii.	429
xii. 41	231	ix. 7	202	viii. 1-5	307
xiii. 6	184	ix. 26, 27	203, 311	viii. 9	289
xiii. 18	231	ix. 33, 34	181	viii. 9-14	307
xiv. 11	157	ix. 36-40	181	viii. 17	308
xiv. 16-18	305	x. 9-16	201	ix. 4, 5	232
xiv. 26	305, 308	x. 10	284	ix. 6	367
xv. 16	211	x. 38	221	x. 5	275
xv. 26, 27	305	x. 40-43	186	x. 6-9	238
xvi. 12-15	305	x. 44	306	x. 15	301
xvi. 24	211	xi. 1	367	x. 19	275
xvii. 20	306	xi. 24	311	xi. 9	275
xvii. 21	192	xii. 2-4	367	xi. 13	309
xvii. 22	308	xiii. 2-4	305	xi. 17-21	232, 378
xix. 24	231	xiii. 9	306		

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
Rom. xii. 4, 5	211	2 Cor. xii. 1	199	1 Thess. iv. 1, 2	305
xv. 4	300, 301	xii. 1-4	284, 313	iv. 8	307
xv. 10	300	xii. 9, 12	305	iv. 15	305
1 Cor. i. 1	305	xii. 11, 12	309	2 Thess. ii. 13	307
i. 16	284	xiii. 2, 3	305	ii. 13-15	305
i. 17	309	xiii. 10	289	ii. 15	306
ii. 6	307	Gal. i. 1	305, 309, 310	1 Tim. i. 1	305
ii. 6-13	310	i. 6-9	325	ii. 5	211
ii. 10-16	305	i. 8, 9	310	ii. 13, 14	265, 266
iii. 1-3	307	i. 8, 9, 11, 12	309	2 Tim. ii. 9	367
iii. 10-12	309	i. 8, 11	289	iii. 8	275
iii. 16	307	i. 9-12	305	iii. 15, 16	297, 298, 322, 344
v. 7	239	i. 10	325	iv. 13	369
vi. 2	308	i. 15, 16	305, 310	Titus i. 1-3	305
vi. 19	307	i. 18	203, 335	ii. 5	367
vii.	313	ii. 2	313, 314	iii. 5	307
vii. 6	312	ii. 5	314	Heb. i. 1	289
vii. 10	312	ii. 6	309	i. 2	308
vii. 12	312	ii. 6-9	305	i. 6, 7	300
vii. 25	312	ii. 11-14	313	ii. 2	276
ix. 1	202, 305, 309	ii. 14	314	ii. 12	300
ix. 9, 10	237, 301	iii. 2	307	iii. 7	300
x. 1-4	232	iii. 3	307	iv. 3, 4	300
x. 4	276	iii. 7	232	iv. 7	275
x. 11	301	iii. 8	301	iv. 12	367
xi. 8, 9	265, 266	iii. 14 <i>sqq.</i>	232	iv. 15	182
xii. 3-13	307	iii. 15	312	v. 6	300
xii. 4	289, 309	iii. 19	276	vii.	239, 241
xii. 27	211	iii. 24	232	vii. 26	182
xii. 28	309	iv. 5-7	308	viii. 5	240
xiii. 10	307	iv. 22-25	239	viii. 7	344
xiii. 12	368	v. 16	307	x. 1	240
xiv. 36	367	vi. 1	307	x. 5, 15	300
xiv. 37	305	Eph. i. 1	305, 373	xi. 7	261
xv. 1	309	i. 13	307	xi. 8	261
xv. 1-11	199	i. 15	373	xi. 11	261
xv. 3, 4	232	ii. 20	309	xi. 17-19	261
xv. 8	202	iii. 1	373	xi. 28	261
xv. 8-10	305	iii. 1-7	305	xi. 29	261
xv. 15	181	iii. 2-8	373	xi. 30	261
xv. 22	265	iii. 13-19	373	xi. 33-38	276
xv. 35	203	iv. 1	373	xii. 18-21	261
xv. 45	265, 301	iv. 8	300	James i. 25	379
2 Cor. i. 5, 7	308	iv. 11	309	ii. 21	261
i. 24	325	iv. 13	307	v. 17	261, 277
iii. 6	303	iv. 17	373	1 Pet. i. 2	307
iii. 7	261	iv. 25	372	i. 3	186, 208
iii. 7-11	232	iv. 30	307	i. 10, 11	301
iii. 15	275	v. 18	307	i. 10-12	305
iv. 2	367	v. 30	211	i. 19	182
iv. 5	325	vi. 20-22	373	i. 21	208
iv. 6	272	Phil. iii. 10	308	i. 23	367
iv. 7	368	iii. 12	307	ii. 6	301
v. 21	182, 211	iii. 15	307	ii. 9	308
x. 8-11	305	Col. i. 1	305	ii. 22	182
x. 10	289	i. 24	308	iii. 20	261
xi. 3	265	i. 28	307	iii. 21	208
xi. 5	305, 309	ii. 16	240	iv. 14	307
xi. 17	312	ii. 19	211	2 Pet. i. 4	308
xi. 23	312	1 Thess. ii. 13	305, 367		

	PAGE		PAGE		PAGE
2 Pet. i. 21	301	1 John iii. 1, 2	308	Rev. i. 9	367
ii. 16	261	iii. 5	182	i. 18	267
iii. 2	305	iii. 9	342	ii. 7	267
iii. 5	367	iii. 24	307	ii. 8	207
iii. 15, 16	305	Jude, 9	276	xx. 2	269
1 John i. 1-3	305	14, 15	276	xx. 4	367
i. 3	332	Rev. i. 1-3	305	xxi. 2	267
i. 8	341	i. 5	207	xxii. 2	267
ii. 20	289	i. 6	308	xxii. 6, 7	305

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