HANDBOOKS

FOR

BIBLE CLASSES

AND PRIVATE STUDENTS.

EDITED BY

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CANDLISH ON THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF GOD.

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THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF GOD.

BY

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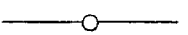

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PREFACE.

THE object of this volume is to provide a text-book on the first part of Systematic Theology similar to the many compends that were found useful to students in former times, but adapted to the requirements of the present age. Several such works have appeared, and had a large circulation in Germany, such as Hase's *Hutterus Redivivus*, Luthardt's *Compendium der Dogmatik*, and others; but the only book in English exhibiting in brief compass the theology of the Reformed Church is Dr. A. A. Hodge's *Outlines of Theology*, which is already a quarter of a century old. A greater adaptation of the form of presenting the unchanging truth of the gospel to the habits of viewing such subjects at present seems to be desirable, especially in the following ways.

The evidences of Christianity cannot be kept so distinct from its contents as was common down to the last generation, for it is increasingly felt that the contents of Christianity are its strongest evidence, commending themselves to the mind, conscience, and heart of man. It is desirable to bring more closely together doctrine and evidence, Apologetic and Systematic Theology: not proving or assuming the absolute authority of Scripture before entering on the study of its contents, and then allowing no appeal save to it; but rather beginning upon more general ground, and showing in regard to each doctrine, as we come to it, that it rests on solid ground of fact, using not merely the evidence of Scripture testimony, which, however, must always hold the chief place in any statement of Christian doctrine; but also, wherever it is possible, the proofs and confirmations arising from nature, experience, and history.

The increased knowledge that we have of non-Christian religions

makes it desirable to utilize, when possible, in Systematic Theology the results of modern research in that department, by comparing the doctrines taught in Scripture, not only with deviations from them within the pale of Christendom, but with the principles of the great ethnic religions and systems of philosophy; and such a use of the Science of Religion, or Comparative Theology, is especially suited for a missionary age of the Church, when she is awake to her high calling, to testify of her Lord and His salvation in the face of the varying creeds of all the nations.

The growth and value of the study of Biblical Theology should also be recognised by the Systematic theologian, and must modify the form and manner of his discussion of doctrines. Account should be taken of the distinctive character of the different portions of Scripture, and their historical relation to each other, as successive stages in a gradual process of education, increasing in clearness and fulness as it goes on; and an endeavour should be made to take as the leading idea of the systematic arrangement, not any dictate of mere philosophy, but some Biblical notion understood in its true historical sense. The notion of the kingdom of God seems to be that which has the highest authority and is most comprehensive; and it has therefore been taken here as the basis of the arrangement and establishment of the various doctrines of Christianity.

Regard for these considerations has led to some deviation from the order and manner in which the body of Christian doctrine has commonly been set forth; but it has not required any alteration of the substance and real meaning of the theology of the Reformation; and if there is occasionally a frank expression of dissent from men and documents of high reputation in the Reformed Churches, that is not inconsistent with great respect for them, and hearty agreement in maintaining the essential doctrines of grace.

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CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF GOD.

INTRODUCTION.

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE is the theory or explanation of the facts of Christianity; just as natural science is of the facts of nature. It aims at presenting them in the clearest possible form to the intellect; reducing the manifold, as much as may be, to the simplicity of general laws or ideas, and showing the connection and mutual relations of these. This study is called doctrine, rather than science or philosophy, because in Christianity we have a divine revelation, and in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments a divine record of that revelation. We are therefore not only inquirers, but disciples of Christ; and we have from Him a teaching which it is our duty to take in for ourselves, and, in turn, to set forth to others. We must make our inductions from the facts of Christianity under the guidance of the Bible; though we must also seek to verify its statements, as far as possible, by the undoubted truths of history and experience. In the success of such verification lies the practical proof of the divinity of Scripture.

This study of doctrine has been a progressive one in the Christian Church. From the beginning, Christians have had faith in Christ and His teaching; but at first without any definite intellectual conceptions of what that implied. By degrees one part of Christ's teaching after another was studied, and distinct truths were seen to be contained in it, the understanding of which became

gradually more complete. Sometimes, however, mistakes were made; the notions even of earnest believers were often one-sided, defective, or exaggerated; and long and fierce debates arose, sometimes ending in the separation of Christians into distinct communities, each maintaining a different notion on some point of doctrine. The student has to inquire which of these conflicting opinions is most in accordance with Scripture and the facts of Christianity. Hence every exhibition of Christian doctrines has to mark them off, by comparison with inadequate or perverted representations of them by some bodies of Christians.

But Christianity is a universal and missionary religion; and those who seek to exhibit its intellectual contents in the form of doctrines, should not only aim at separating them from inadequate and distorted representations that have appeared among Christian thinkers, but also at showing their relation to the religious notions that have prevailed among men outside Christendom entirely. The erroneous beliefs of Christians, which are technically termed "heresies," are not essentially different, and were not distinguished by ancient writers, from similar errors of non-Christian philosophers or religious teachers; and it would give our theology a more wide, living, and practical character than it has sometimes had, if the scriptural doctrines that we maintain were considered, not only in their relations to other conceptions of Christianity, such as the Roman Catholic, the Rationalistic, and the Mystic; but also in relation to other views of religion in general, such as those of Brahmanism, of Buddhism, of Parseeism, of Confucianism, and of Islam. Such a wider view would enable us to see, not merely in general, but in reference to each of its great doctrines, where Christianity stands among the religions of the world; how far any of them coincide with its teaching, and where and in what directions they diverge.

The facts of Christianity, from which the theologian has to start as his data, are numerous and varied, including the life, teaching, and work of Jesus Christ, His death, resurrection, and ascension, with the whole life, experience, thought, worship, and work of

Christians all down the ages. They may, however, be gathered up in a general statement, based on what was Jesus' own most usual and comprehensive expression for the object of His work, "the kingdom of God." It may be put thus: that in a world, made and governed by God, but alienated from Him, Jesus has established the kingdom of God, *i.e.* a fellowship of men, in which the highest morality is obeyed as the will of God, and the highest blessedness enjoyed in communion with Him.[1]

That the kingdom of God or of heaven proclaimed by Jesus is a fellowship of men, appears not only from the natural import of the word "kingdom," but from such expressions as, "least in the kingdom," "great in the kingdom" (Matt. v. 19, xviii. 4), "of such is the kingdom," "he shall in no wise enter therein" (Mark x. 14, 15), etc. That in it the highest morality is obeyed, is clear from the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v.–vii.; Luke vi. 20–42) and the whole tenor of our Lord's teaching; and that it is done as the will of God, appears from the phrase "kingdom," which often means "reign," "of God," from its being joined in the Lord's Prayer with the doing of His will (Matt. vi. 10), and from the many parables in which God is represented as a King, a Master, a Householder, a Shepherd, a Father, a Judge (Matt. xx. 1, xxii. 2, xxv. 14, 34; Luke xv. 4, 11, xvii. 7, etc.). Finally, it is plain that it includes the highest blessedness; since it is to be sought as the chief good (Matt. vi. 33; Luke xii. 32); is compared to a treasure, or pearl of great price (Matt. xiii. 44–46); and is the final reward of the righteous (Matt. xiii. 43, xxv. 34), as well as the beginning and the end of their blessedness here (Matt. v. 3, 10; Luke vi. 20).

[1] In my Cunningham Lectures on the Kingdom of God (Lecture IV. pp. 193–224), I have given and endeavoured to justify a fuller definition, as that seemed appropriate, after a consideration of all the Biblical materials (in Lectures II. and III.), and in view of a survey of the historical attempts to realize the kingdom of God (in Lecture V.); but here, where the object is to develop the Christian doctrine of God, it is better to start from a simpler conception, such as can be verified by a mere reference to the outstanding and undoubted facts of our Lord's teaching.

Thus, without any minute discussion of texts, such as is necessary to make out a complete definition of the kingdom of God, the general and undoubted nature of our Lord's teaching establishes the truth of the description here given, which is sufficient for our present purpose.

The body of Christian doctrine has commonly been divided into the following parts :—I. Theology proper, or the doctrine of God; II. Anthropology, or the doctrine of Man; III. Soteriology, or the doctrine of salvation ; IV. Ecclesiology, or the doctrine of the Church, the company of the saved ; and V. Eschatology, or the doctrine of the last things. It is only the first of these with which we have to do at present.

Now we have to ask, What does the kingdom of God imply and reveal about God ? and if we can answer this question correctly and completely, we shall exhibit the Christian doctrine of God in its essential parts. Besides what our Lord's proclamation and foundation of the kingdom of God directly reveals, there are certain truths about God that it presupposes as already known and believed. These we must consider in the first place. Then, coming to the proper teaching of Jesus, we shall find that what it directly reveals is the moral character of God as holy love ; but that in doing so, it further discloses a mysterious threefold distinction in the unity of the Godhead. These are the three parts into which the subject naturally falls :—

Part First.—Presupposition of the Kingdom of God : God is The Infinite Spirit.

Part Second.—Main Revelation of the Kingdom of God : God is Holy Love.

Part Third.—Corollary from the Kingdom of God · God is Three in One.

PART I.

PRESUPPOSITION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD:

GOD IS THE INFINITE SPIRIT.

CHAPTER I.

THE PERSONAL AUTHOR AND GOVERNOR OF NATURE.

BESIDES what Jesus directly revealed of God in His teaching and work of founding the kingdom of God, there are some truths about Him without which that work would have been impossible, but which did not need to be expressly taught or proved; since they are manifested by other works of God, and were generally believed by those among whom Jesus wrought. These do not form parts of the notion of the kingdom of God, but are presupposed in it as things without which that notion would be inconceivable. When Jesus began His ministry by announcing "the reign of God is at hand" (Matt. iv. 17; Mark i. 15), He took it for granted that His hearers knew God, and knew Him to be such a Being as could have a reign over them. It was not so when the apostles came to preach to heathens; for then they had, in the first place, to declare to them a God that they knew not, though they might be groping after Him and conscious of their ignorance (Acts xvii. 23); they had to show them that the deities they worshipped were vain idols, and exhort them to turn to the living God (Acts xiv. 15; 1 Thess. i. 9).

So, too, in pre-Christian times, men needed to be taught to know God before they could enjoy His salvation. When Moses was sent by God to Egypt to bring Israel out of bondage, the first thing he expected to be asked about Him who sent him was, What is His name? (Ex. iii. 13); and God enabled him to answer that question by revealing Himself as Jehovah, "I am that I am" (*ib.* 14). The prophets also found it necessary, while the Israelites were very imperfectly enlightened in the knowledge of God, and apt to confound or associate Him with the deities of the nations around them, to remind them who and what Jehovah their God was (Amos iv. 13, v. 8; Isa. xl. 18–26; Jer. x. 1–16; Ps. cxv., cxlvii., etc.). They appeal, like the apostles afterwards, to the glory of God appearing in nature: for the Biblical writers ever assume that men ought to have known God from His works, though in fact they have not done so.

The only case in which Jesus is recorded to have spoken directly of what God is, was His conversation with the Samaritan woman (John iv. 19–26); and we see that in this one case, where we have an account of His unfolding His salvation to one outside the people of the Jews who knew what they worshipped, He begins at an earlier point than in speaking to the Jews, and declares, what her question about the place of worship showed she had not fully understood, "God is a Spirit," or God is spirit, not material, therefore not confined to any one place, but to be approached everywhere; a spirit also not merely in this negative sense, but positively as well, having mind, will, desire; not a mere impersonal power, but a Being who is spoken of in personal language, and may also be called the Father.

This elementary but sublime teaching to the Samaritan stranger corresponds with what Jesus everywhere assumes in His preaching to Jews about the kingdom of God, and what that kingdom as an actual reality implies. The very idea of the kingdom of God involves a belief in God as a living, intelligent power, who can be to men in the relation of a king to his subjects. If this relation be not a mere name or empty figure of speech, there must

be so far a likeness between God and man that we do not err in ascribing to Him those attributes that are excellences in ourselves, such as knowledge, will, affection. These are what we mean when we say that we are mind, or spirit, as distinct from matter; and so, when God is spoken of as Spirit, and as knowing, feeling, and willing, He is distinguished from the material world which we perceive, as well as from our own souls, of which we are conscious.

Further, the kingdom of God, as proclaimed by Jesus, implies that God is supreme over the universe, as well as distinct from it. If He were not so, His kingdom could not be the sum of all blessings and the highest good of men: for if there were in existence any powers over which God had not absolute and entire control, these might possibly frustrate His purpose, and mar the peace and happiness of those who were most entirely in His kingdom. To this agree all the positive representations of God given by Jesus. He is our Father in heaven; heaven is His throne, and the earth His footstool (Matt. v. 34, 35); He makes the sun to rise and the rain to fall (*ib.* 45); He seeth in secret (vi. 4, 6, 18); He can give all things to those who seek first His kingdom and righteousness (vi. 33); all things are possible to Him (xix. 26). Nothing therefore can be conceived as independent of God, and no limit can be set to His presence or power. He is a Spirit, infinite in being and perfections.

This first part of the Christian doctrine of God is not a new revelation by Christ; nor indeed could it ever be taught by revelation, were it not evident from the phenomena of nature in which God's glory is seen. Thus much about God has been believed by many of the greatest and best philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, whose opinions on mental and moral science are still regarded with respect by all thinkers, and who without any revelation were led to this belief in God by arguments that have appeared sound and conclusive to most of those who have considered them in successive generations. Of the many and various arguments that have been used for this purpose, that from

the evidences of design in the adaptation of means to ends in nature is the most common and striking.

But the belief of a personal God as the author of nature is far older than these intellectual arguments, by which it has been confirmed in times of speculative inquiry and doubt; and is to be traced back, not to processes of reasoning, but most probably to intuitive convictions of the mind, conscience, and heart, which may be justified by philosophical discussion, but in their primitive form are distinct from anything of the sort.

Conscience, which gives law inwardly, carries the belief of a spiritual Lawgiver; and the perception of the movements and changes in the things around us has always led simple and unsophisticated men, as it does children, to ascribe these to the same cause that we are conscious of in ourselves as leading to movements of our limbs, viz. an intelligent will, and thus to believe in a personal power behind the appearances of nature. Those movements in outward things will be only gradually classified, and the distinction most obvious at first will be between those that cause pleasure and comfort and those that bring discomfort and suffering: the former would be regarded as indications of kindness, and the latter as expressions of anger or ill-will on the part of the Being, or beings, supposed to animate the phenomena of nature.

In this primitive form of belief the idea of unity in the will-power recognised in nature is not distinctly present: it is suggested rather by the moral feeling of duty, which leads to the recognition of a personal Lord and Lawgiver: the unity which science has discerned in the physical world cannot have been apparent in the infancy of the race; but if the minds of primitive men distinguished the appearances of nature, it would probably be at first as they affected them pleasantly or painfully, and the tendency would be to think of different moods of the power in nature rather than of different powers.[1] Afterwards,

[1] This thought is suggestively put by Dr. Martineau, *A Study of Religion*, vol. i. p. 233 foll.

when it came to be seen that the phenomena of the world grouped themselves in various connections, some with water, some with fire, some with light, some with air, and so on, and that those of each group might be sometimes beneficial and sometimes hurtful, there would arise the notion that there were separate souls in each of these objects, and so Polytheism would come in: and when the power to benefit or to hurt was ascribed to the sensible things themselves, they would be venerated as fetishes, and supposed to have souls like those of men. This form of belief, which has been called Animism, is found among many savage races of the present day, and has been traced in the primeval religions of various ancient nations, especially that of Chaldea. Many students of the origin of religion think that this is its most primitive form, from which the purer and truer faiths of mankind have all been developed by a gradual process. Animism is certainly very ancient, but it is itself rather a crude form of philosophy than a religion,[1] and does not seem capable of explaining the origin of the higher elements of religion, such as reverence, worship, trust.

The researches of science, and the comparison of the oldest religions known to us, seem to agree with the view that Paul gives, that God has made Himself known to men, on the one hand by the things that are made (Rom. i. 20), and on the other hand by the law written in their hearts and the voice of conscience (*ib.* ii. 14, 15). These, which in times of enlightenment have led the wisest of men, by processes of reflection and reason, to the belief of Theism, would bring rude and primitive people, by instinctive intuition and feeling, to a vague and indistinct religion of the same kind. Of such an indistinct Theism there are traces in the most ancient religions of different races of mankind, as in the earliest records of China, the *Shû King*, where there is frequent reference to a supreme Being, generally called Heaven, but sometimes God, represented as protecting the righteous and punishing the wicked;

[1] This is admitted by Tiele (*Outlines of the History of Religion*, § 8), who maintains the development of all religion from Animism.

though prayers and sacrifices are offered not only to him, but also to ancestors and to the spirits of heaven and earth; also in the oldest hymns of the Veda, where praise and prayer are addressed to the Heaven Father (Dyaus pitar, the Zeus or Ju-piter of Greeks and Romans), the sky personified as representing the supreme power in the universe: also in the conception of Ahura Mazda, the good Lord, in the Zend religion; and most probably also in the most ancient religion of the Egyptians.

It is true that in none of these old records of Gentile nations do we find pure Theism, still less distinct Monotheism: the supreme power that is worshipped as a personal God is also at times identified with natural objects, such as the sky or the sun, and there is generally joined with it the worship of inferior objects. Hence there is room for some variety of opinion as to which element in these mixed and confused beliefs is the most primitive; and some learned investigators think that they may all be traced up to Animism, though the view just stated seems on the whole the most probable.[1]

But anyhow, in most of the races of mankind, there came to prevail religious ideas very different from the Theism that is presupposed in Jesus' teaching about God. Nature-worship is the most general name by which these ideas can be described. The power recognised in the objects of sense was identified with these objects themselves: instead of a Father in heaven, of whom Jesus spoke, heaven itself had come to be regarded as a father: the sun, in place of being made to rise by God, was thought to be himself a god, and similarly all the other powers of nature were deified. Then, as different tribes and occupations of men had special need of different natural agents, a special deity came to be appropriated to each, and there ensued an endless division of the divine, and a worship of innumerable tribal and local gods. This is the popular Polytheism that prevailed almost universally

[1] See Max Müller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion;* Renouf, *Hibbert Lectures on the Religion of Ancient Egypt;* Pfleiderer, *die Religion ihr Wesen u. ihre Geschichte;* Pressensé, *The Ancient World and Christianity.*

in the ancient world, and still holds sway in many lands and races of the globe. It has generally been associated with a more or less elaborate mythology, and the lively fancy of the Greeks developed that in the most beautiful and artistic way; so that the deities were entirely conceived after the manner of men, represented in forms of perfect human beauty and majesty, and described as animated by human purposes, passions, and wills, and therefore often opposing and contending with each other. Such a religion, however, failed to satisfy those intuitions and cravings of the soul from which belief in the divine springs. The numerous anthropomorphic deities could not be regarded as the source of moral law or the satisfaction of the soul's wants. They were simply human beings, distinguished from mankind mainly by the attributes of immortality and blessedness.

The only way in which such Polytheism could continue to be a real religious power would be by the many merely human deities being conceived as standing under one head, or as intermediate between mortals and one supreme God. Such an idea was partially embodied in the Olympian system of Greek mythology; but it could not gain permanent ascendency, because the supreme deity in that mythology was really as anthropomorphic as any of the others; and among these there were not only differences of function and province, but conflicts and wars imagined, on account of the conflicts of natural powers, or the struggles of nations worshipping nature under different forms and names. Thus in ancient European paganism, the power really conceived as supreme was not the gods of the mythology or any one of them, even when they were really believed, but that Fate or Necessity (*αἶσα, μοῖρα, ἀνάγκη*) which was viewed as above them all. This was what really corresponded to the theistic notion of God; and as it was often conceived (*e.g.* by Æschylus) as avenging crime and teaching men by suffering, some attributes of true deity were ascribed to it: but it was impersonal, and could not be the object of worship and love. Moreover, this belief in a power making for righteousness had no sufficient support in

evidence, and when the Greek mind reached its maturity, the old polytheistic religion ceased to be believed by the educated. Its place was taken by philosophy, which in some schools won its way to a theistic view of the universe, while in others it was thought possible to explain all the phenomena of nature by material causes without the recognition of an originating and directing mind. Such was the Epicurean theory, according to which all things were held to have proceeded from a fortuitous concourse of atoms; and while the gods of the popular mythology were not denied, they were regarded as having no government of the world or care for men, but simply an eternal and untroubled existence. In fact, the distinguishing characteristics of deity in the practical conceptions of the Greek and Roman Polytheism were just blessedness and immortality, as expressed in the epithet *μάκαρες θεοὶ αἰὲν ἐόντες*, and these indeed may ultimately be reduced to the one idea of happiness. It is obvious how opposite this purely selfish conception is to the Biblical representations of God.

A different conception of the deity rose, and prevails to this day, in the great people of the Hindoos in India. With them nature religion early took the form of Pantheism; the deities were not conceived, as by the Greeks, as magnified men, presiding over the different elements of nature, but were identified with these elements themselves; and while in popular worship innumerable gods were adored, the more reflective regarded all these as but different forms of one Divine Being, embracing all things. This notion excluded all personal and moral relation between God and man; and made the connection with the Divine Being to be either magical, through ceremonial rites and observances; or metaphysical, through esoteric knowledge and contemplation. Both these were developed in Brahmanism, which came to embrace an elaborate system, both of ritual and of philosophy. Closely connected, both with the ritual and the philosophy, was the institution of caste, which dominated the social life of the people; and by the stability which this whole system thus ac-

quired, the pantheistic conception of the universe has come to hold, with a most tenacious power, even the popular mind of the Hindoos. In other countries it has been the creed of some profound philosophers, and in ages of speculative thought has gained hold of many of the learned and thoughtful; but in Hindooism it has become ingrained in the minds of a whole nation, and determines the thought and life even of the least cultivated. Amid the boundless Polytheism and idolatry of the popular religion, there is the belief of the identity of all being, not only held as a principle, but operating to exclude all notions of personal responsibility, or hopes of personal fellowship with God. The philosophic poem, *Bhagavad-Gita*, so popular in India, brings the most profound metaphysics to bear on the strict observance of the rules of caste; and Christian missionaries to the Hindoos uniformly testify, how both the philosophy and the social system make it extremely hard to awaken in their minds any real sense of sin or feeling of personal responsibility.

In contrast alike with the Polytheism of the West and the Pantheism of the East, which had its counterpart in Egypt also, there is distinctly taught in the Old Testament the monotheistic doctrine of a personal God, distinct from, and supreme over, the world. The first commandment given to Israel was a stern prohibition to have any other god but Jehovah, who had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt; and though that may at first have been observed by some, along with the belief that the deities worshipped by other nations were real beings, though hostile and inferior to Jehovah; ere long it came to be the universal faith of Israel that idols were but the work of men's hands, and that not only was there none like Jehovah, but no other god but He. This was undoubtedly the teaching of all the prophets; and it is enforced with great eloquence in many of the psalms (*e.g.* cxv. cxxxv.), as well as in the discourses of Jeremiah (chs. ii. x.) and the latter part of Isaiah (ch. xl. foll.); though such phrases as "the God of gods" are occasionally used, even in the latest portions of the Old Testament (Ps. cxxxvi. 2; Dan. xi. 36). The second

commandment, forbidding all image-worship, served as a protest and safeguard against the identification of God with nature. No visible object in heaven, or earth, or sea is like God, or can be taken to represent Him; He is invisible, and, while distinct from the world, fills heaven and earth with His presence. These practical commandments, though they were continually broken by the people, and could only be enforced by a long and severe struggle, did ultimately succeed in impressing on the mind of the Jews, better than any doctrinal teaching could do, the belief in one personal God, distinct from, and supreme over, the universe. This primary element in the Christian conception of God is more distinctly brought out by the more special doctrines of Scripture:

1. Of Creation.
2. Of Providence.
3. Of the Attributes of God seen in Nature.

CHAPTER II.

THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION.

THIS doctrine asserts the absolute dependence of the universe on God in respect of the origin of its existence; and has commonly been expressed by saying that God in the beginning created all things by His will, or the word of His power. This is the teaching, both of the Old and of the New Testament. "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. i. 1); "Our help is in the name of the Lord, which made heaven and earth" (Ps. cxxiv. 8); "God created all things by Jesus Christ" (Eph. iii. 9); "Thou didst create all things, and on account of Thy will they are and were created" (Rev. iv. 11). On the ground of this uniform testimony of Scripture, the Christian Church began its oldest

creed with the article, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

The word "create" is used, in philosophy and theology, to express the notion of producing out of nothing, as distinct from the simple "make;" but the distinction is not observed with absolute precision in any language, more especially in the earlier periods and popular forms of literature. It is not therefore from the mere use of the word that we ascertain that Scripture teaches that God made all things out of nothing; but from the general view that it uniformly gives of the origin of the world, and God's relation to it. For there are just three broadly distinguished alternatives on this point, and each of them leads to a distinct and easily recognisable theory of the universe. One is, that the universe was made out of the substance of the Deity; a mode of origin which is properly called Emanation, and which has been believed by many. A second is, that the universe has been made out of something independent of the Deity, that either existed eternally, or came spontaneously into being; and the only other possible view is, that it was made out of nothing by the power of God. Now we know how the two former of these views are expressed in other religions, and to what consequences they lead; and if we find in Scripture these expressions and consequences avoided and contradicted, we are shut up to the conclusion that it teaches the doctrine of creation out of nothing.

The theory of Emanation is that taught in the Brahmanic sacred books, and expressions of it are to be found both in the Vedic hymns and in the later philosophic treatises. The following is a translation, by Sir Monier Williams, of one of the most famous portions of the *Rig Veda* (*Hinduism*, p. 26):—

> In the beginning there was neither nought nor aught;
> Then there was neither sky nor atmosphere above.
> What then enshrouded all this teeming universe?
> In the receptacle of what was it contained?
> Was it enveloped in the gulf profound of water?
> Then was there neither death nor immortality;
> Then there was neither day, nor night, nor light, nor darkness;

Only the Existent One breathed calmly, self-contained.
Nought else but he there was, nought else above, beyond;
Then first came darkness, hid in darkness, gloom in gloom:
Next all was water, all a chaos indiscrete,
In which the One lay void shrouded in nothingness.
Then, turning inwards, he, by self-developed force
Of inner fervour and intense abstraction, grew.
First in his mind was formed desire, the primal germ
Productive, which the wise, profoundly searching, say
Is the first subtle bond connecting Entity
With Nullity."

More abstract is the account given in one of the *Upanishads*, or philosophic treatises: "In the beginning, there was that only which is (*Sat*=τὸ ὄν), one only without a second. Others say, In the beginning there was that only which is not, one only and without a second; and from that which is not that which is was born. But how could that which is be born of that which is not? No; only that which is, was in the beginning. It thought, May I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth fire. That fire thought, May I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth water," etc. (*Khandogya Upanishad*, vi. *Prapathaka*, 2 *Kanda*, *Sacred Books of the East*, i. p. 93).

On the other hand, the theory of an eternal existence or spontaneous evolution of matter appears in the cosmogonies of the Greeks. In these the beginning of all things is ever represented to have been chaos, or matter in a state entirely destitute of form and order, from which sprang Erebus and Night, and from them, united by Love, the various parts and forms of existence in the world, in successions that are differently given by different poets who have repeated the legends. These were evidently very variable in their details, and moulded into diverse forms according to the fancies and speculations of particular men, or the traditions of different tribes or places; but the general conception underlying them all is that of an eternally existent matter, from which the whole universe has been evolved. If in some of these legends, as in Hesiod's *Theogony* (ver. 120 foll.), Love (Eros) is described as an independent power, it does not

create any new substance, but only developes the coexistent Chaos and Earth; and in some forms of the cosmogony Love itself, as well as the deities worshipped by the Greeks, is said to have sprung from Erebus and Night (see Aristophanes, *Birds*, vers. 693–702). The form of these Greek legends that comes nearest to the theistic doctrine of Creation is that given by Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, i. 5–88), in which, after a description of chaos as the original state of all things, a deity (*quisquis fuit ille deorum*, ver. 33) is represented as reducing it to order, and filling it with plants and animals. Here the development is not indeed spontaneous, but is the work of a deity whose origin is not traced to the primeval elements, but he is still only *mundi fabricator* (ver. 57), artist, not creator, of the world; and the whole process is but the first of the transformations that are the subject of the poem.

Similar to these are the ancient Assyrian and Babylonian legends of the origin of the world, which have been recently discovered and deciphered, and which resemble so much in some respects the creation narratives in Genesis. Not only do they differ from these as being polytheistic in teaching, but they all assume a primeval chaos independent of any deity; and many of their forms do not even leave room for a moulding and ordering god, but describe the whole process as one of spontaneous evolution from matter. Prof. Sayce, in his Hibbert Lectures on the Religion of the Babylonians, has shown that there was an important difference between the Accadian and the Semitic forms of the cosmogony; and that while both traced all things back to a watery abyss (*Ap-zu* or *Tiamat*), the former regarded that as itself the source of all that was beneficent and good, while the latter viewed the brood of *Tiamat* as monsters of evil that were conquered by Bel Merodach, the framer of the world of order. These are the same alternatives as those between which the Greek myths wavered; and the Greek philosophy was divided in the same way. The atomic theory of Democritus and the Epicureans, which is poetically expounded by Lucretius, was the most scientific form to which the notion of spontaneous evolution

was brought in the ancient world: and even those philosophers who opposed that, and held that the order of nature could not be accounted for without a mind presiding over its changes, did not rise higher than the belief of a deity moulding and ordering an eternally pre-existent matter: as Plato, for example, represents the subject in the *Timæus*.

These different theories of the origin of the universe have never become entirely obsolete. The Epicurean doctrine of a spontaneous genesis of all things from atoms or chaos is the same in principle as the views of those modern advocates of evolution who think that it removes the need and evidence of an intelligent First Cause;[1] and though the Platonic notion of an eternal matter limiting a personal deity is not congenial to modern ideas, it has been suggested by both the Mills as at least a plausible explanation of the evil that exists in the world. Also Spinoza and modern Pantheists of the Hegelian school have adopted views of the origin of the universe very like the emanation theories of the Brahmans.

The Biblical doctrine is distinct from all these. While the account in Genesis agrees with the ethnic cosmogonies in representing chaos as the original state of the universe, it differs from them in describing even that formless mass as not independent of God, but made by Him. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. i. 1, 2). It is a very forced construction that takes the second of these verses to describe a state anterior to the act mentioned in the first; and no reason to depart from the natural interpretation, that the primeval chaos was created by God, can be found in any of the later Biblical references to creation. None of these mention any pre-existing

[1] Prof. Huxley distinctly separated himself from such believers in evolution in a lecture delivered in Glasgow, 17th February 1876, in which he declared that though evolution is true, the teleological argument, in a certain sense and within certain limitations, is still valid.

matter; and the existence of all things is invariably traced to the mere word or command of God. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. . . . For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. xxxiii. 6, 9). "He commanded, and they were created" (Ps. cxlviii. 5). The inference from these statements is that drawn by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 3): "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made of things which do appear." Production by the mere word of God excludes any pre-existing matter, and the recognition of this is an exercise of that faith which is the evidence of things not seen. The same representation of God calling things into being by His word, excludes also the notion of the universe being an emanation from the Divine Being, a notion which is further contradicted by the way in which the Bible ever recognises the real existence of material things. For a theory of pure emanation of all things from a spiritual being must regard the external world as a mere illusion, as is done in the Indian systems of philosophy. It is true the Bible sometimes speaks of all things being of God (ἐξ αὐτοῦ, Rom. xi. 36; 1 Cor. viii. 6), and Paul quoted at Athens the line of Aratus and Cleanthes, "For we are also His offspring" (Acts xvii. 28); whence Spinoza and others have sought countenance to the notion of emanation as opposed to creation out of nothing. But the preposition ἐκ is undoubtedly used sometimes not strictly for the source out of which a thing flows, but for the cause or agent by which it is done;[1] and the general representations of Scripture, about God speaking and it was done, show that the latter is the sense intended in these places.

The expression *ex nihilo* occurs first in the Vulgate version of 2 Macc. vii. 28 for the Greek ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων or οὐκ ἐξ ὄντων; and though that is not a canonical book, the occasion on which the words were spoken, the martyrdom of the seven brothers, who were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain

[1] So in 2 Cor. ii. 2, vii. 9; Phil. i. 23; Rev. ii. 11.

a better resurrection (Heb. xi. 35), shows how the belief of creation sustained the faith of Israel. For they are the words of the mother to the last of her sons: "I beseech thee, my son, look upon the heaven and the earth and all that is therein, and consider that God made them of things that were not; and so was mankind made likewise. Fear not this tormentor," etc. We may compare with this what Paul says of Abraham (Rom. iv. 17), that he believed God "who quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things that are not as though they were."

The assertion that God made all things of nothing is not to be understood as meaning that nothing was that from which they were made, but that there was no pre-existing matter; or, as it is expressed by Anselm, "A thing is said to be made of nothing when it is understood that it was indeed made, but that there was nothing from which it was made" (quoted by Pearson on the Creed). To this has always been objected the maxim, "*ex nihilo nihil fit.*" But this can be regarded as a necessary truth only in so far as it asserts the principle of causation, that every change must have a cause sufficient to account for it. Aristotle, indeed, who combined in the notion of causality the material, the formal, the efficient, and the final cause, taught that nothing could be produced without a material as well as an efficient cause, and therefore held the eternity of matter; and in this most of the ancient Greek philosophers agreed with him; but matter is not a cause in the same sense as efficiency; and the principle on which the maxim rests is simply that everything that begins to be must have a sufficient reason for its existence. In the case of the universe that is found in the divine power, which is its efficient cause, and there is no need in sound reason to postulate anything more. It is true that we cannot positively conceive a production out of nothing, or an absolute commencement of being; but neither can we positively conceive an eternal existence or infinite non-commencement of being, nor an emanation of the finite from the infinite. The subject belongs to that realm of the unconditioned that is beyond the grasp of

our finite understandings, and every possible alternative is equally unthinkable. Yet by the laws of logic we know that one, and only one, of them must certainly be true; and we accept the doctrine of creation, as taught by revelation, and connected with the highest and worthiest conception of the Divine Being.

The belief in God as the Creator of the universe has an important bearing on practical religion, not only as the basis of the confidence, which all who can trust His love may have personally in His care and protection (see Ps. cxxi. 2, cxxiv. 8), but also as the ground of our certainty of the final success of His purpose and reign in the world. The Bible contains many predictions and promises of the ultimate extension of the kingdom of God over all the world, and of a last time when God shall be all in all (1 Cor. xv. 28). Now, if there were anything in the universe independent of God, what assurance could we have of the certainty that these promises shall be fulfilled? But if all that exists is absolutely dependent on Him for the beginning of its being, we see that there is an absolute certainty that the end of all shall be according to His will and purpose of grace. It seems to be for this reason, that the description of God as Creator is sometimes introduced in connection with the prophecies of the extension of His kingdom, as in Isa. xlii. 5, 9, liv. 16, 17, and in the Book of Revelation the visions that depict the fortunes of Christ's kingdom and its final triumph, are ushered in by an ascription of praise to God as Creator (iv. 11), and the announcement of the end (x. 6) is accompanied with a solemn invocation of "Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created the heaven and the things that are therein, and the earth and the things that are therein, and the sea and the things that are therein." With a similar feeling, Heber has made this the climax of his grand missionary hymn,—

"Till o'er our ransom'd nature
The Lamb for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss returns to reign."

According to the Biblical representations, creation is not necessary, as it would be if the universe were an emanation from the Divine Being. It is said to be dependent on the will of God (Rev. iv. 11), and frequently, in passages already quoted, is ascribed to His word. The opinion of some modern writers of the Hegelian school, that creation is "grounded in the nature of God, having its reason in the very nature of infinite reason,"[1] is destitute of any support in Scripture: for we cannot give the term "word," when used of creation, the meaning "reason:" it denotes, not the internal reason (λόγος ἐνδιάθετος), but the external expression of reason (λόγος προφορικὸς, ῥῆμα), which implies an act of will along with the thought. There is indeed truth in the negative statement of these writers, that creation should not be conceived as an arbitrary act, without any reason: in wisdom has God made all things, and for good and holy ends; but as we are conscious in ourselves that an act is not the less free because it is done for a wise reason and a good end, so we need not deny God's freedom in creation because it displays not only His power, but His wisdom and goodness as well.

Some theologians indeed, while denying any physical or metaphysical necessity to creation, have yet asserted what is called a moral or philosophical necessity, on the ground that God being infinitely wise and good, cannot be conceived as not creating if it was most wise and good to create. Such is the view of Leibnitz, Samuel Clarke, and Rothe.[2] But this is plainly something different from the necessity that arises from any natural law or force. Though the certainty with which an intelligent being acts according to his views of wisdom and goodness, may be equal to that with which material causes operate, the action is evidently of a quite different kind; and though it is often called moral or philosophical necessity, it is, properly speaking, no necessity at all, since it implies choice and excludes compulsion.

[1] So Principal Caird, *Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 151, 152.

[2] Clarke, *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, Prop. xii. Leibnitz, *Theodicée*, § 175, 231 foll. etc. Rothe, *Theologische Ethik*, § 41.

Though the expression is improper and apt to be confusing, the assertion of a moral necessity of creation does not run counter to any of the representations of Scripture or principles of Theism; but it has no positive support from either, and can only be regarded as a legitimate hypothesis, to be used, if at all, with caution and reserve.

The Biblical teaching further implies that creation is not co-eternal with God, as those who maintain its necessity are almost constrained to believe. Here, however, it is useful to attend to a distinction made by the old divines[1] between active and passive creation. Active creation, or more exactly, creation considered actively, is the act of God creating; and as that is not to be conceived as the exertion of any effort, but simply His will that the universe should exist, that is in a true sense eternal, since God has ever willed that. But passive creation, or creation passively considered, is the fact of the world being created; and in regard to that, the Bible distinctly teaches, that God was from everlasting, before the mountains were brought forth, or ever He had made the earth and the world (Ps. xc. 2), before the foundation of the world (John xvii. 5, 24; Eph. i. 4; 1 Pet. i. 20).

The phrase "in the beginning" is used in Scripture alike of the creation of the heaven and earth (Gen. i. 1), and of the existence of the Logos or Word, who was with God and was God (John i. 1); the difference being that the world was created by Him, while the Word was. Hence we are warranted in speaking of creation as having a beginning, if not properly in time, at least with time; since time as known to us is only conceivable as marked by change in some created things.[2] There is no reason to suppose either an infinite succession of worlds, as Origen held, or an eternal creation, as Rothe maintained.

[1] See Amesius, *Medulla Theologiæ*, lib. i. c. viii. Mastricht, *Theologia*, lib. iii. c. iv. § 6. Ebrard, *Christliche Dogmatik*, § 157–176.

[2] See Augustine, *de Civitate Dei*, xi. 4–6; *Confessiones*, xi. 10–31.

The narrative of the creation in Gen. i. has a general likeness to the legends current in other nations, especially the Chaldean, such as seems to point to a common origin; but is distinguished by such simplicity and sublimity, and such an absence of grotesque, shocking, and polytheistic features, as to indicate special divine illumination in its composition; and its inseparable connection with the religion of Moses and of Christ affords external evidence of its divine authority. It cannot, however, be regarded as a revelation of scientific truth; while, on the other hand, the literal interpretation which makes it contradict science is neither the most ancient nor the most reasonable. It was designed to teach such religious truths as these: that the universe and all that it contains, including the objects worshipped as divine by the nations, were all made by the one living and true God; that they were brought to perfection, not all at once, but by a gradual process, illustrating the wisdom and goodness as well as the power of their Maker; that the highest earthly being, for whom the others were made, is man, who was created in the image of God; and that the keeping holy every seventh day is a fitting memorial of God's complacency in the finished work of creation. These doctrines were worthy of a divine communication to man, and they are conveyed by the picture of the six days' work in a way better suited to the rudeness of early ages than more general and abstract statements would be.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE.

THE theistic conception of God is further defined by the doctrine of Providence, which asserts the absolute dependence of the universe on God in the continuance of its existence, as that of

creation does in its beginning. It is commonly expressed in the form, that God cares for all things that He has made, preserving them in being, and governing them and all their actions. This belief is not peculiar to Christianity, nor indeed to any one kind or class of religions; for it is common to them all, since it is implied in the practice of prayer, which in one form or another is included in the precepts and observances of every religion of mankind. However various men's notions of the Deity may be, they have ever sought to address the unseen higher powers that they have believed, and asked gifts and benefits from them. Often their prayers have been rude and unworthy; the things sought have been only gross material enjoyments, or the gratification of selfish and even evil passions; and the ideas with which the petitions have been made, have been foolish and superstitious. From the ignorant cries of the savage for food and success in war or the chase, to the most elevated and spiritual aspirations that have found expression in Christian devotion, there is a vast range of different stages in men's feeling of need and desire, all of which may be found exemplified in one form of worship or another. The common element in all is that men have sought the supply of these desires by addressing petitions to Heaven; and this plainly implies that they have believed, that the affairs of men are regulated by a divine power. This is one of the strongest evidences of the religious intuitions and instincts of man's nature, and contributes to the reasons for believing that the primitive form of religion was of the nature of Theism.[1]

The belief of Providence has not indeed been universal, any more than that of creation; but it has been rejected, not by any varying form of religion, but by philosophical theories, on account of certain difficulties that the course of nature seems to present

[1] This is well brought out in a recent work, entitled, *Ten Great Religions*, by James Freeman Clarke, Part ii. ch. viii. The second part of this treatise is the only attempt I am acquainted with to compare the chief religions of the world, not only in their general characters, but in their special doctrines, in detail.

in the way of that belief. These difficulties are chiefly two, one which was most felt and urged in ancient times, from the unequal and apparently capricious distribution of good and evil in the lives of men, and the other which has arisen with the discoveries and theories of modern science, from the uniformity and immutability of the order of nature.

When it is believed that all events are ordered by Divine Providence, it is natural that those which produce pleasure and well-being should be ascribed to the good-will and approval of Heaven, and those which bring suffering and loss to its displeasure and anger. In a system of Polytheism, indeed, the endless variety, and often seemingly causeless character, of good or bad fortune may be explained, as the effects of the favour or wrath of one or other of many gods, ruling different elements or powers of nature So in the Greek mythology Ulysses is persecuted by Poseidon, but saved by Athene; Æneas, pursued by the wrath of Juno, is protected by Venus. When, at the same time, the anger of the gods is supposed to be provoked as much by the failure in ceremonial service as by moral crimes, the great ethical difficulty in the belief of Providence is not felt.

But with the development of higher notions of morality, such as took place in Greece and elsewhere about the fifth century before Christ, and the recognition of a unity in the government of the universe, the thought must needs arise: If the Supreme Being cares for His creatures and orders their lot, why is there so much suffering and sorrow in the world? and if it be said that these are a deserved punishment for the wickedness of men, why are the most wicked often not the greatest sufferers, but prosperous and happy? and why are the good sometimes visited with the greatest distress and trouble? These questions perplexed the wisest minds in the Gentile world, and came to be felt as difficulties even in the people of Israel under the Old Testament, as is seen in the Books of Job and Ecclesiastes, as well as in many of the psalms. Some of the Greek philosophers were led by them to deny any Divine Providence at all; as the Epicureans,

who traced the universe back to a fortuitous concourse of atoms, and regarded the gods as distinguished mainly by perfect blessedness, which they thought would be incompatible with a care and concern for the affairs of men. The Stoics, on the other hand, met the difficulty by their doctrine, that the only real good is virtue, which is in every man's own power, and that God trains and exhibits the virtue of the good by subjecting them to external sorrows and pains.[1]

Neither of these alternatives is adopted by the prophets and psalmists of Israel, or by Jesus Christ. The inequalities in the lot of men, and the anomalies of prosperous vice and afflicted goodness, though they often perplexed even the teachers of Israel, never led to a denial of the providence of God ordering all things. This is as strongly and broadly stated in the later as in the earlier books of the Old Testament, and is undoubtedly assumed and taught by our Lord. He says that God makes His sun to rise, and sends rain, feeds the ravens, and clothes the lilies; that without Him not a sparrow falls to the ground, and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered.[2] Nor does He or the inspired writers make nought of outward good and evil, or teach such an unnatural apathy as the Stoics professed. They always acknowledged pain and sorrow to be real evils, though not at all the greatest of evils. The solution of the enigmas of Providence that is given, partially and indistinctly in the Old Testament, but more fully and clearly by Christ and His disciples, consists of the following doctrines: (1) That in the light of God's perfect holiness all men, even the best, must feel themselves to be sinful, and therefore cannot justly complain of any sufferings they may have to bear. This is especially brought out in such passages as Job xlii. 5, 6; Ps. lxxiii.; Lam. iii. 39. (2) That suffering is used by God for the awakening and correction of the wicked, and for the trial and perfecting of the godly. This is taught occasionally and incidentally in the Old Testament, and very fully

[1] See Seneca, *de Providentia*. M. Antoninus, ii. 11, etc.

[2] Matt. v. 45, vi. 26–30, x. 29, 30, etc.

and expressly in the Epistles of the New.[1] (3) That there is for man a life beyond death, and a final judgment, in which every one shall receive according to what he has done, and the perfect righteousness and goodness of God's government shall be made manifest. This was only gradually and dimly revealed in Old Testament times, but is clearly and solemnly taught by Jesus. If these doctrines are believed, the inequality of Providence in this life ceases to be a general or speculative difficulty; though in particular cases, and in the practical experience of men, it must still often be a sore trial to Christian faith.

But the intellectual difficulty, which is chiefly felt in the present day in connection with the doctrine of Providence, is that which arises from the new conception of nature and its phenomena, so powerfully impressed on the minds of cultivated men by the scientific discoveries of the last three centuries. These have shown, that beneath all the variety and apparent irregularity of the movements and changes in the physical world, there is a perfect uniformity in the laws according to which they take place. It has been discovered, for instance, that things so unlike as the falling of an apple from a tree and the movements of the heavenly bodies, are determined by the same force acting in the same way; it has been shown that phenomena long supposed to be due to exceptional causes are the result of the ordinary operation of mechanical forces; that apparent anomalies are reduced to order by a patient investigation of all the facts of the case; that the universe is vastly greater in extent than was ever dreamed of before, and that through all its inconceivable distances the same forms and laws of matter prevail; that it has also been in existence for a length of time hitherto unimagined and unimaginable, and yet there has been found no break in the uniformity of the processes of nature; and still more wonderful, it has been proved, that all the different kinds of forces are correlated, and can be changed into each other, while

[1] See Rom. v. 1–11, viii. 18–28; 2 Cor. iv. 16–18; Heb. xii. 5–11; Jas. i. 2–12; 1 Pet. i. 6–9.

the total amount of energy is ever the same, what disappears in one form ever reappearing in another. These results of science have fixed in all educated minds the conviction of the uniformity of nature; man seems to have discovered the method on which the whole course of the universe proceeds; it is like an enormous and highly complex machine, whose manifold different movements seemed formerly to be produced by separate and irregular impulses, but have now been discovered to be the effect of one power acting through innumerable combinations, but ever according to the same law. This view of nature, which hitherto has been verified and confirmed by every successive discovery of science, has seemed to many to make the belief of an overruling Providence unnecessary or impossible. If everything that takes place can be accounted for by antecedent causes, operating according to an absolutely uniform rule; what need is there to suppose an act of divine power bringing it about? do not the principles of science forbid us to assign two causes to the same event? and is not the true philosophic and scientific way of conceiving God's relation to the universe this, that He has created it at first, and impressed on it those forces and laws by which all its subsequent states and phenomena are brought about?

This has been called the mechanical theory of God's relation to the world; because according to it that relation is analogous to that of an artificer who with great wisdom and skill has constructed a machine, so that it can go by means of the forces he has connected with it, and the arrangements he has made for the regular action of these forces. On this view the agency of God might be recognised in the events of the world's history, only not as an immediate act, but merely as having made at first the forces and laws which in due time produce the result. We might therefore quite as reasonably praise and thank God for the benefits that come to us through the laws of nature, as if He bestowed them by a direct act; for we believe Him to have foreseen and appointed all their consequences. Even on this theory, a large part of the feelings that enter into true personal

religion would be quite possible and proper. Still the generality of devout Christians have always been dissatisfied with this view. It requires an unnatural and forced construction to be put upon many passages of Scripture, that in their most obvious meaning represent God as working continually in nature: it puts Him at too great a distance from the soul to satisfy the spiritual mind, which craves to have God as a present Helper and Friend; and above all, it makes all prayer, in the sense of petitions offered to God, unmeaning and impossible. We may thank God for blessings received from Him with equal truth and fervour, whether the act by which He has caused them was done to-day or millions of years ago. It is enough that somehow or other, whether directly or by a long chain of means, He has done what promotes our good. The same is true of the duty of submission to the afflictions that God is pleased to send, and of that of trust in His goodness. But to ask blessings from God is absurd and impossible, if we believe that He exerts no present agency in the course of nature. If all that He does in relation to the world, is to set in motion a system of forces and laws, that will work out the physical history of the universe according to His plan; then our worship may include adoration, thanksgiving, confession, and resignation; but it can contain no petition for things that are thus brought about. It is mainly because of its thus excluding prayer, that this theory has never commended itself to devout believers in Scripture. For prayer, including petitions for external as well as for spiritual blessings, is most emphatically inculcated in every part of the Bible, and very specially by Jesus; indeed it is an instinct of the human heart that has found expression in all religions.

But prayer for external blessings is itself a thing which many think to be inconsistent with the scientific conception of the uniformity of natural laws. For since all things proceed according to sequences that are absolutely unbroken and unvaried, and the religious exercise of prayer does not enter into these sequences, how can we believe that the events are determined

by prayer? The duration of life and the coming of death, the attack of sickness and the return of health, the direction and force of the winds, the gathering and discharge of the clouds, the growth and fruit-bearing of plants and trees, and all physical changes, are shown to occur in certain uniform sequences; and any one of them might be traced up by a man of science, if he had sufficient knowledge, to physical causes, which will lead to the same result, whether petitions be offered to God for them or not. There seems therefore no room for prayer, and it appears to be just a relic of that old pagan view of the world, which personified the forces of nature, and supposed them to act arbitrarily and lawlessly.

It has been said, in answer to this difficulty, by Dr. Chalmers and others,[1] that God may answer prayer without interfering with the uniformity of nature's sequences as far as known to us, by touching these sequences at some anterior point beyond our ken; or more generally, that He uses the forces and laws of the material world, just as man may to a limited extent, to accomplish special purposes in answer to prayer. The reply, however, is hardly satisfactory, and not likely to be accepted by men of science; for it assumes that in every answer to prayer there is a real divine interference with what would otherwise be the course of nature, only that it is in a region out of reach of our knowledge; it is, so to say, a miracle behind the scenes; and this assumption, while contrary to the scientific conception of the uniformity of nature, is destitute of all positive evidence. It seems better to meet the difficulty by a closer investigation of what science has actually proved. What are these causes whose succession is proved to be so uniform? They are really nothing but invariable and unconditional antecedents. We can detect nothing in the preceding phenomena that could enable us to tell beforehand what would follow from them. Even force itself is only defined by physicists as that which tends to produce motion,

1 Discourse ii. subjoined to *Astronomical Discourses*. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, iii. p. 709.

i.e. that which when unimpeded is invariably followed by motion. There is nothing of real power discernible in the sequences of nature, our only idea of power being derived from our own volitions. Thus neither the discoveries of science, nor the conception of unbroken continuity and order, that these discoveries have established, affords any proof of the theory that the course of nature proceeds by an inherent power, without any present divine agency. Though we can trace all things that take place back to physical causes, we have done nothing to explain the efficiency by which they are brought about; and the uniformity of natural law is quite as consistent with the belief of the divine power sustaining and moving the material world from moment to moment, as with that of God having imparted to matter some power by which it acts without any further divine efficiency.

The old theological form of stating the doctrine of Providence in relation to the actings of the creatures was, that there is a co-operation or concurrence (*concursus*)[1] of the divine power with that of the creature to produce the result. This was open to the objection that it assigned two causes for the same effect, which, besides, could not be regarded as each producing it in part, for each had to be regarded as a cause of the whole. Modern science simplifies the matter by showing that the natural antecedent and the divine power are not causes in the same sense. When the scientist traces any event to its physical cause, —when, for example, he explains a shower of rain by showing how moisture is drawn up from the earth by heat in the form of vapour, condensed in the cooler air, and precipitated back to the ground, according to the law of gravitation,—he has simply shown that in this case there takes place the same series of changes that always occur in the same conditions; but he has not shown any power by which these are effected. But when the Christian declares that God sends rain, he does not mean to say that the

[1] Some preferred to call it influence, *influxus*. So Mastricht, *Theologia*, l. iii. c. x.

divine action is a link in the sequence of physical phenomena, or interferes with the order of that sequence, but that it is the efficient power on which the whole sequence and all its parts depend. The doctrine of Providence simply means, that as the universe has all been called into being by the will of God, so the whole of it, and everything that happens in it, is dependent on that will continually put forth. But God's will is that the sequences of natural events should be uniform, and the laws of nature are but the expression of the uniformities that God wills to maintain. This view is quite as consistent with the scientific conception of the universe as the mechanical theory; and it is sufficient to establish the propriety of prayer. All that is necessary for that is, that God's action in bringing about the events of the world's history is not merely an original impulse at the beginning, but a continuous agency; and that as it is the act of an infinitely wise and good as well as powerful Being, it has ever regard to all the circumstances of the case. When we make petitions to God for material blessings, we do not ask Him to violate the order of nature for our sake, or to alter the plan according to which He directs the course of things as a whole; nor do we presume to think that our prayer should be the only reason moving Him to do what we desire, so that there would be no real answer to prayer, unless something took place which would not have happened if the prayer had not been offered. When a parent does something that a child asks, it is surely not the less an answer to the request, because it may be he would have done it in any case, and has other reasons for it, if only the child's desire be truly a reason.

Prayer is, as aptly defined in the Westminster Shorter Catechism, "the offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to His will." Its essence is not the mere desire, but the presenting it to God, and the object must be what is agreeable to His will. In regard to spiritual blessings we learn what the will of God is from His Word, and that is the rule to direct us in prayer; but as to material things, which we may ask with great freedom,

subject to the general reservation, "if it be Thy will," science may be regarded as showing us in some cases what is God's will. We do not pray for things that our knowledge of nature has taught us would be against its course, as for summer's heat in December, or autumn's crops in spring; nor, again, for things that we have learned to expect in the regular order of nature, as the succession of the seasons: for these things we thankfully wait. If the progress of science should give us equally certain knowledge of the course of nature in other things, such as disease and recovery, it may be proper to alter the form of our devotion; but that will be just because God is making known to us His will either to grant or to deny our requests. But meanwhile there is, and is likely long to be, a large field, in which as we do not know the particular determination of God's will, reverent and submissive petition is most appropriate. If only in the phenomena of nature we are in contact, not with a lifeless mechanism, but with a personal God, exercising an intelligent will in all that takes place, the laws of nature need not hinder us making known our desires to Him; and if we do so humbly and trustfully, He will not be offended, though our petitions may often be such as would appear foolish and impossible to one perfectly acquainted with nature's laws.[1]

According to Scripture, the Providence of God must be held to be universal, including all things that come to pass, without any exception whatever. Not only casual events, but the free actions of men, and even those that are sinful, are represented in the Bible as ordered by God for the fulfilment of His purposes.[2] It is also plainly necessary, in order to that absolute trust in Divine Providence which we are enjoined to have, that it have a perfect control of all creatures and events. Yet it is equally

[1] This solution of the difficulty raised by science as to the hearing of prayer is given in substance by Dr. J. Oswald Dykes in his exposition of Matt. vii. 7–11 (*Manifesto of the King*, p. 563 foll.), and is suggested by Robert Browning in his poem, "The Family," in the volume entitled, *Ferishtah's Fancies*.

[2] See Gen. xlv. 5; Ps. cvi. 17; Isa. x. 5–7; Acts iii. 17, 18.

taught in Scripture, and a dictate of all ethical religion, that God is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works, and that men are responsible for their moral offences. The universality of the divine agency, and the absolute dependence of all things on God, has been pushed, in the Indian systems of philosophy and in the Pantheism of modern Europe, to the extreme of making all finite existence a mere delusion or transient modification of the Infinite, which is regarded as the only real being.

The great barrier against this is the moral sense of personal responsibility, which is as essential to healthy religion as the feeling of absolute dependence; and it is a remarkable feature of the piety both of the Old and of the New Testament, that alongside of descriptions of the infinitude of God, that might seem to swallow up man entirely, there are expressions of a personal relation of displeasure or of favour between God and man. In such psalms as the 90th and 139th, where in the one the eternity and in the other the omnipresence of God are most sublimely asserted, there are utterances of most direct personal fellowship with this infinite God; and Paul in his speech at Athens, while he says, "in Him we live and move and have our being," yet speaks of God commanding men to repent, and being about to judge the world in righteousness. This feeling of responsibility implies that man is a free agent in his moral acts, not determined by any necessary and invariable sequence of physical antecedents, but capable of determining himself in view of what his intellect recognises as right and good. The human will, in other words, is a real agent or power in the world, and not a mere uniform antecedent.[1] But it is not on that account exempt from the government of God's Providence; only that government is not merely the same as that which God exercises over inanimate things, but is suited to the

[1] The doctrine here stated would be expressed somewhat differently by those who hold the philosophical theory of determinism, such as Dr. Woods of Andover in his *Theological Lectures*, and Dr. Hodge in his *Systematic Theology*. I prefer the Libertarian view, which is ably supported by Dr. Calderwood (*Handbook of Moral Philosophy*, Pt. iii.) and Dr. Martineau (*A Study of Religion*, Bk. iii. ch. ii.).

nature of a rational and free creature, and is what we call moral government. God preserves us in being as He does all things; He preserves to us the power of free action; but He guides that action, not by forces such as those that guide the planets in their courses, nor by blind instincts such as influence the lower animals, but by truths brought to the knowledge of our minds and motives acting on our wills. This mode of governing moral agents leaves it possible for them to disobey and act against the will of God, and as He sustains all the while their being and power, and is able to overrule and control the issue of their acts, it is properly described as a "permission such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding and otherwise ordering and governing of them in a manifold dispensation to His own holy ends."[1] So far, therefore, we can go in the study of the mysterious subject of the origin of moral evil, as to perceive that it is not caused by God, but due to the agency of creatures, whose very excellence it is that they have a power of free and rational action, though they are continually dependent on God's power preserving them and overruling their actions. When we attempt to penetrate farther into the mystery we meet with other difficulties; but meanwhile we may see that while, according to the Biblical view, God's Providence includes even the sinful acts of the creatures in its scope, yet He is neither the author nor the approver of evil.[2]

[1] See Westminster Confession of Faith, ch. v. § 4.

[2] On the doctrine of Providence in general, as well as on this particular point, the student may consult Charnock's *Discourse on Divine Providence;* Woods' *Theological Lectures;* Müller's *Christliche Lehre von der Sünde* (Pt. ii. c. ii.); Bushnell's *Nature and the Supernatural;* Dorner, *System der Christlichen Lehre*, § 35–37.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD MANIFESTED IN CREATION AND PROVIDENCE.

THE theistic conception of the universe, which is presupposed in Christianity, and more particularly expressed in the doctrines of Creation and Providence, involves the recognition of some, at least, of the attributes of God. The term attribute is used, rather than quality or the like, in order to indicate that what we so designate is not anything separable from the essence of God, but only His one Infinite Being as it is viewed by us in various imperfect conceptions, since by no one can we take it all in. These various conceptions of God we gain through His works, or the various ways in which He reveals Himself; and they together constitute what in Scripture is called the Name of God, which is well defined in the Westminster Shorter Catechism (qu. 55 and 101) as "all that whereby God maketh Himself known." He is known partly through nature, partly through history, but most fully in Jesus Christ; and the various titles and epithets given to Him in connection with His various manifestations of Himself indicate the various attributes that should be ascribed to Him. Of those indicated by Creation and Providence the most obvious is Power, the notion of which we get from the control which we have by our will over our mental and bodily acts.

This we must ascribe to God without any limit whatever. With Him nothing is impossible, but whatsoever He wills is done. Hence He is called Almighty God, *El Shaddai*, and this would seem to be one of the earliest names by which He was known to the Hebrews. The omnipotence of God is specially asserted in the Old Testament by the statement that He, and He alone, doeth great wonders (Ps. lxxii. 18, cxxxvi. 4); and that He can and sometimes does create a new thing in the earth (Num.

xvi. 30; Jer. xxxi. 22). These expressions come very nearly to a definition of what we call a miracle, and show that the Biblical conception of the power of God is not limited, as that of many in modern times is, by the laws of the natural world. These have no real efficiency; they are simply the order in which God usually works in His Providence. There are good reasons for this order being generally followed, and useful objects gained by its being, for all practical purposes, uniform: this has made possible the great discoveries of human science and the wonderful achievements of art. But this uniformity is no shackle on the power of God, and when there are sufficient reasons for departing from it, He is free to do so. The redemption of a lost world, with the deliverance of innumerable multitudes from the power and love of sin, is surely such a reason; and it is for this end, either directly or indirectly, that all the miracles were wrought which Christianity requires us to believe. Our acceptance of particular miracles must indeed depend upon the historical evidence in each case; but a general rejection of all miracles as such, on the ground that they are impossible, or cannot be proved, must proceed upon an assumption that the power of God is limited by the order of nature. If this is to be reconciled with omnipotence at all, it can only be by the theory that the Deity is only immanent or in the world, and not also transcendent or over it. The Deism of the last century asserted only the transcendence of God; the Pantheism and speculative Theism of the present day proclaim a Deity who is only immanent; but the Christianity of the New Testament includes both, teaching that there is one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all (Eph. iv. 6).

The omnipotence of God is most distinctly denied in the dualistic religion of Zoroaster, in which, along with the good deity, Ormuzd, there is recognised an opposing principle of evil; though even that religion, by affirming the final triumph of good, tacitly implied its superior power. Its dualism was introduced into Christendom in the form of Manicheism; and the supposi-

tion of the power of God being limited by a necessary principle of evil, such as matter, was held by many of the Greek philosophers, and seemed to James Mill and J. S. Mill not impossible as an explanation of the existence of evil consistently with the goodness of God.

Another divine attribute that appears in Creation and Providence is Wisdom. The chief evidence that these works afford of the being of God, in the view of modern thinkers, is the wonderful adaptation of means to ends, and of one thing to another, throughout the whole range of the material world; and this proves that He who is their author possesses consummate wisdom. The universe, which in all its parts is disposed according to reason, must be the work of reason; and if the doctrines of Creation and Providence be true, that reason is not something impersonal, merely immanent in the world, but associated with consciousness and will, distinct alike from matter and from finite minds. The pantheistic forms of thought all tend practically to exclude wisdom in the proper sense from the conception of the Deity, since they exclude personality. But those religions that revere personal deities, even when they fall short of pure Monotheism, always describe them as wise in counsel as well as mighty in working. So the Greek poets constantly praise the wisdom of Zeus; and in Apollo and Athene they imagined impersonations of wisdom. In the Vedic hymns of the Brahmanic religion, and in the philosophic utterances of later schools, there is less reference to wisdom as an attribute of the Deity, even when power and agency in the world are freely and emphatically ascribed to Him.

In every part of Scripture, from the earliest to the latest, there is a clear recognition of the wisdom as well as the power of God. "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all" (Ps. civ. 24); "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens" (Prov. iii. 19); He is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom" (Isa. xxviii. 29); "He hath established the world by His wisdom,

and by His understanding hath He stretched out the heavens" (Jer. x. 12); "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God" (Rom. xi. 33). Such are a few of the more emphatic statements of what is everywhere assumed and often illustrated in the sacred pages.

Along with wisdom there is also to be ascribed to God a knowledge which, as having no bounds whatever, and including all things, is called Omniscience. It transcends the knowledge of man, particularly in two ways. It is not limited to what appears by signs perceptible by the senses, or may be inferred from them; but extends to the inmost thoughts and feelings of every man, even though these should find no outward expression. Hence God is described as seeing in secret, looking at the heart, knowing all hearts, searching the heart (Matt. vi. 4, 6, 18; 1 Sam. xvi. 7; 1 Kings viii. 39; Acts i. 21; Rom. viii. 27). This view of God's knowledge is essential to the maintenance of constant fellowship with Him. It lays the foundation of that holy fear of offending even in thought and desire, as much as in word or deed; and it makes prayer and devout communing with God possible at all times and in all circumstances, and thus renders worship sincere and spiritual.

Again, God's knowledge is not limited to what is present or past, but takes in the future as well; nay, not only what actually shall be, but all possibilities, even though they are never to become realities, are known to Him. Indeed, the knowledge of all possibilities is more easily conceived by us than that of future events; for we can often ourselves understand that there are a number of possible events when we cannot tell which is actually to be. Such simple apprehension enlarged to the utmost, so as to embrace absolutely all things that can occur by any possible combination of causes in all the universe, is indeed in its extent far beyond our conception, but it is inseparable from the notion of a wisdom that is absolutely perfect; and as this knowledge does not imply the certainty of any of its objects, but views them all simply as possible, there is nothing that even seems to be

contradictory in the notion. But if we believe that the acts of intelligent creatures are free, and determined by their own will, it appears as if these, up to the time of their doing, are undetermined, and therefore uncertain; and the difficulty arises, how can that be certainly known, *i.e.* known as certain, which is not certain? To escape this difficulty some Christian theologians have denied that the volitions of men are self-determined, and have held that they are invariably determined by motives, so that they may be foreknown, by one who perfectly knows the antecedents, in the same way as physical phenomena can be foreseen, even by men, because they are virtually given in their causes. This is the theory of Determinism or philosophical necessity, which has always had advocates among students of mental science, and has been held by many able and estimable theologians, such as Edwards and Chalmers; as held, however, by modern philosophers, especially of the Sensationalist school, it does not leave sufficient room for the freedom and responsibility of man; and while it removes the difficulty as to the foreknowledge of free acts, it raises a greater one; for if men's acts are certainly determined by motives arising from their characters and circumstances, since these are ultimately due to the Creation and Providence of God, it is not easy to explain how, as all Christians must believe, His causality is excluded from evil.

Others, again, have cut the knot by denying that God foreknows the free acts of His creatures; and they argue that this does not detract from the absolute perfection of the Divine Being; because the thing denied is a self-contradictory notion. As it is no derogation to the divine power to say that it cannot effect what involves a contradiction, so it is legitimate to say of the divine knowledge that it does not include that which cannot be known without a contradiction. This was the view of the Socinians; but it is at variance with the undeniable fact, that, according to the representations of Scripture, in very many instances, the free and even sinful acts of men have been predicted by God. All the pro-

phecies of chastisement to be inflicted on Israel by heathen nations, and of the rejection, persecution, and death of the Messiah, are instances of this. It seems impossible, therefore, to deny that God foreknows events that depend on the self-determination of free agents; and if He does so in any case, we cannot but conclude that He does so in all, however difficult it may be to conceive how this is possible. We may observe, however, that the difficulty arises from the relation of knowledge to time. We can easily see how a free act in the past can be certainly known; because, though it was undetermined before, it has been determined by the choice of the agent; the perplexity in regard to an act still further arises from its being not yet determined by the agent. Now, if we regard God's knowledge as raised above the limits of time, so that He sees all things—past, present, and future—by a direct act of intuition as present to Him, we may be satisfied that there is no contradiction involved in His certain foreknowledge of free actions; though we are not able to form a positive conception of a kind of knowledge that is so different from ours as to be independent of the relation of time, by which all our knowledge is conditioned.[1]

The moral attributes of God are made known apart from revelation, not directly by His works in the world without, like the natural attributes of power and wisdom, but in the first instance by the inward witness for God in the conscience and heart of man. The sense of moral obligation or duty, which exists in rudiment at least in all men, and is vivid and powerful in proportion as men advance in intelligence and goodness, implies a personal lawgiver, to whom that duty is owing; and he who is thus made

[1] This subject is ably discussed by Dr. Martineau (*A Study of Religion*, vol. ii. pp. 272–80), who adopts the view that the divine knowledge of future events is self-limited, so as to allow free action to the creature. See, on the other side, Dr. Cunningham's *Historical Theology* (ch. xxv. § 10). The position of Dugald Stewart seems preferable, that we cannot see how the foreknowledge of God is consistent with the freedom of man, though both are certain, this being one of the antinomies arising from the inability of our finite minds to comprehend the Infinite and Unconditioned.

known must possess that moral character which conscience tells men ought to be theirs. The Deity therefore, to whom the moral sense testifies, must be morally good. The heart, also, which seeks in God for the highest and greatest of beings, must ascribe to Him the utmost conceivable perfection, and regard Him as Best, as well as Most High. Whatever men recognise as excellences in themselves, or any other beings, they are led, alike by reason and sentiment, to ascribe to Him whom they acknowledge as the Maker of all. These dictates of conscience and religion are, to a considerable extent, confirmed by the observation of the course of nature. That shows manifold arrangements tending to the happiness and well-being of animals of all classes, and so indicates benevolence as a character of the Author of nature. It also discloses a tendency to favour such virtues as temperance, industry, justice, and courage, so much so that some philosophers have thought it possible to resolve the very notion of virtue into utility, or a tendency to produce happiness. Though this theory fails to recognise the intuitive and necessary character of moral distinctions, the facts on which it is based afford proof that God is one who loves goodness and hates evil, and has made and governs the world so as to encourage virtue and punish vice.

Yet this evidence from nature of the moral attributes of God is not at all free from great perplexities and seemingly opposite indications, which have led some in all ages seriously to doubt the goodness and justice of God: so much evil is there in the world, and so often do the wicked seem to prosper and the virtuous to suffer. It is not so much the observation of nature as the voice of conscience, that has maintained in almost all nations a belief in the Deity or deities as morally good as well as great. Hence, too, the kind and degree of goodness recognised has varied according to the development of the conscience in different races and times; for it did not rise above what they recognised as the standard of morality. Thus, in ancient Greece, when revenge, cruelty, unchastity, and deceit were not condemned as absolutely wrong in men, such vices were freely ascribed in the myths to the anthro-

pomorphic gods of their pantheon; though Plato, by a purer philosophy, rose to the contemplation of the First Cause of all as the absolutely Good, and would banish from his Republic the poets who rehearsed such legends.

But besides the imperfection in the notion of God's moral character arising from the inadequate or perverted moral sentiments of most peoples destitute of supernatural teaching, the belief of the goodness of God is made difficult by the consciousness, which all thoughtful men must have more or less distinctly, of moral shortcoming and sin. The world around us may show tokens of the kindness and bounty of its Author to all the living beings He has made; but when conscience tells men that they have been abusing the gifts of God, displeasing Him by ingratitude, selfishness, and disobedience, and cruelly wronging and hurting their fellows, they cannot but fear that the God of nature will be a terrible avenger of their ill deeds. Hence an evil conscience has invested men's notions of Deity with an awful and dreadful form; they have pictured Him as armed with weapons of death and destruction to punish His enemies; and there is much in the phenomena of nature that seems to lend countenance to such ideas. Storm and earthquake, plague and fire, cause appalling loss and suffering; and men see in these calamities the working of a divine power that is apparently hostile to men.

These terrible manifestations of divine power may be variously conceived at different stages of moral enlightenment. Sometimes they are not connected with moral distinctions at all, but traced to a power or form of the Deity that is essentially destructive, as the Siva of Hinduism; sometimes it has been thought that the Deity is envious of human greatness and prosperity, and delights to humble and plunge in suffering any one who has risen high among men, according to the belief expressed by Solon to Crœsus, that the Deity is altogether envious and troublous, and delights to uproot suddenly those who have long been fortunate;[1]

1 Herodotus, i. 32: τὸ θεῖον πᾶν ἐὸν φθονερόν τε καὶ ταραχῶδες. The same idea appears in the ancient conception of Fortune as a goddess.

sometimes deities have been regarded as local or national, protecting particular cities or men, and plaguing those who were hostile to them; sometimes as propitiated with gifts and ritual offerings, and angry with those who refused or neglected to offer such.

But even when a worthier view than any of these was taken, and it was recognised that God is displeased only with moral evil, and is free from all malevolence, envy, and partiality, the view that nature gives of the moral attributes of God, though real and precious so far as it goes, is unsatisfying to the cravings of man's conscience and heart. It discloses God as benevolent, but also as just, and capable of inflicting terrible sufferings, as well as of bestowing abundant happiness. But how will He deal with the guilty? On that the light of nature can only afford dim surmises. It was indeed perceived that as forgiveness is a nobler thing in man than inexorable wrath, so there must be forgiveness with the gods; and Homer beautifully describes the Intercessions that are the daughters of great Zeus, following, though with lame steps, after Vengeance, whom if a man reverence, they obtain forgiveness for him, while if he despise them he is ruined.[1] This hope has never been entirely absent from the heart of man; but it was shaded by many things causing doubt and fear, and needed to be confirmed by a word from God Himself.

Wherever the theistic form of religion has been held, God has been regarded more or less distinctly as just and good, though there is much in the history of the world that seemed to cast doubt on these attributes; and even when they were recognised, it was a perplexing difficulty to say how a sovereign, perfect both in justice and goodness, would deal with offences against His law; punishment could not but be feared, while mercy was hoped, and the hope itself was hardly more than a mere peradventure, like that expressed by the people of Nineveh after Jonah's preaching of God's judgment. "Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish

[1] *Iliad*, ix. 492–507.

not?" (Jonah iii. 9). Even this hope moved them to a repentance that was acceptable to God; but it could not avert the ultimate doom of Nineveh, or effect a lasting reformation there. There was needed for that the establishment of the kingdom of God, and the fuller revelation of His character which that brought with it.[1]

[1] On the subject of this chapter students may be referred to Clarke's *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God;* Butler's *Analogy;* and a work by a Scottish divine on the Deistic Controversy, less known than it deserves to be, Halyburton's *Natural Religion Insufficient and Revealed Necessary.*

PART II.

MAIN REVELATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD:

GOD IS HOLY LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD REVEALS HIM AS HOLY LOVE.

JESUS CHRIST, the Founder of the kingdom of God, has alone perfectly revealed Him as holy love; but this revelation of His character was given, in germ and gradually developing clearness, in the Old Testament; and indeed the rudiments of it are to be traced in those convictions of the justice and goodness of God that some of the Gentiles had learned from nature and conscience. Revelation has raised the conception of justice to the higher and intenser one of holiness, and that of goodness into the more personal affection of love; and it has also shown that these are not separate, far less opposing attributes, but inseparable and mutually implying each other.

To the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God revealed Himself as having a personal interest in and care for them, and through them for all mankind, promising to bless them and make them a blessing, so that in them and their seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. In the faith of these promises He called them to come out from among their kindred and be

separate; and it soon appeared that the blessing He bestowed on them was not merely outward prosperity, but His own favour and fellowship; and that they were commanded and trained to live in a purer and more unselfish way than they were naturally inclined to do. Thus arose the belief, not only of God's general goodness, but of His personal love for them, a love that sought to make them like Himself, and capable of fellowship with Himself; that is, a holy love. The same lesson was repeated on a larger scale, when the love of God was shown to the nation of Israel, in their wonderful deliverance from the Egyptian bondage, and in their receiving a law of life that was so strict and pure.

The sort of love thus revealed was of a higher kind than either general benevolence, or the partial affection for particular persons or races ascribed by the heathen to their gods; but a still greater distinction in the Hebrew conception of God was the attribute of holiness that is so prominent in the Old Testament representations of Him. The very word holy (קָדוֹשׁ, ἅγιος), in its application to God, is peculiar to the Old Testament, and expresses an idea quite strange to the other religions of antiquity. It is far more than the justice of a Supreme Ruler, who protects the good and punishes the wicked; it is greatly more personal in its nature, implying an infinite abhorrence of evil, as that which cannot dwell with God (Ps. v. 4), and which He cannot behold (Hab. i. 13), because of His own ineffable purity. It is an attribute that indicates the awful glory of the divine nature, as appears, for instance, in Isaiah's vision (Isa. vi.), while it is also associated with the most tender discoveries of His character; for in virtue of it sin not only calls forth God's wrath and judgment, but is personally displeasing and painful to Him, so that He looks upon it as much in sorrow as in anger. It is remarkable that the very earliest distinct statement in Scripture of God's feeling towards the sins of men represents it as one of sorrow: "And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart" (Gen. vi. 6); and the note of divine pain thus early struck is frequently repeated, till it finds its highest utterance in Jesus'

tears over Jerusalem. It indicates not only compassion and love, but that absolute and intense purity that feels a stain like a wound, and is pained by the very sight of evil. This notion of God's holiness was wrought into the mind of the Jews by the laws and institutions under which God placed them. The unapproachable inner shrine, the vails, and priesthoods, and purifications that kept the people at a distance, impressed on them the terrible gulf between the holy God and sinful men; and though the conditions of approach were in themselves outward and earthly rites, they were so closely associated with high and pure moral laws, that it was felt to be really a moral barrier that separated men from God.[1]

This notion of the holiness of God was, as it were, a dark background, that enabled the devout Israelite to see, in the common bounties of Providence, that the Lord is merciful and gracious, long-suffering and slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth; not dealing with them after their sins, nor rewarding them according to their iniquities. The love of God is also very affectingly exhibited in some places of the Old Testament; but it is chiefly as a love yearning over men and grieved by their sins: the full revelation of divine love in its redeeming and self-sacrificing power was given first by Jesus Christ. This was done, not by any formal or doctrinal teaching, but by His conduct in proclaiming and founding the kingdom of God. The most striking thing about His ministry was, that He received sinners, even the worst and most degraded, and gave them at once the assurance of forgiveness and peace with God, if only they repented and believed on Him. Yet this gracious reception implied no winking at, or toleration of, their sins; they were called, and they were enabled, to forsake their evil ways; and in this way the love of God was revealed as a power that could and did raise the most sinful and polluted, and make them lovers of

[1] This has been doubted by Ritschl, who thinks that it was only the greatness of God that was indicated by these rites of mediation; but his view does not seem to be well founded.

holiness and of the holy Saviour. Above that yearning, pitying love, that seemed in the end constrained to leave sinners to themselves as incorrigible, there was now seen a mighty redeeming love that was able to save even the worst.

This idea of holy, saving love is expressed in Jesus' declaration of God's name as the Father, the holy Father, the righteous Father. To this there are approximations in the Old Testament. God is there compared to a father (Ps. ciii. 13; Prov. iii. 12; Deut. viii. 5); He is called the Father of Israel as a nation (Ex. iv. 22; Deut. xiv. 1, xxxii. 6), more particularly of the kings of David's house (2 Sam. vii. 14; Ps. ii. 7, lxxxix. 26, 27); and sometimes especially of the godly (Ps. lxxiii. 15; Prov. xiv. 26; Isa. lxiii. 16); but the title is but sparingly used, and its significance is not fully unfolded. With Jesus, however, it was familiar as a household word; and since He used it so as to bring out its meaning, it forms the most comprehensive expression of His revelation of God.

It is the affection and care that naturally flow from fatherhood that Jesus has in view when He ascribes that relationship to God. He bids us not be anxious about food and clothing, because our Father in heaven knows that we have need of these things (Matt. vi. 8, 32); He assures us that God will hear our prayers, because earthly fathers, though morally imperfect, attend to the requests of their children (Matt. vii. 9–11; Luke xi. 11–13); He tells us that our heavenly Father will give good things, even the Holy Spirit, to them that ask Him. Above all, He teaches that as a father's love is not quenched by great ingratitude and long misconduct of a son, but joyfully welcomes home a returning prodigal, so God rejoices more over one sinner that repents than over many righteous that need no repentance (Luke xv.). It is a love, individual, careful, minute, bountiful, patient, forgiving, unquenchable, yet withal pure and holy, that is ascribed to God by Jesus in calling Him Father.

Sometimes He speaks of Him as the Father absolutely, without express mention of whom He is Father (Matt. xi. 27; John

iv. 21, 23, vi. 27, and frequently in the fourth Gospel). This describes God as the ideal of Fatherhood, possessing in absolute perfection the fatherly heart and affections. Jesus declares this of Him on the ground of His own personal knowledge, which none but He has, and those to whom He wills to reveal Him (Matt. xi. 27); He has had experience of the love of God such as none else ever had; and so He calls Him emphatically His own (or proper, ἴδιον) Father (John v. 18), and very frequently "my Father." But He reveals the Father to men, so that they who are taught of Him come to know God in this character as their Father too; hence in addresses to men He speaks of God as "your Father." Those to whom He says this are always, in the same discourses, described as His disciples (Matt. xxiii. 8–10); members of the kingdom of God (Luke xii. 30–33); the light of the world, and the salt of the earth (Matt. v. 13, 14); the peacemakers (Matt. v. 9); the merciful (Luke vi. 36); which seems to show that the blessing of being children of God, in the sense in which Jesus described it, belongs to the members of the kingdom. But as Jesus undoubtedly invited all, without exception or condition, to enter the kingdom, the privilege is free to all; and the fatherhood of God in Christ in relation to believers is a revelation of His fatherly love to all men. Hence it is freely described in discourses delivered in the hearing of promiscuous crowds; and all are invited to that filial trust in God that His children have. Thus Jesus revealed God to all men as a Father, having a Father's heart of holy love to all, though He never spoke of Him as actually Father of all, and said of some that they were not children of God, but of the evil one (John viii. 41–44; Matt. xiii. 38).

The fatherly love of God to the world is measured by the gift of His own only-begotten Son (John iii. 16), whom He has sent into the world to seek and to save the lost, to bring back sinners to their allegiance to God, and in the course of this work to suffer at their hands even to death. He came at His Father's command, but of His own free will, to give His life for them,

that they might not perish, but have eternal life; and that life, consisting in knowledge of God, and being loved by God even as Jesus Himself is loved, He gives to all who will trust and follow Him. Such is a brief summary of the message of salvation that Jesus brought to men; and we may see that it declares the character of God to be holy love in the sense already explained.

Many able and excellent men think that Jesus taught that God is the Father of all men, on the ground of His use of the expression "your Father" in the Sermon on the Mount, and other addresses in the hearing of promiscuous crowds, and of the parable of the Prodigal Son. These certainly show that God offers to all men His fatherly love, and has for all men feelings that may be compared to those of a father. This is all that some understand by the universal Fatherhood of God, and in this sense it may be admitted that it was taught by Jesus. But to infer that all that He said about the Fatherhood of God in these discourses was meant to be understood of all men, is precarious reasoning, and would prove too much; for it would equally follow that all men are in the kingdom of God, the salt of the earth, etc. It is remarkable that Jesus never uses the phrases that are habitually on the lips of those who hold this view, "Father of all," "Father of mankind," "all men God's children," etc.; and in one place He describes those whom He calls God's children as a little flock, to whom it is their Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom (Luke xii. 32). It seems safest to avoid the use of phrases that our Lord and His apostles do not use, at least when we mean to make the Fatherhood of God a principle in theology, from which other doctrines may be inferred, as is frequently done. There is great danger lest, after having been proved to be true in one sense, it should afterwards be used as a proof of further assertions in a different sense in which it is not true.[1]

1 See Dr. Candlish's Cunningham Lectures *On the Fatherhood of God;* Dr. Crawford *On the Fatherhood of God;* Dr. C. H. H. Wright, *The Divine Fatherhood.* Weiss, *Bibl. Theol. des N. T.* § 20.

CHAPTER II.

COMPARISON OF OTHER CONCEPTIONS.

THE real nature and peculiar greatness of this doctrine of God may be better seen by comparing with it the different conceptions that are embodied in other monotheistic religious systems. Of these there are two that have been historically important, both of which arose on the ground of Old Testament Judaism, though both have also been developed independently by ethnic thought. When the Jewish Rabbis, after the voice of prophecy had ceased, gave undue and exclusive prominence to the law, and made the theocracy a nomocracy, omitting those elements of the revelation to Israel that spoke of a redemption of sinners by God's free grace and love; this led to two different modifications of their view of God.

One was to make the unity and uniqueness of the Divine Being, and His absolute loftiness above all else, the controlling and all-absorbing idea. Every approach to anthropomorphism was avoided with an exaggerated scrupulosity: no human limitation or passion must be ascribed to the Infinite First Cause of all: and whatever in Scripture seems to approach to that is explained as a mere figure or mode of speech. Thus, when Scripture says "God saw it" (Ex. ii. 25), the Targum of Onkelos has "it was manifest before God;" for "I have heard" there is put "before me it has been heard" (Ex. vi. 5); "God meant it for good" becomes "it was meant before God for good" (Gen. l. 20). "Repent of this evil against Thy people" is made "turn back from the evil which Thou hast said Thou wilt do to Thy people" (Ex. xxxii. 12).[1] This way of conceiving God's character is indeed consistent with His holiness, and allows that to be

[1] These and other similar paraphrases are given by Weber, *System der altsynagogalen palästinischen Theologie*, pp. 150, 151.

fully recognised; but as it explains away the nature of the divine anger, so it cannot ascribe to God pity, mercy, or, in a word, love, in any true sense. Even though the Rabbis frequently called God "Our Father in heaven," this meant for them no more than that He had chosen Israel to be the people of His own possession.

A similar conception of God also arose independently, outside the people of the Old Covenant. Probably the nearest approach made by human reason, without the aid of revelation, to the Christian conception of the moral character of God as holy love, was in the Greek philosophy, especially of the Platonic and Stoic schools; but the perplexities in which these philosophers were involved show the great darkness that encompassed the subject, when Christ, the light of the world, had not irradiated it. Up to a certain point, indeed, the Greek philosophers advanced with firm step. Anaxagoras seized the principle, that the cause of the universe must be Intelligence (*νοῦς*); and Socrates, following out this thought, developed the argument from design, as clearly as it has ever been done since, to prove the wisdom and goodness of God. But when Plato sought to work out a system of the universe, and placed at the beginning and head of all things the absolutely good (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*), he was met with the difficulty that perpetually arises from the existence of evil in the world. The way in which he attempted to meet this difficulty was by ascribing the evil to matter, and consequently it was the aim of his philosophy to remove God as far as possible from all contact with the material world. The Deity in the Platonic system is the absolute good, far above all comprehension or thought, not to be conceived or defined by any attribute; and in order to explain the existence of the world there are introduced, as intermediate between the Deity and it, the ideal world (*κόσμος νοητός*), or sum of ideas, which is the pattern or archetype of the actual world, and the soul of the world, or plastic nature, animating all material things.

Thus no sooner had Greek philosophy reached up to the belief of a First Cause of the universe, perfectly and absolutely good, than it felt constrained to remove Him to an infinite distance from the actual world of sense, in which there is so much evil, and to interpose a series of intermediate beings or ideas between God and man.

The ideal theory of Plato was the part of his philosophy most open to criticism by the clear and matter-of-fact intellect of Aristotle, who in other respects maintained the general theistic principles of Socrates and Plato, though bringing God into more direct connection with the world than Plato had done. But he has not very consistent theological doctrines, and seems to waver between a personal and impersonal conception of God, leaving it doubtful whether He is distinct from the world, or only immanent in it. The Stoics decidedly adopted this latter conception, and so developed a theology radically different from Platonism. They got rid of the dualism of matter and Deity, and held that all that takes place is to be regarded as the operation of nature or of God. The moral problem which such a doctrine suggests, they solved by their rigid ethical theory, that nothing is really good but virtue, which is in man's own power, and that pain and sorrow are not evils at all. Thus Seneca, in his treatise *De Providentia*, discussing the question why evils happen to the good, answers by saying that Nature is like a stern but virtuous father, and trains and disciplines his children by such suffering, appointing it for the exercise and proof of virtue. The fatherhood of God here appears, but in a totally different form from that in which Christ taught it; sternness and not grace predominates, and there is no room for pity, love, or redemption.

However in some respects the Stoic philosophy differed from the Platonic, both agreed in the purely abstract conception of God, the one placing Him in remote supremacy far from the world, and the other immersing Him in the world; but both

tending to lose sight of man's affinity to God as made in His image, and of a truly moral and emotional character in God.

This view of God was adopted by the Alexandrian Jews, whose conceptions were largely influenced by Greek philosophy; some, like Philo, endeavouring to interpret the Old Testament as much as possible in accordance with the theories of Plato, and others appropriating Stoic ideas. Philo emphasized the transcendent greatness of God as the Infinite and Incomprehensible, and interposed between Him and the world an array of "powers," analogous to the Platonic ideas, the sum of which was the Logos, or Thought of God, which is the intelligible world (κόσμος νοητός), or archetype of the universe. But while asserting the infinite greatness and holiness of God, he left no room for His condescension and self-communicating love, and practically lost sight of the Messianic promises and hopes of Israel.

The same tendency appeared in Christendom, when questions about God's being were discussed in the fourth and fifth centuries, largely under the influence of Greek forms of thought. Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy had much to do with the growth of the Arian and semi-Arian doctrines, as it has been said, "Aristotle made Arians, Plato semi-Arians."[1] Even those who maintained the faith of the true Deity and incarnation of Christ were too apt to conceive the essence of Deity in a metaphysical way, as appears for instance in the so-called Athanasian Creed. The statements in the Creeds of the Reformation and later times make the moral attributes more prominent: and though in modern days the definition of God in the Westminster Standards has been objected to, as falling short of the scriptural conception of God as love, it has been truly pointed out by Dean Stanley, that it is favourably distinguished from the ancient creeds, and even from the Articles of the Church of England, by its larger and nobler description

[1] J. H. Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century.*

of God, giving more prominence to the moral as compared with the metaphysical attributes.[1]

The Arianism of Dr. Samuel Clarke proceeds on the same metaphysical notion of God as simply the Infinite First Cause, whose Being and attributes can be demonstrated *à priori*.[2]

Modern speculative Theism—also regarding God mainly as the Infinite, and shrinking with the same horror as the old Alexandrians from everything that savours of anthropomorphism—follows the Stoic rather than the Platonic line of thought, and regards God as only immanent in the world, working in and with all its processes, but not transcendent or acting at all beyond these. Theodore Parker's conception of God was that of the absolute Author and Controller of Matter and Mind, Infinite in all respects, who will therefore ultimately make all His creatures perfectly happy. That of more recent Theists, such as Professor Seeley and Mr. Fiske, is that of a Power that works in all the processes of the world, but which must be conceived as void of every human characteristic.

All these are various forms of that view of the divine character which holds infinite greatness and separation from the world to be its most essential element. Many of them give conceptions of God that are lofty, pure, and worthy of admiration; but, as compared with that of Christ, they are cold, abstract, and unattractive.

The other alternative conception of the divine character that arose in the Monotheistic religion of Israel was most fully developed in Islam, and presents a view of the moral attributes of God that has also analogies in later times. By a reaction of thought from the extremely abstract conceptions of some of the Rabbis, others went to the extreme of conceiving God entirely after the manner of an orthodox Jew; and as orthodoxy had come to be considered as simply regard for the law as an external

[1] Article in *Macmillan's Magazine*, Aug. 1881, "The Westminster Confession of Faith."

[2] See Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, Part ii. § 1-9.

code, God's character was held to be the same. He was described as meditating on the law, delighting in it, and the like; and it was identified with the wisdom that was with God in the beginning, and was daily His delight. In a word, the notion of God was completely Judaized. Towards men this meant that He is simply a Lord and Lawgiver, giving external command, and requiring obedience; in His bounty bestowing rewards; and in His justice punishing, or in mere sovereign mercy pardoning; but not in any true sense redeeming or working for good in the hearts of men.[1]

Very similar to this is the conception of God preached by Mohammed. The unity and personality of God are most emphatically proclaimed, as against the idolatrous Polytheism of the Arabs, and a corrupt Christianity, in which the abstract conception of God had left room for saint and angel worship, and a dead orthodoxy supplanted living faith. But he viewed God simply as an almighty despot, who demanded absolute submission and obedience from men. He is indeed celebrated as "the compassionate, the merciful;" but that describes simply the kindness of a master to his slaves, who have no right to anything, and no higher relation to him than goods and chattels. His greatest gift to men is the Koran, or revelation of law; for obedience to which they shall be rewarded with sensual bliss in Paradise.

Within Christendom, too, this conception of God has appeared. It is that which rules the Socinian theology, and determines some of its peculiar doctrines. That system of belief, rejecting all that is mysterious and above reason, sought to find an explanation of the application of the name of God to Jesus in the New Testament, by holding the name to denote properly nothing more than absolute dominion. Jesus, though merely a man, may be called God and worshipped; because He has been exalted to be Lord of all. In accordance with this view of the essence of Deity, the image of God in which man was created was simply his dominion

[1] See Weber, *System der alt-synagogalen palästinischen Theologie*, § 32.

over the lower creatures: man's relation to God is merely that of a slave or possession to his absolute owner and lord. Sin therefore, as an offence against God, can only be a debt, the withholding from our absolute Master of what is His due; and, like any other debt, it may be remitted freely by a simple act of sovereignty, without the need of any manifestation of God's holiness or vindication of His justice. In forgiving sin, God exercises simply the attribute of placability, and the mission of Christ was necessary merely to reveal this to men, and assure them of it by sealing His testimony with a martyr's death. Such was the Socinian theology of the sixteenth century; and it manifestly rests on that view of God that regards Him as simply a sovereign Lord, benevolent, bountiful, and placable, but fails to rise to the conception of Him as holy and redeeming love.

An effort was made to maintain this theory on the ground of faith in Christianity as a supernatural revelation, and the Bible as a divine authority, and made with great learning and exegetical ability; but in vain. The modern Unitarians have been forced to give up the attempt to reconcile their creed with the natural sense of the New Testament, and to reject its authority; so that now it is seen that the most consistent development of this form of thought is in the direction of Deism. In one respect, indeed, the deistic view is not so consistent a carrying out of this notion of God; for as it asserts that all that need be known of God for man's religious life can be discovered without any supernatural revelation, it virtually assumes that there is some bond of connection between God and man above the mere relation of dependence on an absolute and arbitrary authority; while the Socinians, with their denial of natural theology, maintained more thoroughly the principle of simple lordship as the essence of Deity. A revelation, and that of the most positive kind, seems necessary on such a theory. Only the Christian revelation, which appeals to the spirit of man through the inworking of the Spirit of God, is not the sort of revelation it requires. Hence Mohammed found it needful to supplement the gospel by a more completely

inspired book—the Koran; and Islam is, after all, the religion in which the conception of God as an almighty, beneficent, and merciful despot is most completely carried out.

It is proper to state also that there is an approach to this notion of God in a certain extreme form of Calvinism, which exaggerates and misapprehends the divine sovereignty. The doctrine of effectual calling, as held by Augustine, Calvin, and the Reformed Church, implies that God's grace in the salvation of sinners is free and sovereign; but the zeal for a logical system, and pressing to literal rigidity a saying of Paul, which is one of the things in his Epistles that are hard to be understood,[1] have led some to maintain that God is equally sovereign in the hardening of the lost. Along with this, it has often been held that God appoints both issues alike for the manifestation of His attributes, of grace on the one hand and justice on the other; and thus the doctrine of predestination is made nearly the same as that held by the Moslem. Then the last end of God in creation must be regarded as simply His own glory, to the exclusion of the communication of good, the promotion of happiness, or even the holiness of the creatures. Further, the exaltation of the sovereignty of God has led some high Calvinists to coincide with the Socinians in denying the necessity of the atonement, holding that God could have forgiven sins by His absolute authority, though He was pleased, for wise reasons, to do so through the mediation of Christ's sacrifice. More frequently they have defended the justice of mankind suffering for Adam's sin, merely and entirely on the ground of a covenant established simply by the supreme authority of God, to the exclusion of all other considerations. Some have gone so far as to hold that the will of God is the foundation of moral distinctions, and that the inborn instinct that leads men naturally to believe in God is simply the feeling of absolute dependence.

[1] Rom. ix. 14–18, a passage which I cannot explain, since its most obvious and grammatical meaning seems to conflict with the plain teaching of Jesus and of Paul himself elsewhere. Matt. xxiii. 37; John v. 40; Rom. ii. 4; 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4.

It is to be regretted that several of these positions are taken by Dr. C. Hodge in his *Systematic Theology*, though they are neutralized by other statements, and are probably sometimes only incautious expressions, and sometimes meant in a qualified sense. The Westminster Confession also gives some apparent countenance to the extreme doctrine of predestination, by the form of its expressions in ch. iii. *Of God's Eternal Decree*, a form that is due to the Lambeth Articles of the English and Irish Church, though in ch. ii. it bases sovereignty, more scripturally, on the whole of the perfections of God. Most of the popular objections and invectives against Calvinism really attack only that extreme form of doctrine which, though it has been held by some great and good men, deserves to be exploded, as really, though unconsciously to its holders, perverting the Christian notion of God.

CHAPTER III.

EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION.

WHEN we perceive that the New Testament view of God as holy love differs so remarkably from other notions that have been and are held of His moral character and relation to men; the momentous question arises, what proof have we that the Biblical doctrine is true, and not a mere imagination? Some of the alternative views must be false, and how can we be sure that the Christian one is not so? The ground of our belief of this is not single but manifold, a combination of evidences, each strong in itself, and all fitting in together to form a body of facts, that cannot be accounted for unless the Christian doctrine is true.

One of these is, that the Christian conception of God is the highest that has ever been reached. When we compare it

with the views of the Deity given in other religions and philosophies, we cannot but see that in all the qualities that call forth our admiration, approval, love, and confidence, it far excels them all. The mere nature-powers or magnified men of popular paganism are clearly not to be mentioned for a moment in comparison with it; but even when, as we have seen, the thoughts of men rose higher, they reached to no thought of God so high as that of Christ. The Brahman in his mystic contemplation of the One only real Being, of which all that appears is but a varied manifestation, apprehended something infinitely great and worthy of the admiration that greatness commands; but it was destitute of the moral excellences that our consciences recognise as far more admirable, when we see a good man contending with overwhelming power, a Job, an Aristides, or a Regulus. The Platonist embraced in his conception of Deity absolute goodness, but at the cost of removing him to a vast distance from man and his material world, and leaving no room for sympathy or fellowship with man. The modern speculative Theist reverences a God who is greater, he thinks, than the Christian notion,—a power that is deeper, wider, greater than either matter as we know it or consciousness as we know it, of which matter and thought are merely special forms, appearances, expressions, the one Eternal Substance and Power at the bottom of those things that we know, as well as of innumerable other possible manifestations of itself of which we know nothing.[1] Though this view in the hands of some of its advocates endeavours to rise above the old Pantheism of the East by ascribing purpose and moral character to God, yet it cannot invest Him with the qualities of mercy, forgiving and redeeming love; and our heart tells us that these are greater and more to be admired than mere greatness and goodness, when we are drawn more to the self-denying life of a Buddha or a Howard than to the stern virtue of a Brutus. The

1 See Graham, *Creed of Science*, p. 346: "The developed Conception of God," and Seeley, *Natural Religion*.

Mohammedan again worships a personal God, mighty, just, merciful, but arbitrary and despotic, forgiving His creatures indeed on their repentance, but not redeeming and sanctifying them, remaining to the last their Lord and Master only, not their Father.

Look where we will among the religions of the world, there is no conception of God so high and worthy as the Christian; and this of itself affords a strong argument for its truth. For God must surely be the absolutely perfect Being; and how could He be such if man can conceive one more perfect? It may indeed be said that human fancy can produce ideas of unreal excellence; and that just as we sometimes dream of scenes of happiness and bliss that can never be realized, because they imply a combination of incompatible elements, so this notion of God is unthinkable, because it ascribes to Him inconsistent and contradictory attributes. Now we need not attempt positively to meet this objection, and to show how all the things said of God in Scripture can be perfectly reconciled: we admit that He is incomprehensible by us, and as He is in Himself can be known only by Himself: there are aspects of His character that may appear to be inconsistent with others, but this is no more than might be expected in a Being who is, as all admit, in every respect Infinite. This therefore does not weaken the force of the argument, that the highest conception of that Infinite Being is the truest one. If man's mind has conceived of a Being of absolute moral and spiritual perfections, it is because God is such a Being.

But besides the inherent loftiness of the Christian notion of God, there is evidence of its truth also from its origin. It is not like the others, with which it may be compared, which have sprung up independently, each in several different countries, and at different times; its one historical origin is the teaching and life of Jesus of Nazareth, the founder of Christianity; though the way had been prepared for it by the growth and development of the religion of Israel. Nowhere outside of

Christendom, or beyond the influence of Christianity, has God been conceived as holy love; indeed, even within its pale this lofty and pure conception has not always been retained, but professing Christians have often been prone to fall back into one or other of the lower ideas of God; though the teaching of Jesus and His disciples, as recorded in the New Testament, has made it always possible to restore and revive the original Christian faith. This highest notion of God, then, is due to the teaching of Jesus, a Galilean peasant, who in the reign of the Emperor Tiberius proclaimed in Palestine the coming of the reign of God, for which the Jews had been taught to look; but in a manner so inward, gracious, and large-hearted, so different from the worldly, legal, and national expectations of the priests and scribes, that He was rejected and condemned by them as a false prophet, and delivered to the Roman governor, by whom He was crucified. Of His public life we have memoirs published from thirty to seventy years after His death, within the lifetime of many contemporaries, and based on earlier documents and oral accounts by eye-witnesses. From the internal evidence afforded by these memoirs it is clear, that the very earliest traditions ascribed to Jesus works of healing and beneficence of a supernatural kind.[1] Further, we have a series of letters by six of the disciples of Jesus, in several of which, and those of undoubted genuineness, and written not merely to friends but to opponents in controversy, miracles are expressly asserted to have been wrought by the writer, or within his own and his readers' knowledge, the character of the writers appearing, from the letters themselves, to be such that they could not possibly, in such a matter, be either deceivers or deceived.[2] Finally, it is an undoubted fact that the whole body of believers in Jesus publicly asserted in Jerusalem, where He had been crucified, and from a time

[1] See Dr. A. B. Bruce, *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, Lect. iii., iv.

[2] See Isaac Taylor's *Restoration of Belief*, pp. 179–219.

soon after that event, that He had risen from the dead; and rather than give up this testimony, endured the loss of all their worldly goods, and the cruellest tortures and death. This was done by many who had ample means of knowing the truth of the fact, and who also, because of their faith in Jesus as risen, undertook a new course of life, morally and religiously, of the purest and most disinterested kind.

Such is, in general outline, the evidence available to show that the teaching of Jesus, which He gave as being from God, was confirmed by works in the realm of nature, such as God only could do. To those who reject this evidence on the ground that no deviation from the uniform course of nature is possible or conceivable, we reply, *first*, that this implies a notion of God and His relation to the world, different from, and, as we think, lower than that of Jesus, so that to assume it at this stage is to beg the very question at issue; and *secondly*, that to explain fairly the whole of the phenomena, without admitting the reality of miracles, is a task that has often been attempted, but never performed to the satisfaction even of unbelievers themselves. To those who object, that the historical evidence is not at all points so direct and strong as to counterbalance the improbability of the story, and that, when allowance is made for the credulity of an uncritical and superstitious age, the grounds of belief are very weak, we say, that though men's judgments may fairly differ about many of the particulars, as about other things of the kind, in so remote an age, yet when the whole case is considered with an impartial mind, the great probability is, that the life of Jesus is as authentically known to us as that of Julius Cæsar, and was in substance what the Gospels declare it to have been.

The evidence of miracles as signs of a divine commission is appealed to by Jesus and His apostles; and therefore it should not be omitted as valid in its own place. But they also teach that this is not the only evidence, nor that which gives the fullest certainty to our faith. Jesus appealed to the witness of John

the Baptist, to the Old Testament, and to the wonderful works that He did (John v. 30–47); but He also claimed that His own testimony, even apart from these, was sufficient evidence of what He said, because He spoke as one having full knowledge that He came from God, and was going to God (John viii. 14; comp. xiv. 11). Those who had the best opportunities of knowing Him believed, because they felt that He had words of eternal life, and knew Him as the holy One of God (John vi. 68, 69). He revealed God as holy love, not merely by teaching, but by an actual manifestation of that character in His own person; and even we can see it in the record of His life and work. This appears both when we consider the substance of His life-work and the manner in which He performed it.

The work to which He devoted His whole energies and life was the religious and moral salvation and improvement of men; and even this most general account of it shows benevolence and philanthropy to have been His ruling motive. But the form in which He set Himself this task, the establishment of the kingdom of God, as a heavenly and spiritual, not an earthly and outward reign, proves further that piety and devotion to God was as strong an emotion in Him as love to men. Heathen sages, such as Confucius, Buddha, and Socrates, have displayed in large measure true and disinterested desire for the moral good of their fellows, but without a corresponding love to God; as, on the other hand, Mohammed, at least in his earlier career, showed sincere zeal for God, without love or sympathy for men. Moreover, Jesus conceived God, not as the absolute Lord that Mohammed preached, but as the One perfectly good (Matt. xix. 17 and parallels), as the Father in heaven, the righteous and holy Father, who cares for all His creatures, yearns over the sinful with a fatherly compassion, and receives the penitent with a father's joy and forgiveness. Love and devotion to such a God, shown in Jesus' continual labour to establish His reign in the hearts of men by bringing them to love and trust Him, is of its very nature holiness; and in the lofty standard of morality

which He inculcated and exemplified, and to which it was His life's labour to raise men, we see a living example of holiness. When He resented so warmly, and with such keen personal feeling, the profanation of God's house of prayer by merchandise, of His name by profane swearing, of His word by traditions that made it void, do we not see in His heart a personal affection to God, that is at the same time a love of the highest moral goodness? This warm and emotional holiness was plainly a moving impulse in His work for the kingdom of God; and it worked together with, what is even more conspicuous in it, His love to men. Never did He despise or despair of any, however far off they were, or hostile to that holy God whom He so ardently loved; even those whom He denounced as hypocrites, He invited to the kingdom; and in calling them and all sinners to repentance, He was manifestly animated by love and desire of their highest good. Thus the very undertaking to establish the kingdom of God reveals in Jesus a character that may be summed up as holy love.

The same thing appears, perhaps even more strikingly, from the manner in which He carried out this work. The means He chose were thoroughly worthy of His aim. He did not employ force, as many of those who favoured Him wished He would; though He might have put Himself at the head of a patriotic movement to liberate Israel from subjection to Rome, and as king of the Jews establish a righteous and beneficent government. He worked on men's hearts by persuasion and moral influence. Never did He yield to the temptation to do evil that good might come. When He was at the height of popularity in Galilee, and might have retained multitudes of followers simply by not contradicting their hopes of an earthly kingdom, He declared the heavenly and spiritual nature of His mission in such strong terms as to drive many back from following Him (John vi.). Nor, on the other hand, did He ever try to gain the support of the scribes, the religious teachers of the time, by any connivance at their system of legality as the means of moral renovation.

In the face of all opposition and temptation to compromise or to opportune silence, He maintained His great announcement of the grace and mercy of God as the means of recovering the sinful. The holiness of absolute sincerity of purpose marked all His work; He never would gain any disciple under false or mistaken ideas, or from unworthy motives. Then how perfectly was He in sympathy with that grace and mercy that He proclaimed! how unmistakably true and deep were His pity and compassion for sinners of all kinds, for the greedy, extortionate, hard-fisted publicans, for the frivolous, pleasure-loving harlots, nay, even for self-righteous, conscience-seared hypocrites! He does not shrink from intercourse with any of them, and for all He has tears of pity and words of mercy and hopefulness, as well as of needful rebuke and warning. Yet with all this, how perfectly pure He manifestly is from all stain of evil! Even when mingling with the worst sinners in compassion and love, how clear and strong is His abhorrence of their sin, how lofty and pure the moral standard of His teaching! His proclamation of free forgiveness, even to the worst, never tended to encourage licentiousness; for He proclaimed, in the same breath, the unbending requirement of a holiness in heart, word, and deed, like that of our Father in heaven.

Then with what unwearied self-denial did He carry on His work; how constantly He went about doing good; how ready He was to give up at any moment His own ease or rest in order to do good to others,—at the evening hour of rest after a day spent in teaching (Mark i. 32), when asleep with weariness in a boat on the lake, when seeking repose and privacy at a momentous crisis (Mark vi. 31), He never failed, without a murmur, to answer a call of need. How considerate, too, was His love, caring for bodily wants and comforts, and for little things, that might seem beneath the notice of one about so great and heavenly a work as His! There is also to be mentioned His meekness and patience in the face of ingratitude, persecution, and wrong, His calmness under the bitterest provocation, the

gentleness of His remonstrances against the basest injuries, His forgiveness of His enemies, and prayer for His murderers. Yet Jesus was capable of indignation and wrath, as witness His terrible denunciations of the Pharisees, after all His efforts had failed to soften their hearts. His anger was awakened at sin as an offence against God and ruining men's souls ; but that makes all the more wonderful the entire absence of it for His own personal sufferings and wrongs. While His whole life displays holy love, His last hours reveal it in the highest and most concentrated form ; and time and power would fail me to exhibit it.

What has been said is not intended to give a full picture, even in outline, of the character of Jesus, or to rival those who in recent times have admirably set it forth as a principal evidence of Christianity ;[1] but only to indicate one aspect of it, so as to be the ground of the statement, that in the person of Jesus we have an actual exhibition of holy love such as reveals God to us in that character. For since we see in a human life such perfect and intense holiness and love united, and since He who exhibited that character appeared as a messenger from God, and claimed to be doing the work of God, and establishing His reign on earth, how can we avoid the conclusion, that what was excellent and admirable in His character belongs also to God who sent Him? For while Jesus claimed belief on His own word, and spoke with authority as a lawgiver, and not a mere expositor ; He never allowed His own claims to supersede those of His Father. Nothing is more characteristic of His teaching than the care He takes to lead men's thoughts always up to God, even while He asks them to believe in Himself. Whether it is power, or right, or love that He sets forth as the ground of their faith, while He exhibits it in Himself, He ever traces it back

[1] See Ullmann, *Sinlessness of Jesus;* Dr. Channing, *The Character of Christ;* Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural,* ch. x., On the Character of Jesus ; Young, *The Christ of History;* Bruce, *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels,* ix.

ultimately to God the Father. So, when He invited the weary and heavy-laden to come to Him for rest, He had just before recognised the sovereign authority of His Father, and asserted His commission from Him (Matt. xi. 27); and when He spoke of Himself as the Good Shepherd, laying down His life for the sheep, most entirely of His own free act, He was careful to add, "This commandment have I received from my Father" (John x. 18). We may be sure, therefore, that His moral character is a representation of that of God; and that what is central in the character of Jesus, and explains all His life and work, is also the central and ruling element in the moral nature of God. Thus He said, with demonstrable truth, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9); and as Paul expresses it, "we behold the glory of God in the face (or person) of Christ Jesus" (2 Cor. iv. 6). The Christian conception of God as holy love is proved to be true, not only by its being the highest possible, and by the evidence of well-attested miracles, but above all by its being actually revealed to us in the life and work of Jesus. Those are ways in which we are convinced of it; this is how we see it.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

WHILE the Christian revelation of God can be summed up in the brief statements, God is light, God is love, or God is holy love, it is so comprehensive and full of meaning that we cannot fully appreciate it unless it be expanded and unfolded into the various forms which it assumes in relation to the varying characters and circumstances of the creatures; and as the Bible is the

historical record of the progressive revelation that was completed by Christ, it presents God's character to us in a number of special aspects, ascribing to Him holiness, justice, wrath, forbearance, mercy, goodness, grace, and truth. These all belong to the complete conception of God in the Christian religion, and therefore call for our study here. We must seek to understand the meaning of all the chief moral qualities ascribed to God in Scripture; and if we find that they can all be deduced from holy love, and are comprehended in it, the results we have already reached will be confirmed.

First, then, holiness itself is to be more particularly considered. When God commanded Israel to be holy, because He their God was holy (Lev. xi. 44, xix. 2, xx. 7, 26), we may learn from the particular precepts then given what is meant by the attribute thus ascribed to Him. These precepts are many and very various. Some are merely positive ordinances, with no moral character in themselves, as to abstain from eating certain animals, to keep certain feasts, etc. The sense in which holiness is connected with these is explained in Lev. xx. 26. They separated Israel from all other nations, and marked them as Jehovah's own possession. God calls Himself holy in a sense corresponding to this, inasmuch as He is the only God, the unique One, absolutely separate from all other beings, and therefore claiming the whole and undivided allegiance of His people. But many of the precepts based on God's holiness have a moral character. They forbid what is unjust, unkind, unloving. It is from Lev. xix. that Jesus took the second great commandment, in which He summed up the law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." They also forbid all forms of sexual impurity, *i.e.* all sensuality or indulgence of animal passion apart from that tie of love and faithfulness that refines and elevates it. Hence we may infer that the holiness of God consists in the absolute purity of His nature, the utter absence of anything unloving or unrighteous in His character, and His love for purity and love in Himself and in all other beings. It is worthy of notice that all the moral precepts con-

nected with the holiness of God as their motive belong to the second table of the law, and that where the sum of the first table is given, as love to God with all the heart, it is based, not on His holiness, but on His being One and alone their God (Deut. vi. 5). For the love we ought to have to God is not precisely the same as that to our neighbours. We are to love them with the love of benevolence; and the reason is, that God delights in and desires that love. We can only love God with the love of complacency and delight; and the reason why we are to do this is, that He is infinitely great and good. Obedience to the first great commandment, therefore, is really love of goodness, for it is love of the God who is Love; and the love and regard for that love which is His own essence, is as near an account as we can give of the holiness of God. From another point of view, it has been defined by some as God's acting always like Himself and for Himself;[1] though the latter part of that definition can only be accepted as meaning for the sake of His own character, which is love, not for His own self-exaltation. We see also how holiness is the self-conserving attribute of God, as love is the self-communicating;[2] and the two, though distinguishable, are inseparable.

If we are right in viewing God's holiness as the love of moral good or of love, it must have as its converse the hatred of moral evil, of all that is unloving; and so we find this emotion ascribed to God in the Bible, and specially by those of its writers who dwell most on His holiness. When hatred is ascribed to God, as when it is commanded or commended in men, it must be understood to have for its object, not persons, but qualities that are morally evil; in the rare cases where God is said, or men are bid, to hate men, that should be understood figuratively for abhorring the evil that is in them. The language in which this aspect of God's holiness is set forth is necessarily that of emotion and figure;

[1] This definition is given in a volume of discourses, entitled *Theologia*, by William Wisheart, Principal of the University of Edinburgh, 1716.

[2] See Nitzsch, *System der Christlichen Lehre;* Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics.*

and as it has to express the feeling of an infinitely great and good Being towards what is infinitely offensive to Him, it can only be language thrown out towards its object, not properly expressing it, and hence must include what to a cold logic seem contradictions. Thus God is said to be displeased, grieved, pained at the sins of men, and yet He is represented as ever blessed in spite of them (Rom. i. 25); and care is taken to show that our sins do not really injure Him, as our obedience does not profit Him. Again, it is said, He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity; and yet the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. The moral truth conveyed by these opposing statements is felt by every devout mind, though their intellectual reconciliation may baffle the most acute metaphysician.

The relation of God's holiness to the persons, whose sin He hates, is most frequently described in Scripture as His anger, wrath, indignation, or fury, these being terms of different shades of intensity for the same generic idea. In endeavouring to ascertain what that idea is, we must avoid two opposite extremes: that of unworthy anthropopathy and that of empty abstraction. We must on no account conceive of anger in God as if it were the same in all respects as the passion denoted by that name in men, which involves a disturbance of mind, and frequently also malevolent feelings towards those against whom it is directed. No desire of or delight in suffering can be ascribed to the God of love; and no real perturbation can have place in Him who is blessed for evermore. We must abstract from all such human imperfection and evil the notion of anger that Scripture teaches us to attribute to God. It is not the same as that which we know in ourselves, though it is called by the same names, but at most something analogous to it. Yet it is possible to carry the recoil from anthropopathy to such an extreme as will empty the language of the Bible of all real meaning. To this many of the Fathers, who lived in presence of the Greek and Roman worship of deified men, were led, when they declared that anger in God denoted nothing more than the infliction of punishment, and was not an affection, but

merely an efficiency.[1] This is to reduce the resemblance implied in the name to the mere external effect produced; that, as man's anger usually leads to the infliction of suffering, so when God is said to be angry, the meaning is simply that He will inflict suffering on evil-doers. If this were so, the language in which the Bible speaks of the wrath of God would reveal nothing as to the inward principle in the Divine Being from which the infliction of punishment proceeds, but would only declare its certainty and terribleness. But then we could not understand why so many strong and varied expressions should be used, nor could we do justice to their natural meaning. More especially we find that sometimes a clear distinction is made between God's anger and the sufferings He inflicts; as when saints beseech God to rebuke them, but not in anger (Ps. vi. 1, xxxviii. 1; Jer. x. 24, 25). There is a suffering which God inflicts, not in anger, but in love (Heb. xii. 6–11); hence His anger must be something different from the mere infliction of punishment. We can quite well conceive it as a real affection, without infringing either on the holiness or the blessedness of God. There is a kind of anger in man that is not sinful, but essential to his moral perfection—the sentiment of righteous indignation against wrong, which is quite different from resentment at a personal insult or injury, being not selfish or cruel, but noble, generous, and one of the principal supports of righteousness in human society. We may warrantably ascribe to God something analogous to this, but free from all imperfection, and having a calmness and absence of perturbation such as we cannot positively conceive.[2]

This leads to the consideration of another attribute often ascribed to God in the Bible, and closely connected with His anger, that of righteousness or justice. This is of the same generic nature as holiness, inasmuch as it implies, like it, a

[1] Chrysostom explains it as ἐπίτασις τιμωρίας; and Augustine calls it "non affectus sed effectus" (*de Civitate Dei*, ix. 5). See Ritschl, *Rechtfertigung u. Versöhnung*, ii. 119.

[2] See Butler's *Sermons*, viii., ix.; Dorner, *System der Christlichen Glaubenslehre*, § 87; Godet, *Commentary* on Rom. i. 18.

favour for moral good, and an opposition to moral evil; and if the view just given of the nature of God's wrath be correct, the theory of Leibnitz and others, who resolve all virtue into benevolence, so that justice is merely benevolence guided by wisdom, must be rejected as inadequate. It does not account for the element of indignation against wrong that the Biblical representations show to be in God. A better explanation is that of the Roman jurists, that the essential element in the virtue of justice is the desire of giving every one his due; and there is clear warrant in Scripture for recognising this as one of the moral perfections of God. This is distinct from holiness, and sometimes, among men, has seemed to form different and even opposite types of character. Many men eminently distinguished for holiness, devout, pure, zealous for truth and right, have not been marked by that love of fairness and equity, that will carefully weigh men's deserts, considering all the circumstances of each, and dreading to inflict any undeserved or excessive blame. Such a quality is morally good and admirable in man, and is altogether worthy of God, so that there need be no hesitation in ascribing it to Him. It is frequently attributed to Him in Scripture in connection with the terms right and righteousness. See Gen. xviii. 25; Ps. xi. 4–7, l. 4–6, xcix. 4; Ezek. xviii. 25, 29, 30; Rom. ii. 5–12; Rev. xvi. 5, 6.

It is true that since the Israelites, under a dispensation of law, conceived of all virtue as a fulfilment of legal obligation, the word righteousness was often used as comprehending all goodness, and sometimes even for such excellences as beneficence or piety (Matt. vi. 1), which we distinguish from righteousness strictly so called; and hence there are passages where God's righteousness means His goodness as a whole; and sometimes, where it is associated with faithfulness and truth, it denotes the consistency and stedfastness with which He carries out His plan of salvation. But it is not possible, consistently with a fair exegesis, to make either of these the sole and universal meaning of the term; and there is clear evidence that, according to the

Bible, righteousness, in the sense of what philosophers call distributive justice, is an attribute of God. According to the teaching of Scripture, most clearly that of Paul, there is a wonderful provision of God's grace in Christ, by which His justice is manifested even when He forgives sinners for Christ's sake; and hence there are various passages in the Old Testament as well as in the New, where God's righteousness is especially connected with salvation and forgiveness, in more or less distinct reference to this; but this association, instead of disproving, rather confirms the view, that the Christian conception of God includes the attribute of justice in its ordinary and natural sense.

So understood, this attribute is based on holiness, because it implies a love of what is good and a hatred of evil; but it differs from it especially in this, that it also includes a regard for the personality of the intelligent creature. The simple desire for goodness, were there no other principle in the divine nature, might move the Almighty to the exertion of all His power to crush and annihilate all that is evil, no matter by what violent and terrible means. But God, being just as well as holy, has a regard to what is due to each of His creatures, and will not use His power, even at the impulse of holiness, except in accordance with that. The equitable rights of men have a value in God's sight; and He wills to maintain them most perfectly. This implies also that He has a regard for the souls that He has made, and treats them as persons whom He has endowed with free wills, and so made capable of personal relations to Himself, and of yielding a free obedience to His law. It is a perilous gift indeed, for it implies the possibility also of disobedience; but it elevates man in the scale of being, and makes Him more precious in God's sight than the lower creatures, whom He governs only by natural laws which they cannot break, but fulfil without any will of their own. Rational agents are governed by God after a higher manner, by precepts addressed to their consciences and wills; and in this moral government

God's righteousness is seen. This righteousness implies indeed that sin must and shall be punished; but this is done, not because God has any pleasure in suffering, but because it is right and necessary for the maintenance of His moral government. Without this God could not, consistently with His holiness, create a class of beings capable of personal relations to Him as His free and willing servants; this high privilege must have been denied, and men constrained to a conformity to the law of holiness. It is to elevate them to a higher dignity that God has made them subjects of a moral government in which His righteousness as well as His holiness is revealed.

But God's regard for His creatures appears still more in the attribute of love which is revealed in Christ. Love in general is the desire of and delight in the good of others; and the highest kind of love has for its aim the highest good of its objects, that is, their moral goodness or holiness, though not to the exclusion of inferior good, such as happiness. Where the good that is the end of love already exists, and can only be delighted in, we call it the love of complacency; where it is to be procured or increased, we call it love of benevolence; but the two are alike in their nature, and differ only because of the difference of their objects. Both forms of love are frequently ascribed to God in the Bible. The Lord loveth the righteous (Ps. cxlvi. 8); He takes pleasure in them that fear Him (Ps. cxlvii. 11); Jesus said, "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father" (John xiv. 21, 23, xvi. 27). That is the love of complacency. But again Hosea (iii. 1) speaks of "the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel who look to other gods;" Jesus said, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son" (John iii. 16); and Paul speaks of the "great love wherewith God loved us, even when we were dead in sins" (Eph. ii. 4). That is the love, not of complacency, but of benevolence.

The love of benevolence shows itself always in bestowing good wherever that is possible; but where it is entirely destitute of complacency, it is inferior in quality, and rather to be called

goodness or bounty than love. Where a person has no value for that which is the object of his beneficence, however bountiful he may be, he cannot properly be said to love; for a feeling worthy of that name it is requisite that there be some esteem for the person loved, if not as he is, at least as he may become. A token of this is, that in genuine love there is always a desire to be loved in turn by those whom we love. Hence God's works in nature, while by their many beneficent contrivances they show the goodness of God, do not distinctly or fully reveal His love. They prove that God is good to His creatures, and desires their welfare; but not that they are really precious to Him; indeed, it might be argued from the infinity and all-sufficiency of the Creator that this could not be. The law, commanding love to God as the first great commandment, inferentially showed, what was directly declared by the prophets, that God's goodness to men is of the nature of love; and the greatness and depth of that love was revealed by Jesus.

The love of God for His creatures assumes different forms according to their various states and characters; and these show its richness and fulness, and are often enumerated as different attributes of His character. It is in this way that the greatness of the divine love is expressed, especially in the Old Testament; while in the New it is shown in its intensity by the one great gift of His own Son. The chief forms of it distinguished in Scripture are the following:—

Compassion, or, more properly, Pity (Heb. רחמים, Gr. *οἰκτιρμοί*), denotes the form that love assumes when the object of it is a suffering creature, altogether irrespective of moral character, whether good or evil. That feeling of sympathy with suffering that is natural to man, and gives so much beauty and attractiveness to character, has its archetype in the divine heart. God feels for sorrow wherever it exists; and much of His dealing in Providence with men is due to this attribute. He graciously puts it foremost in His proclamation of His name to Moses (Ex. xxxiv. 5).

Grace (חֵן, χάρις), or loving-kindness, may be extended to any dependent being, and exerts itself, not only in relieving misery, but in bestowing blessing. It may also have for its object either the worthy or the unworthy. Our Lord Jesus Christ as man is represented as receiving God's grace, and so also are sinners, who are saved by grace. It is free favour, bestowing blessings on dependent creatures, as they need and are capable of receiving. Towards those who are sinful and unworthy, the love of God shows itself in a further variety of forms.

Forbearance (ἀνοχή) is that attribute in virtue of which God does not deal with sinners according to their sins, nor reward them according to their iniquities, but spares them and restrains His wrath, though it is justly deserved.

Long-suffering (אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם, μακροθυμία) expresses the highest degree of this form of love, when the restraint of wrath is not merely for a little, but for a long time, and in the face of repeated and continued provocation. It is the reality of God's hatred of evil and wrath against the evil-doer that shows this to be truly a form of love, and not of indifference to sin, or mere contempt of the sinner. Thus, unless we recognise the holiness of God, we cannot see His love in what is the most universal manifestation of it.

Mercy (חֶסֶד, ἔλεος) is a further manifestation of God's love to the unworthy and sinful, in which He not only forbears to punish, but forgives their sins; that is, not simply remits the punishment or suffering that follows on sin,—it may be sometimes does not do that entirely,—but ceases to be angry with the sinner, and receives him into favour, while continuing unalterably to hate his sin. How this is possible is indeed a great mystery; for there would seem to be only the alternative between making light of the evil of sin, by assuring men of God's favour in spite of it, or of driving them to despair, by setting forth the hatred of an absolutely holy Being against all sin. But that Jesus by His gospel did indeed secure both ends at once, is historically certain; since He filled His disciples both with a deeper sense of sin

and a more joyful hope of God's favour than any other religious teacher has done. To explain how He did this belongs to the doctrine of Redemption; the fact, with which only we have to do here, illustrates God's attribute of Mercy.

Favour, or good pleasure (רצון, εὐδοκία), is a still other manifestation of the divine love, denoting God's complacency in those who are morally good; in its perfection it is bestowed on Christ as God's beloved Son, and in degree on His followers, in so far as they are conformed to His image.

Truth (אמת, ἀλήθεια) is also ascribed to God in Scripture as a moral quality, and in connection with those attributes which we have already seen to be forms and modifications of love, in relation to creatures of different characters and conditions. This means, that the constancy and uniformity of God's ways are not due, as some think, to a mere natural immutability, but to God's will, and to that regard for His creatures' good, that is involved in His moral character as holy love. Hence we should not only rely on His faithfulness with perfect confidence, but also, as the inspired servants of God and Jesus Himself did, love and praise Him for His truth as well as for His love.

From all these attributes together flows the Sovereignty of God. He is supreme over all, not merely because He is resistless in power and infinite in greatness, but because He possesses essentially and immutably all moral perfections. If He is represented in Scripture as doing according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, acting as it seems good in His sight, and not giving account of His ways, He is always recognised as infinitely good as well as great. He has a right to rule over all, not merely because He is the Creator of all, but because He is the Best of all beings, and His will is always right. Hence even when He exercises the most absolute sovereignty He does not act arbitrarily, but always for wise and holy reasons, though these may be unknown to us, and always in perfect goodness, justice, and truth.

The consideration of the number and variety of the ways in

which God's holy love may show itself, and is described in Scripture as appearing, may meet the objection that has often been made to the doctrine that God is holy love from the existence and amount of evil in the world. For it shows that though God is love indeed, it does not follow that He will make all His creatures perfectly happy and free from pain. Love may, in many cases, prompt the infliction of pain for the sake of a higher good, and may be really manifested even when suffering is inflicted. The love which is revealed by Jesus as the character of God is something more than mere beneficence, and appears as pity, grace, long-suffering, mercy, favour, even in the midst of great privations and sufferings. Nay, the still more appalling problem of the moral evil in the creation of a God of love may find some relief from the view of the many divine operations of love. For if, by means of the creature's freedom and liability to sin and fall, there is opened to him the possibility of a higher advancement in moral excellence, than would have been attainable had all evil been excluded, how shall we venture to deny, that even a universe that has been so marred by sin may be the work of a God of holy love?

CHAPTER V.

GOD'S PLAN OF THE UNIVERSE.

SINCE Christianity confirms the revelation of nature, that God is the personal First Cause of all things, we cannot but conceive of Him as acting according to a purpose; and since it reveals Him as essentially holy love, we are enabled to understand what is the ultimate end for which He does all things. We must, indeed, exclude from our thoughts all those elements in our idea of a purpose that imply imperfection, as, for instance, that to

aim at an end proceeds from some want to be supplied by its attainment, or that to choose means with a view to an end implies a defect of power to reach it at once, or a lack of certainty of gaining it at last. Our conception of purpose is derived from the working of our own minds and wills, which are limited, and therefore is of necessity involved in these limitations. But we cannot but judge, that to act with deliberation for an end is higher than to act without any such purpose, and hence we warrantably conceive of God as acting in a way truly analogous to this, though free from all its human limitations. In this we have the full countenance of Scripture, where both God's purposes in particular acts, and His general purpose that includes them all, are frequently mentioned. The latter form of representation is much the more frequent; and as in forming a theological doctrine we have to do with God's general design, and not with the endless details of its relation to particular events, it is more correct to speak of the Purpose of God as one, embracing all His works, than of His purposes as many. Theologians have used for this the term Decree, which is unscriptural and misleading, as it is apt to suggest the notion of a command or requirement; but it would be well to discard it entirely, and to use instead the scriptural word Purpose, or what may be still better for popular use, Plan. In reading the older divines it should be remembered that Decree means just Purpose.

This Purpose, or Plan, of God, reason and revelation alike teach us, must be marked by the highest wisdom; and since, as we have seen before, we are taught to ascribe to God the most perfect knowledge of all things, past, present, and future, His plan of all His works must have been formed from the beginning and remain unalterably the same. The plans of men need often to be altered on account of unforeseen occurrences, because they are formed with insufficient knowledge or wisdom; it is frequently a part of prudence not to form a plan too soon, before all the things that ought to be regarded are known; and the more wisely and carefully a man forms his plan, the more likely is he to be

able to carry it through without alteration. So Scripture gives us the highest conception of the wisdom of God, by teaching that His plan for all His works is unchangeable and ever perfectly carried out (Ps. xxxiii. 10, 11, cxxxv. 6; Isa. xliv. 25–28; Rom. xi. 33–36; Eph. i. 11). In like manner His purpose is described as eternal, having been formed before the world was. As it includes all His works, of Creation as well as of Providence, it must be conceived as anterior to them all.

The general doctrine of the divine Purpose then is simply this, that whatever God does in time He has from eternity, with infinite wisdom and knowledge, purposed to do. This is evidently fitted to increase our trust in God and gratitude to Him, as it shows that in making and preserving us and all men God has been exercising infinite wisdom. No objection can apply to God's purpose that does not apply even more to the works by which He executes it. If His acts are right and good, the purpose to do these very acts must be right and good too. For He purposed to do just exactly what He does, and in the same way and for the same reasons as He does it. If, for example, He has eternally purposed to punish ungodly men, it is because He has foreseen their sin; and if the infliction of the suffering is right and proper, the purpose to do so must be right and proper also. We must discharge from our minds the notion which the word Decree is apt to suggest, that the purpose of God has any constraining effect on the things to which it is directed. It has no such effect, any more than a man's purpose has. An architect's plan cannot build a house, though it may delineate beforehand exactly what it is to be. God's plan of the universe does not exclude the free will of the creatures whom He has endowed with reason and conscience. He does not constrain or force them to act either one way or another; He preserves them in His providence, and permits them to act according to their own will. But their actions, however wayward, cannot derange His plan, for with that mysterious foreknowledge of His, He has foreseen them from the beginning, and with His wonderful wisdom He is able

to turn to good what men design for ill. Such is the view that the Bible gives of God's purpose and its execution (see Gen. xlv. 5–8, l. 20; Isa. x. 6, 7, 15; Acts iv. 27, 28), and it is a view that contains nothing unphilosophical; it is not fatalism, it is not necessarian, it is not inconsistent with the freedom of the will as not certainly determined by motives; it can be held equally by those who affirm and by those who deny that philosophical theory. The permission of voluntary agents to act freely makes it possible to conceive how evil could find place in the plan of a God who is holy love; it does so as foreseen and permitted, but not caused by Him; the overruling of evil for good enables us to believe that the divine plan of the universe, though permitting so much sin and misery, is yet the wisest and best.

Can we then say what is the last and highest end of God in His works? It has been felt by many that since God is the infinitely great and absolutely perfect Being, He is of incalculably more worth than all created things together; and as it is more reasonable that the less should be for the better than the better for the less, if it is possible in any way that God should be the last end of all things, this must be true; and this presumption of reason has been confirmed by certain statements of Scripture, that all things are not only of Him, but through Him, and to Him (Rom. xi. 36; Heb. ii. 10); and as nothing can be conceived as really adding to the perfection or blessedness of God, this has been thought to be explained by the other statement of Paul, that God acts for the praise of His glory (Eph. i. 5, 12, 14). Many theologians, not only of the Calvinistic but of the Lutheran communion, have thought that this is all that need be said of the last end of the universe, and that though there are undoubtedly other purposes, such as the happiness or the holiness of the creatures, these are all subordinate, and only means in relation to the manifestation of God's attributes in all their manifold fulness and beauty.

To many, however, this has seemed an unworthy view of the divine plan, as it represents God as acting ultimately for Him-

self alone, and makes all the creatures merely means to God's glory, so that even the highest of them have no value to Him for their own sake. This seems inconsistent with the Christian revelation of God as love, and with many representations of Scripture. Hence many Christians have thought that Plato was right when he said that the reason why God made all things was simply that He was good; and he that is good does not envy any good thing to others, but seeks to communicate his own perfections, and as widely as possible. The last end of God's plan, therefore, has been held by not a few to be the good of the creatures; the manifestation of God's glory being subordinate to that. This view has assumed different forms, according to the opinions entertained as to what constitutes the good of the creatures, which is held to be the last end. If it be simply happiness, then a utilitarian system of ethics is implied, and a very unworthy view of the end of man is adopted; while if it be holiness or moral goodness, the theory is much more worthy of respect, and indeed contains an element of truth that ought not to be overlooked.

The way in which the considerations in favour of both these opposite views may be best harmonized is by recognising the necessary connection between holiness and the nature of God. This has been done by those who have thought most profoundly on the subject, and seen that in some sense God, and not the creature, must be the highest end; while at the same time He must not be conceived as acting from selfish motives. Thus Thomas Aquinas maintains that God is the final cause of all things, but says in explanation that the First Cause, who is uncaused, does not act for the acquisition of any end, but only intends to communicate His own perfection, which is His goodness (*Summa*, I. xliv. 4). So Milton introduces Satan tempting Jesus to seek glory:—

> "Think not so slight of glory, therein least
> Resembling Thy great Father; He seeks glory,
> And for His glory all things made, all things
> Orders and governs;"

and our Lord replying :—

> "And reason, since His Word all things produced,
> Though chiefly not for glory as prime end,
> But to show forth His goodness, and impart
> His good communicable to every soul
> Freely."
>
> —(*Paradise Regained*, iii. 109–112, 122–126.)

Other theologians have endeavoured in various ways to combine the manifestation of God's attributes and the communication of good as the last end of the universe ; but the problem has been solved most satisfactorily by Jonathan Edwards, who, in his *Dissertation on God's Last End in Creation*, has ingeniously and solidly shown that these two ends are really not different, but one and the same viewed from different sides, and that the manifestation of God's glory, which on many accounts must be regarded as the highest end, consists simply in the communication of His own fulness of knowledge, holiness, and blessedness to other beings whom He has purposed to create for that end. God makes, indeed, Himself the end of all His works, as He must needs be believed to do, since He alone is infinite both in being and in goodness ; but He can make Himself an end in no other way than by seeking the manifestation, the love, and the enjoyment of His own perfections. Now these are the very things in which the highest good of rational beings consists, and in seeking them God is seeking the communication of good. When, indeed, we confine our thoughts to the manifestation of His perfections as the last end of God, that may appear to be quite distinct from the communication of good. But that is too narrow a conception of what is meant when it is said that God created all things to the praise of His glory. In making that His end, God sought not merely that His perfections should be known, but also that they should be loved, and still further that they should be enjoyed. But to know the perfections of God is the highest intellectual attainment of the creatures, to love them is their highest holiness, to enjoy and delight in them is their highest happiness. In aiming at His own glory, therefore, God is at the same time

aiming at the communication of the highest good. Thus the two objects that have sometimes been opposed as the last end of creation in reality coincide, and are one and the same.

The way in which this is connected with the conception of God as holy love may be seen from the form in which substantially the same thought is put by Rothe. That profound and bold thinker held that creation is due to a moral necessity, "that God should determine Himself to posit His *non-ego*, His other, to the end that He might make it similar to Himself, so as to have His own being in it, or to communicate Himself to it; in other words, the necessity of a creative activity as a self-communication of God to His other. Now this determination is in one word, Love" (*Theologische Ethik*, § 41). This, in the abstract and logical form in which the German theologian put it, deducing it *à priori* from the idea of God, is apt to shock us as somewhat irreverent, bringing the creation too near the Creator. But it is not essentially different from the thought of Edwards, that God's last end in creation is to communicate His fulness of being and perfections; and this view seems to be really borne out by the teaching of Scripture. That fulness which is ascribed to God, and is said to have dwelt in Christ (Col. i. 19, ii. 9), is spoken of as being communicated to us. We are said to receive out of Christ's fulness of grace and truth, even grace for grace (John i. 16); and we have it set before us as our aim, to be filled unto all the fulness of God (Eph. iii. 19). Again, it is said that beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory (2 Cor. iii. 18); that we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John iii. 2). God's design in chastisement is, that we should be partakers of His holiness (Heb. xii. 10); and He has given us exceeding great and precious promises, that we might be partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. i. 4). These statements surely warrant the conclusion, that God designs to have creatures like Himself in some of the most essential attributes of His being, and that it is in this that His glory consists. It is to be regretted, that in the

Westminster Standards the glory of God is asserted as His last end in a bare and one-sided way, and not in the more full and scriptural way in which Edwards has explained it.

A similar view also arises from the scriptural idea of the kingdom of God, which combines the different elements sometimes presented separately. The kingdom of God is that by which His glory is realized. So in the Lord's Prayer, after the first petition, "Hallowed be Thy name," follows, "Thy kingdom come" (Matt. vi. 9, 10). In 1 Cor. xv. 24–28, Paul declares the end to be the kingdom being delivered up to the Father, that God may be all in all; and in the Book of Revelation it is the kingdom of God that is repeatedly set before us as the end of all His ways. The idea is the same, though the word "kingdom" does not occur, in Eph. i. 9, 10, iii. 9–12; Col. i. 19, 20. This idea makes God supreme as fully as that of His glory; while, on the other hand, the kingdom of God is presented as the highest aim and chief good of man (Matt. vii. 33; Luke xii. 31); and in 1 Cor. x. 31–33, when the glory of God is set up by Paul as what ought to be our aim in all that we do, it is explained to imply our not seeking our own profit but the profit of many, that they may be saved. In the notion of a kingdom we have set before us a common end for God and His intelligent creatures. He is supreme and supremely honoured as King; but His supremacy consists, not merely in His receiving tributes of praise, but in His exercising a government under which His subjects are perfectly blessed.

Some important theological differences turn upon the view that is taken of the relation of sin to God's plan of the universe. We have seen, in considering the doctrine of Providence, that the teaching of Scripture and the necessary presuppositions of the kingdom of God revealed by Jesus, lead us to believe that moral evil is not due to God as its cause, but to the free will of creatures permitted by Him, and that it is also bounded and overruled by His Providence, so that good is brought out of evil. But when we consider this in connection with God's plan, more perplexing

questions arise. Shall we say that the possibility of sin is always and in all circumstances necessarily implied in free agency, so that if God willed to create free agents at all, it must have been possible that some of them would sin? His permission of sin would on that view be nothing more than His determination to create beings endowed with intellect, conscience, and will; in a word, to found a moral system. But if the possibility of sin is essentially involved in free agency, it would follow that sin must always be possible for moral agents, that even creatures who have for long obeyed God's will may at any moment transgress, and those who have sinned, but have repented and returned to obedience, must always be in danger of falling away. Then, further, there can be no security of the accomplishment of the ultimate end, of God being glorified in the holiness and happiness of creatures, except God's foreknowledge that some of His rational and free creatures will not sin, or will repent and persevere eternally in holiness. That is to say, God blesses as many as He can, but there are some whom, from the nature of free agency, He cannot bless. This is in substance the Arminian doctrine, though expressed in a very general and naked form. Now I do not urge the objection often made to it by Calvinists, that it limits the divine omnipotence, for I do not think that argument valid; but a decisive objection is, that the Bible speaks of God keeping men from falling, causing them to walk in His ways, inclining their hearts to keep His precepts, guarding them through faith unto salvation; and of men being in such a state that sin shall not have dominion over them, that they do not and cannot sin. Yet this is represented as not infringing their liberty, nay, according to Christ, men have their true liberty only when made free by Him so as not to commit sin (John viii. 31–36). It seems therefore clear, that according to Scripture God can, through the grace of Christ, secure the obedience and holiness of men, in perfect consistency with their freedom and responsibility as rational and moral agents. This is the essential principle of the Augustinian or Calvinistic theology: and it is all that need

be asserted on this point, in order to a consistent maintenance of the entire Calvinistic system as laid down by the Synod of Dort.

But most Calvinists have gone farther, and held, that God could always and in all circumstances keep His creatures from sinning without impairing their freedom. A universal proposition like this clearly cannot be proved from particular facts such as those above mentioned, but must rest on *à priori* argument from the omnipotence of God, or from the assumption that there is nothing so peculiar about the facts as to prevent a universal conclusion being drawn from them. But the circumstance, that in the cases where we know that God keeps free agents from sin He does this by the influence of His Holy Spirit, whose mission is made possible and effectual by the Incarnation and Redemption of the Son of God, seems to show that this is such a wonderful and special exercise of divine love and power, as to make it precarious to assert that the result could certainly be secured without these means. Because God can, through the sacrifice of His own Son, effectually secure the holiness of those whom the Son makes free, does it follow, that He could keep newly created beings from sin before that sacrifice had been offered? The reign of God is the means by which the holy obedience of free creatures is secured, and that reign was established on Calvary, where the Son of man lifted up draws all men to Him. This great exercise of the moral power of self-sacrificing love may be the means, not only of drawing sinners to God with the cords of love, but of securing the free obedience to God of millions of intelligent beings, yet to be created to people the orbs of the sky, as the nations walking in the light of the New Jerusalem of redeemed men. Yet it may be true, that God could not always, or from the first, secure the holiness of His creatures without destroying their freedom, and that sin could not be entirely excluded from a system of moral government. It is related to God's plan, not as an integral part of it, but as a thing that could not be, from the first, separated from free agency.

This position, as it is more cautious than the commoner

Calvinistic one, and does not go beyond what is certainly taught in Scripture, has the advantage of not requiring us to deny that this is the best possible universe for the holiness of the creature, as well as for the glory of God, or to hold that sin is permitted merely that the justice of God may be known in its punishment, and His grace in its forgiveness.[1] This is a conclusion repugnant to the best feelings of our nature, and it could only be proved by the most cogent evidence. But what has led most Calvinists to it has not been either distinct Scripture testimony or certain facts, but precarious logical inferences, and a recoil from an extreme position on the other side. Many no doubt will prefer to take refuge in ignorance on such a lofty and mysterious subject, and be content to say simply that God permits sin, but that we cannot determine for what reason or end He does so. But if we do speculate on the subject,—and such speculation, if conducted with reverence and humility, is neither unwarrantable nor unprofitable,—we may find in the view just indicated an escape from the difficulties that beset the extreme positions on either side, taken by the Arminians and the ultra-Calvinists. It is stated by Dr. Edward Beecher in his *Conflict of Ages* (Bk. v. chs. xiv., xv.), and it may be held apart from the theory of pre-existence maintained in that able and suggestive work. It is also given in a somewhat different form by Horace Bushnell in his *Nature and the Supernatural* (ch. iv.). Jonathan Edwards' view of the last end of creation seems to require it for its full and consistent carrying out; though he was prevented by his theory of the will from actually thinking it out. But it enables us to see, better than any other theory consistent with the facts, what we trust, whether we can see it or not, "that God is love indeed, and love creation's final law."[2]

[1] So Dr. Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. i. p. 435.

[2] For excellent modern discussions of the doctrine of the Divine Purpose, see Woods' *Theological Lectures*, xxxiv.-xli. Cunningham's *Historical Theology*, ch. xxv. § 7. Crawford's Baird Lectures, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, x.-xii.

PART III.

COROLLARY FROM THE KINGDOM OF GOD;

GOD IS THREE IN ONE.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHRISTIAN KINGDOM OF GOD IMPLIES A TRINITY.

SINCE, as we have seen, the Christian doctrine of God's character, as essentially holy love, is revealed, not only or most convincingly by teaching, but chiefly by the actual manifestation of holy love, in entire perfection, in Jesus of Nazareth; the question naturally arises: — Who was this Jesus, and how comes it that He, alone of mankind, has given, in His own person, a revelation of this the highest conception of God? The fairest and most natural way of seeking an answer to this question will be to examine what Jesus said of Himself and of His relation to God; and in order to meet as wide a circle of inquirers as possible, I will not, in the first instance, use sayings ascribed to Jesus only in a single Gospel, and whose authenticity has been plausibly doubted, but only those claims which it must be allowed He made, if we have any historical knowledge of His life at all. I trust, however, that the progress of our inquiry will show that the more isolated statements, which occur mostly in the fourth Gospel, are so much in accord-

ance with His more largely attested claims, that there is every reason to believe their genuineness.

We may start in our investigation from the undoubted fact that Jesus' main announcement was that the reign of God foretold by the prophets had come, and that His disciples, who learned to know and trust God as their Father, and to endeavour to be like Him in kindness and love to men, were the members of God's kingdom. But, as the prophets had foretold a King of the house of David, who was to reign for God as the head of the people of Israel, and through whom God's reign was to be set up, Jesus announced Himself to be that King, and claimed the title by which he was generally known, the Messiah or Christ, that is, the Lord's anointed. He virtually assumed that title in His reply to John the Baptist's messengers (Matt. xi. 2–15), in accepting from Bartimæus the name Son of David (Mark x. 47–52), and in His public entry into Jerusalem (Matt. xxi. 8–16), as well as from His disciples in private (Matt. xvi. 16–19). There is no doubt that Jesus claimed to be a King: this was the accusation brought against Him before Pilate, and He did not deny the fact, though He satisfied the Roman governor that the Kingship He claimed was not earthly, or such as to interfere with the rights of Cæsar (Luke xxiii. 2–4; John xviii. 33–38).

Ordinarily, however, He did not call Himself a King, except in such a way as showed that it was in a spiritual or heavenly sense that He used the title; but He habitually gave Himself a name, the Son of man, which implied that He was the expected King, while it indicated the difference of His kingdom from those of the world. The name is taken from Dan. vii. 13, where one like a Son of man is the emblem of the kingdom to be set up by the God of heaven, after the kingdoms symbolized by the four great beasts. God's reign is to be gentle and humane, not fierce and brutal like those of the world's conquerors, just as the reign of the Son of David is described in Isa. xi. The name may also have been chosen

by Jesus as indicating His universal relation to mankind, and not to Israel alone.

He conceived the Messianic kingdom of God as a dominion over men's hearts and souls, which would give them the blessings of inward peace and happiness, and secure the observance of the law of holiness and righteousness in thought, in word, and in deed. This was to be brought about by Him through the agency of the Holy Spirit of God. The anointing, implied in the title Messiah, Jesus understood to be, not a mere symbol, but a reality, the resting on Him of the Spirit of the Lord (Luke iv. 18–21). His forerunner, John, had spoken of the Messiah as one who would baptize not merely symbolically with water as he did, but effectually with the Holy Spirit; and the token of this was, that when Jesus received baptism from John, there was an appearance from heaven as of a dove descending on Him. Afterwards Jesus declared that His wonderful works of healing, by which He overthrew the kingdom of Satan, were wrought by the Spirit of God (Matt. xii. 28). At the same time, He declared that reviling or speaking against the Holy Spirit was an unpardonable sin, greater even than that of speaking against the Son of man (*ib.* 31, 32).

Thus Jesus' proclamation of Himself as the King and founder of the reign of God, implied a recognition of God who sent Him into the world, whom, as we have before seen, He called especially the Father, and His own Father, and of the Holy Spirit that God put upon Him, and gave to men through Him. To be baptized unto the name of Jesus as the Messiah implied a recognition of God His Father who anointed Him, and of the Holy Spirit with which He was anointed, as well as of Jesus Himself, the Son of God and Son of man. It is therefore equivalent to being baptized unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Thus a historical consideration of Jesus' teaching and claims in general leads us to recognise Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as together the object of Christian devotion. In some way or other God is

revealed in Christianity in or by the threefold agency thus designated. This is indeed meanwhile a quite general expression; for these titles in themselves are capable of different explanations, and have been very differently understood by Christians. We have not as yet the right to say that they denote divine persons, and teach that God is three in One; we simply say that whatever may be meant by the Father, the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit of God, these are essential agencies in true Christian life, and objects of Christian veneration. We shall proceed to consider more particularly what Jesus taught, first about His own relation to God as the Son, and then about the relation of the Holy Spirit to God; and we shall find that these give a view of the Divine Being that confirms and illustrates the great Christian revelation of God as holy love.

CHAPTER II.

THE SON OF GOD.

WHILE He reveals God as the holy and righteous Father, who cares for all, and receives repenting sinners as His children, with forgiving grace and love, rejoicing over those who had been dead and are alive again, Jesus frequently speaks of having a special relation to God peculiar to Himself alone; and that this implies that He is in nature more than a mere man, and equal with the Father, so as to be truly God, appears from many of His sayings, and from the whole tenor of His life. At His teaching the people were astonished, because He spoke as one having authority, and not as the scribes who sat in Moses' seat (Matt. vii. 28, 29). In the Sermon on the Mount He put His own word, "I say unto you," on a level with what had been said to them of old time (Matt. v. 22, 28, 33, 38, 43), and represented Himself as the final judge of men's

destiny, and His words as the rule by which they should be judged (Matt. vii. 21–27). Again, He claimed authority to forgive sins; and when it was objected that this involved blasphemy, as an assumption of a divine prerogative, since God only could forgive sins, He did not deny this construction of His words, but confirmed them by appealing to His works of healing as an exercise of divine power (Mark ii. 1–12 and parallels). The same claim He made on another occasion, in connection with such a manifestation of ability to read the heart as prevented objection and awakened only wonder (Luke vii. 36–50). Unlike the prophets, who had ever called on men to turn not to them but to God (see Isa. lv. 6, 7; Jer. iv. 1; Hos. vi. 1, xiv. 1, etc.), He invited all the labouring and heavy-laden to come to Him, and promised to give them rest (Matt. xi. 28); and spoke of Himself as the bridegroom, whose presence or absence made the difference between religious joy and sorrow, to His disciples (Matt. ix. 14, 15). Though He vindicated the claims of parental authority against the corrupt glosses of the Pharisees (Matt. xv. 4–6), He demanded for Himself a love and allegiance superior to that due to father or mother or the dearest and most sacred ties (Matt. x. 37; Luke xiv. 26); and He actually obtained such supreme love and affection from many of those who knew Him in His personal ministry, as well as from multitudes who believed on Him through their testimony. Now the only explanation that the Jewish Scriptures afford of such a breach of natural affection is where the claims of God Himself demand it (Ex. xxxii. 26, 27; Deut. xxxiii. 9; 1 Kings xix. 20). Further, Jesus, though of humble station, and destitute of a Rabbi's education, yet received on many occasions marks of reverence, such as kneeling and prostration, which an apostle afterwards refused (Acts x. 25, 26), and angels are described as refusing (Rev. xix. 10, xxii. 8, 9) because they might tend to idolatry. But Jesus never refused them, but repeatedly did mighty works of healing in response to these acts of homage; while yet we see how jealous He was of God's honour when He declined the compliment of the wealthy ruler who thoughtlessly called Him "Good Master," as if

He could prescribe terms of salvation independently of God (Matt. xix. 16, 17). When we take all these things into consideration, we cannot but feel that if He was a mere man, even though a teacher sent from God, His conduct displays singular arrogance or fanatical pride, wholly unlike the character of the prophets that had gone before, or the apostles who came after Him. But it is impossible to believe this of Him; His character, as we have already seen, is the most perfect exhibition of holy love that the world has ever seen, and is especially distinguished by meekness and lowliness. It is impossible, on a fair estimate of His history, to avoid the conclusion that His transcendent claims are indications of His being more than man.

This is indeed a great assertion, and one not to be made without the very strongest evidence; but it is borne out by many other proofs besides those already indicated. It explains how He is in His character a perfect revelation of God as holy love, differing from all other men, not only as being morally better, but as having a higher nature. It explains also how He called Himself in a peculiar sense the Son of God, who alone knows and can reveal the Father, and is known by the Father alone (Matt. xi. 27), to be honoured even as the Father (John v 23), who came down from heaven (John vi. 38, 62), who is before Abraham was (John viii. 58), and who is one with the Father (John x. 30). These explicit statements are given most frequently by John, who supplements the synoptic account of our Lord's ministry in Galilee by narratives of His conflict with the hierarchy, which took place especially in Jerusalem, and in which He would naturally put His claims in the most explicit form; but they are fully confirmed by the equivalent, if less obtrusive, statements recorded by the Synoptists.

It further appears from all the Gospels that Jesus was finally condemned by the Sanhedrim on a charge of blasphemy, not merely for claiming to be the Messiah, but for claiming divine honour. In the solemn moment of His trial He accepted both titles, "the Christ" and "Son of God," and declared that He would henceforth sit on the right hand of God, and come in the clouds

of heaven; and it may be a question whether it was either part of this avowal or the whole together that was regarded as involving blasphemy. It is not certain whether the name Son of God was used as synonymous with Messiah, or as a distinct and divine title; but if Jesus was condemned simply for claiming to be the Messiah, it must have been on the assumption, which some of the prophecies might suggest, that the Messiah was to be divine, since by no possible stretch of legal inference could a claim to be a merely human Messiah be construed as blasphemy. We know that Jesus had been repeatedly accused of this crime before, because He claimed what belongs to God only, or made Himself equal with God; and when He was solemnly condemned on the same charge, it must have been because He made such claims, and the title Son of God was that which most distinctly expressed them. But when He allowed Himself to be condemned on such a charge, on His own confession, He must have meant that confession in the sense in which His judges understood it, and so He not only claimed divine dignity in the most solemn manner, but sealed His testimony with His blood. He died because He made Himself the Son of God. Then His being raised from the dead was a declaration by God that His condemnation was unjust; that is, that He really was what He claimed to be, and thus He was not only justified, but declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead. This would also account for Thomas saying to Him, "My Lord and my God," as soon as he was convinced that He had really risen from the dead.[1]

The testimony that Jesus thus gave of Himself is confirmed by that of His disciples. From the very first they prayed to Him, and invoked Him as one who could hear, guide, and help them (Acts i. 24, vii. 59, ix. 14; 1 Cor. i. 2; 2 Cor. xii. 8); and this was

[1] This view of our Lord's condemnation is not admitted by all, but the arguments of Whately (*Kingdom of Christ*), Treffry (*On the Eternal Sonship*), and Liddon (*Bampton Lectures*) are very strong in its favour; and it is considered probable by Neander and Ellicott.

indeed the characteristic mark of Christians. More or less explicit assertions of Christ's deity are made in nearly all the Epistles. Thus James, the brother of Jesus, calls himself in the same breath the servant or bondman of God and of his own brother, the Lord Jesus Christ (Jas. i. 1), whom he also calls the Lord of glory (ch. ii. 1), and by implication, the one Lawgiver and Judge, who is able to save and to destroy (ch. iv. 19 compared with v. 8, 9). Peter applies to Christ an Old Testament passage (Isa. viii. 13), in which Jehovah of hosts is mentioned as the only object of trust and reverence (1 Pet. iii. 15); and addresses a doxology to Christ (*ib.* iv. 11) in the same way as to God (v. 11). In 2 Pet. i. 1 He is called "our God and Saviour," as in v. 11 "our Lord and Saviour;" and in 2 Pet. iii. 18 there is again a doxology to Christ. These Epistles, as they are not doctrinal but practical in their purpose, could not be expected to contain more references to such a doctrine; but in Paul's Epistles, which are longer, and several of them more didactic or controversial, there are more numerous assertions of the deity of Christ. He is called "God over all, blessed for ever"[1] (Rom. ix. 5). In Rom. x. 9–13, the name Jehovah in Joel ii. 32 is applied to Christ; in Phil. ii. 6–8 He is said to have been originally in the form of God, and His being made in the likeness of man is described as an emptying Himself; in Col. i. 15–17 it is said that He was before all things, that all things were created in Him, through Him, and unto Him; and that in Him all things consist, that is, are held together in continued existence. In Eph. v. 5 and Tit. ii. 13, according to the most grammatical, though not perhaps absolutely necessary construction, He is called God. In the salutations of most of Paul's Epistles Jesus Christ is associated with God the Father, as bestowing the greatest and most comprehensive spiritual blessings, grace and peace, on all believers.

[1] This indeed has been applied to God the Father by some good scholars; but that construction is a very unnatural one, and only supported by the dogmatic assumption that Paul could not have called Jesus God.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews plainly believed that Jesus is God; for he begins it with an elaborate argument for His superiority to the angels, in which He says that through Him God made the worlds, and that He upholds all things by the word of His power, and applies to Him Old Testament sayings in which the names God and Jehovah occur (Heb. i. 2, 3, 8, 10). The same must have been the belief of the evangelist Luke (Luke i. 17, 43, 76). In the Revelation of John, Jesus calls Himself the First and the Last (i. 17), a title also given to God (i. 8); and is described as worshipped by all creation (v. 8-14), while angels decline worship as proper only to God (xix. 10, xxii. 9). In his Gospel John calls Jesus the Word, and asserts that the Word was in the beginning with God, and was God, and that all things were made by Him (ch. i. 1–18); he declares that He was that Jehovah whose glory Isaiah saw in the temple (ch. xii. 41), and he records the adoring address of Thomas to Jesus, "My Lord and my God" (ch. xx. 28). In his first Epistle he also calls Him the Word, and says that He was from the beginning and was with the Father (ch. i. 1, 2); while there is considerable probability, though not absolute certainty, that it is to Christ that He gave the name the true God and eternal life in ch. v. 20.[1]

Probably this body of evidence would have convinced all Christians that our Lord is really God, were it not seemingly opposed by the facts that He was undoubtedly a man, and is declared by the evangelists and apostles to have been so, and that the unity of God is an essential article both of natural religion and of that of the Bible. Hence, those who allow so much authority to reason as to hold that nothing is to be believed which reason cannot positively comprehend, have thought that they must either give an unnatural and forced interpretation to

1 The scriptural evidence for the deity of Christ will be found fully and carefully discussed in Dr. Pye Smith's *Scripture Testimony to the Messiah*, Liddon's Bampton Lectures on *The Divinity of Christ*, and Hodge's *Systematic Theology*. Reference may also be made to Schmid and Weiss on the Biblical Theology of the New Testament.

the text of Scripture, or deny its absolute authority as a rule of faith. Those who have felt chiefly the difficulty connected with the true humanity of Jesus, have generally thought that His exaltation to supreme dominion, and the veneration due to Him as having brought in a new spiritual order of things, might, with a liberal allowance for the luxuriant tropes of Oriental language, account for the sayings of Scripture, consistently with the opinion that, though now exalted to be Lord of all, our Saviour is yet in nature no more than a man. This is the Socinian, or as more generally called in modern times Unitarian doctrine; most accurately it may be designated humanitarian, since the other names tacitly beg the question on opposite sides. But those who chiefly feel the difficulty arising from the unity of God have frequently thought that our Lord is a superhuman being, who existed before His birth of Mary, and was the first and highest of creatures, but yet as a creature is essentially distinct from God the Creator. This is the Arian doctrine, so called from its most famous advocate in the ancient Church; but though it has had some able supporters in modern times, it is now held by few, if any, as their own belief, though by many humanitarians it is thought to have been the view of the apostles. Another alternative is the Ideal Man theory of Schleiermacher and others, according to which the historical Jesus was the realization in a person of a divine idea in the Platonic sense, the archetype of humanity.[1]

It is only fair to admit, that these views, denying as they do what is the most natural interpretation of the New Testament, have not been entirely due to an undue stretch of the province and power of reason, but partly also to a recoil from exaggerations and abuses on the part of those who have maintained the deity of Christ. The wild disdain of reason by Tertullian and others, tended to drive many of the Alexandrian school to an

[1] The fullest exposition of this view is in Beyschlag's *Christologie des N. T.*, an account and criticism of which is given by Dr. Bruce in his Cunningham Lectures on the *Humiliation of Christ*.

opposite extreme: and when reverence for Christ as God was allowed to breed an idolatrous regard for the Virgin Mary as His mother, the followers of Mohammed, with their righteous zeal against creature-worship, swept away also the worship of Christ, that had ever been the Christian practice. So too at the Reformation, since the authority of revelation had been pleaded for such unscriptural and superstitious dogmas as transubstantiation, it is not hard to see how the Socinians were tempted to reject some true mysteries along with many false ones. In more recent times also, a too hard and rigid dogmatism has provoked an unduly sweeping rationalism.

But the great majority of Christians in all ages have held, that all such explanations as the humanitarian, Arian, or Ideal Man theories do unwarrantable violence to the meaning of the words of Jesus and His apostles, and fail to give any adequate explanation of the facts of His history; and further, that though we cannot positively comprehend how He is both God and man, or how He and the Father are one God, yet it cannot be shown that these things involve a contradiction. They are analogous to other mysteries, which we are constrained to believe. We cannot explain, what is an ancient though necessarily imperfect illustration, how the rational soul and material body are united in ourselves, any more than how God and man can be one Christ. We cannot conceive how God can be everywhere present without extension, or how He can infallibly foreknow and foretell contingent events, any better than how there may be some distinction in the unity of the Godhead such that Jesus and the Father are one.

The way in which the Church has been led by long and keen controversy with the Arians, Socinians, and others to formulate her belief of the deity of Christ has been by declaring that He is "very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father" (Westm. Conf. viii. 2). The former part of this statement is designed to distinguish our doctrine from that of the Socinians, who admitted that Jesus is called God, but held that He was so

called only figuratively, as made Lord of all after His ascension to heaven. We believe that He is God, not merely by a figure of speech, but truly, and not from the time of His exaltation only, but from eternity, therefore we say very, *i.e.* true, and eternal God. The latter part of the statement embodies the decision of the first General Council of Christendom at Nicæa in Bithynia, A.D. 325, which excluded the Arian doctrine, by asserting Jesus to be consubstantial, or of one essence (ὁμοούσιος), with the Father. As this phrase is not found in Scripture, no one is bound to receive it, unless he is satisfied that what it means is taught there; and even then, one may prefer to express the teaching of Scripture in some different way. What it means is substantially this, that Jesus is God in the same sense as the Father, and not in any different or inferior sense. The essence of God is not anything different from God Himself with all His attributes; and the statement is, that Jesus possesses all these equally with the Father. It may be illustrated by the challenge which the Trinitarians addressed to the Arians to name any title, attribute, or dignity ascribed in Scripture to God the Father, and they would undertake to produce some passage in which the same is given to our Lord.[1]

The Apostle John, when he speaks of our Lord as existing in the beginning with God, calls Him (John i. 1, 14; 1 John i. 1) the Word (*Logos*), a name which denotes both inward thought or reason, and the outward expression of thought in speech, and recalls those Old Testament personifications of Wisdom in which it is said that by her God made the world (Prov. iii. 19, viii. 22;

[1] "We bid the Socinian welcome to choose for himself over the entire field of the divine names, perfections, works, worship—whatsoever in Scripture may be considered most peculiar to, and characteristic of, the eternal God. And when he shall have made his choice, we undertake to show him that which he has chosen ascribed to the Lord Jesus in the Scriptures." *The Divine Glory of Christ*, by Charles J. Brown, D.D., a brief but most suggestive treatise, bringing out the spiritual and religious bearing of the deity of Christ. For this all-important aspect of it, Owen's great work, *On the Person of Christ*, should also be consulted.

Job xxviii. 12–28), as well as those passages that describe all things as made by the Word of the Lord (Gen. i. 3; Ps. xxxiii. 6). It seems therefore to describe Him as the revealer of God's inmost thought, as He is expressly said to be (John i. 18; Matt. xi. 27; Col. i. 15; Heb. i. 3). In these last passages He is also called the Son; and that name, too, has been generally held to describe Him in His pre-existent state as God. Some able and devout students of Scripture have indeed thought that the title Son of God properly belongs to our Saviour only as the Word made flesh, and denotes, either His Messianic dignity, or His supernatural birth without a human father: and there are some passages where it seems to be used in these senses. The point is not one of vital importance; but I think there are sufficient exegetic grounds for the opinion of the majority of those who believe the deity of Christ, that in some places at least the name Son of God is used as a divine title, and describes a relation that did not begin in time when He became man or Messiah, but has existed from eternity.[1] The name would then indicate that the relation of God and His Word is not merely one of thought and utterance, but of affection and love, and it enables us to see in the mission of Jesus Christ a fuller revelation of the love of God than we have yet attained to. For it shows that in sending Him into the world God was giving up to humiliation, and labour, and pain, and death, One who from everlasting was to Him what a son is to a father. The phrase is no doubt analogical, and not a literal expression of a relation that we cannot positively conceive; but the analogy certainly includes the notion of the warmest mutual love (Matt. iii. 17; John iii. 35, v. 20, xvii. 26; Col. i. 13). Thus we see that this revelation of the Son of God shows us

[1] The most elaborate discussion of this subject is Treffry's *On the Eternal Sonship*, a very able, fair, and satisfactory work, though on points of criticism and interpretation it sometimes needs now to be corrected by later advances in these studies. The best writers on the other side are Moses Stuart, Dr. Wardlaw, and Dr. Lindsay Alexander. See also the investigations on the title Son of God in the works on *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* by Schmid and Weiss.

that God's holy love to men has in it, in some mysterious way, the element of self-sacrifice, since "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John iii. 16).

This last expression "only-begotten," which occurs also in John i. 18 and 1 John iv. 9, has suggested to theologians another point in the analogy implied in the name Son of God. We hardly do justice to its peculiar emphasis if we explain it as meaning no more than either "*only*" or "*beloved;*" nor can it be supposed to refer to our Lord's miraculous conception, of which John, in whose writings alone it occurs, makes no mention. It seems to indicate that though God has other sons, it may be by creation, or by adoption, or by regeneration, the eternal Word is begotten of Him in a unique sense, or in some ineffable way emanates from the Father. This conclusion is confirmed by the manner in which the writer to the Hebrews describes the Son of God as "the effulgence of His glory and the very image (or impress) of His substance" (Heb. i. 3). The figure is that of a ray issuing from a light such as the sun, in which there is a certain relative dependence, yet no separation or difference of nature, and no posteriority in time. The ray is derived from the sun, but it is the same light that shines in both; and the ray is not later in time than the sun, which never has been without the ray, any more than the ray without the sun. This has suggested what is known as the eternal generation of the Son of God, that He stands to the Father in a relation analogous to that of the ray to the sun, emanating from Him, yet not divided, and not having any beginning of being, but co-eternal with the Father. The generation of the Word, therefore, is something entirely different from creation: it is not out of nothing but out of the being of God, not in time but eternal, not by an act of God's will but by necessity of the divine nature. This is what the Nicene Creed means when it calls our Lord "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made," the phrase "Light of Light" showing that the idea is taken from Heb. i. 3.

Those who do not regard the name Son of God as a divine title, and therefore reject the doctrine of the eternal Sonship, naturally find still greater difficulty in this of the eternal generation; and some who accept the former deny the latter, thinking, as Dr. Hodge does, that the analogy indicated by the name Son need not be pressed so far as to include generation. This is a point subordinate in importance to that of the eternal Sonship, as that again is to the vital doctrine of the deity of Christ; and it must be admitted that some scholastic divines, both in the Catholic and Protestant Churches, have pushed the analogy much too far, and based on it the most presumptuous and unintelligible speculations, well fitted to disgust sober minds with the whole subject. But if we remember with due humility that our whole ideas on the being of God must be analogical, and that we ought to advance in our conclusions as far as Scripture will lead us, and no farther, I think we may accept the Nicene doctrine, which has commended itself to most Christians.[1]

CHAPTER III.

THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

IN the foundation by Jesus Christ of the kingdom of God, the power by which He wrought is declared by Himself to be the Spirit of God (Matt. xii. 28),—an expression which would remind His Jewish hearers of how the successive leaders of their people of old, Moses, Joshua, the Judges, the Prophets, had received the gift of the Spirit of God, and wrought their work by the power of the Spirit. Jesus declared that the Spirit of God was upon Him,

1 On the Nicene statements of doctrine as to the deity of Christ, see Cunningham's *Historical Theology*, ch. ix.; Newman's *Arians of the Fourth Century*; Liddon's *Bampton Lectures*, vii.

and enabled Him to preach the gospel, as well as to cast out demons (Luke iv. 18). But He spoke of the Spirit being blasphemed, an offence properly against a person; and in His last discourses with His disciples, recorded by John (xiv., xv., xvi.), He describes the Spirit as another Comforter or Advocate (*Paracletos*), that was to take His place and supply to His disciples the want of His personal presence when He should be taken from them. The tone and circumstances of these discourses are such as to make it extremely improbable that He was using the rhetorical figure of personification; and the Apostle Paul, and Luke in the Book of Acts, use personal expressions of the Holy Spirit, though they also sometimes employ such as are impersonal. In the formula of baptism (Matt. xxviii. 19), and the benediction used by Paul (2 Cor. xiii. 13), the Holy Spirit is associated with the Father and the Son; as converts are to be baptized unto the name of all three, and all three are the source of spiritual blessings.

These facts, which I have elsewhere stated more fully,[1] have led most Christians to believe that the Spirit of God is not merely a divine power or influence, and is not a created being, but is God Himself as truly as the Father and the Son, though distinct in some way from both these, since both the Father and Jesus Christ are said to give or send the Holy Spirit. This has been generally expressed by saying that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, or a Person in the Godhead, in opposition to the views of those who regard the Spirit as merely a power or influence from God, who, we think, are constrained to do violence to many passages of the New Testament.

It is to be observed, however, that the word Person is not expressly used in Scripture of the Spirit of God, and hence no one is bound to receive it, unless he thinks that it fairly expresses what is taught in Scripture. Hence, also, we cannot determine the meaning of the word exegetically, as we can do those that Scripture itself uses. Its propriety is suggested by

[1] *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, in the present series.

the fact that those pronouns which we call personal, *I*, *thou*, *he*, are used in Scripture of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; but they are not used exactly in the same sense as they ordinarily are when applied to men. Three human persons, as we use the phrase in English, are three men: but we must not, in asserting three divine Persons, conceive for a moment of three Gods. It is not even used in precisely the same sense of the Holy Spirit as of the incarnate Logos; for Jesus, as man, is represented as a person in the same sense as other men are such. The word is used as a convenient one to express a thing that we cannot positively conceive, but believe on the testimony of Scripture; and it is not to be held to denote more than can be shown to be taught in the Bible about the Holy Spirit. If any one prefers to use another word, such as subsistence, or hypostasis, or to decline to use any at all, no objection need be made, if only it be admitted, that the Holy Spirit is truly God, yet distinct from the Father and the Son.

The religious value of the Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit lies in this, that it expresses the truth, that when our souls are aroused, moved, and elevated by religious convictions, feelings, and desires, this is not merely a gift from God of a certain faculty or tendency, but a real working of God Himself in us. That is the way in which all the New Testament writers represent the new life of Christianity. God is in us of a truth (1 Cor. xiv. 25). God worketh in us both to will and to do (Phil. ii. 13). He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him (1 John iv. 16). Paul and John at least are full of such representations, and Paul especially describes this divine agency in us as the Spirit by which we are renewed and sanctified. But since it is religious life that is thus produced and perfected, it must have God for its object as well as its author. It consists of emotions of trust, love, gratitude, submission, reverence, and the like, towards God, viewed as our Father in heaven, who has sent His Son to be incarnate,

to suffer and to die for us: hence we have the notion of God working in us to call on God above us, the Spirit that God has sent forth into our heart, crying, "Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15; Gal. iv. 6).

Hence it is that the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit has generally been received by Christians, not only because it has been thought to be implied in the way in which Jesus and His apostles speak of the Spirit, but also because it commends itself to their spiritual feelings and instincts. A remarkable example of this is found in the life of the famous Robert Hall. Until 1799, when he had been for years a preacher and minister of the gospel, though he fully believed the necessity of divine influence in commencing and continuing the spiritual life, he doubted the doctrine of the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit. But about this time, having been led by a dangerous illness to review his religious convictions and experiences, in the near view of death and eternity, and experiencing the support yielded in these solemn moments by the doctrines of the cross, he was struck by the fact that whenever in private prayer he was in the most deeply devotional frame, most penetrated with the sense that he was nothing, and God was all in all, he always felt himself inclined to adopt a Trinitarian doxology. This circumstance, often occurring and pondered in a spirit of honest and anxious inquiry, issued at length in a persuasion that the Holy Spirit is truly God, and not merely an impersonal influence emanating from God.[1]

It is not difficult to see how this should be so. When we find the Spirit of God so often and so prominently mentioned in Scripture in connection with all the various blessings that we need for our souls, such as enlightenment, guidance, strength, holiness, comfort, we cannot but have our attention very strongly directed to that agency by which these blessings are communi-

[1] See Dr. Gregory's Memoir of Robert Hall, in Hall's *Works*, vol. vi. p. 52.

cated to us. We naturally and necessarily think, not simply of God, the ultimate source of them, but of the Spirit, through which He bestows them on us. Whatever may be the meaning of the name, it is the Spirit that comes into direct contact with us in the work of salvation. Now, if the Spirit be not a person, but a power or influence of God, then to concentrate our attention on it, as Scripture leads us to do, would interpose something between us and God, and so interrupt or hinder our devout fellowship with Him. When most deeply filled and strongly connected with feelings either of desire for the grace and help we need, or of gratitude for what God has done for us, the current of our feelings Godward would be impeded by our thoughts being fastened on a mere impersonal power or influence, and the tendency of the earnest soul in times of special devotional fervour would be, either to pass over the intermediate agency altogether, as we do that of second causes in Providence, or, since the frequent mention of the Spirit does not permit that, to regard that Agent as not merely a divine influence, but a divine Person. In this view, which as we have seen is the scriptural one, the prominence given to the Spirit of God has no tendency to interpose any obstacle to the flow of devotion to our heavenly Father. For the Spirit is not a thing that comes in between us and God, but a living being who is Himself God, with whom we have to do, one who does not keep us back, but brings us to God. In this view the doctrine, that God works in us through His Spirit, does not remove Him to a greater distance, as it would do if the Spirit were a mere influence used as a means: on the contrary, it brings God nearer to us, for it shows us that He does not merely work upon us from afar, as it were, but that there is working close to us, yea in us, a Divine Spirit who is as truly a Person as the Father and the Son, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

The Scripture representations of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, His only-begotten, sent into the world by the Father, and

yet Himself God, and one with the Father, have led those Christians who believe the Holy Spirit to be a divine Person to understand in a similar way the relation of the Spirit to the Father. He is said to be sent and given by the Father just as the Son is said to be; He is declared to be of or from God in the same forms of expression as are used of the Son; and as the name Son of God suggests by analogy the notion of generation, so the name Spirit of God suggests that of spiration or breathing out, which seems to be indicated when Jesus speaks in one place of the Spirit as proceeding from the Father (John xvi. 26). The Eastern or Greek Church has declined to go beyond this statement, which is literally made by Jesus; but the Western Church, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, has generally considered that as the Holy Spirit is called in Scripture the Spirit of the Son as well as of the Father, and is said to be sent by the Son as well as by the Father, we ought to recognise the Spirit as having a similar relation in nature to the Son as to the Father, and to say that He proceeds from the Father and the Son. This doctrine, however, is one that only depends on inferences from Scripture, and should not be regarded as of importance enough to divide the Church on account of a difference of opinion about it.[1]

CHAPTER IV.

FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT.

THE conclusions to which we have been led about the Son of God and the Spirit of God, must unquestionably be held in consist-

[1] On the subject of this chapter see Owen's *Discourse of the Holy Spirit;* Hare's *Mission of the Comforter;* Dr. George Smeaton's Cunningham Lectures on the *Doctrine of the Holy Spirit;* Dr. Joseph Parker, *The Paraclete.*

ency with the belief that God is one, which was so emphatically taught to Israel in the old covenant, and is reiterated and confirmed by Christ and His apostles. How to harmonize the Christian revelation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as each truly God, with the fundamental truth of the unity of God, is the great problem that has exercised the minds of theologians on this subject; and various statements of Scripture have suggested a number of ways in which they may be said to be one.

The most easily comprehensible of these is a oneness of counsel and will, which is often asserted, and always assumed, in the New Testament: "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing: for what things soever He doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner" (John v. 19). The Spirit "shall not speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak. . . . He shall take of mine and declare it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine" (John xvi. 13–15). Compare also 1 Cor. xii. 4–6; Eph. iv. 4–6. This unity is not indeed by itself alone sufficient to establish Monotheism, nor is it presented in Scripture as the only unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; it is the lowest and loosest kind of oneness asserted in Scripture of the Holy Three. Yet it is not unworthy of consideration, both because it is mentioned there, and because even this oneness of counsel and will, inadequate as it is to establish pure Monotheism, is yet sufficient to exclude the Polytheism of popular Paganism, with which the Jewish and Christian Church had chiefly to contend. The worshippers of local and tribal gods never regarded the various deities in whom they believed as at one in purpose or character: they imagined them to be of different dispositions, favouring different persons or races, and often opposing and contending against one another. This was the case even when, as in the Olympian system of the Greeks, there was supposed to be a sort of family or commonwealth of gods under the supremacy of a single Lord or Father of gods and men. That was the way in which the instinctive conviction of the human soul, that God is one, struggled for

expression in that religion of anthropomorphism ; but how vastly superior to it is that perfect oneness of mind and heart which is the very lowest kind of unity that Christianity teaches to be in God ! The very thing that led men to polytheistic ideas was the variety and number of the manifestations of power in the phenomena of nature, and hence the many deities that it imagined were each different, so as to account for a special set of appearances ; but in the Bible all the manifold differences in the universe are traced up to the one Creator of all ; the diverse parts and modes of revelation are all traced up to one Revealer ; and the manifold spiritual operations in men's souls, to one and the self-same Spirit. The distinctions in the Godhead appear, not in these, but in a higher region, and are consistent with perfect oneness in all their operations on the world beneath. Hence the generally received theological maxim, that the works of the Trinity on what is outside the Godhead are undivided (*opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*) ; that is, in all such works as Creation, Preservation, Revelation, Salvation, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equally active.

But three agents, united only by entire and perfect agreement of mind and will, would still not be really one ; and so we observe that the New Testament teaches also a unity of origin. While Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each called God and worshipped, there are not presented to us three separate sources of being, since the Son is said to be begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit to proceed from the Father. Hence, when asserting the Son and the Holy Spirit to be God, equally with the Father, we do not assert three First Causes of all things, since the Son and the Spirit being of the Father, He alone is of none. In this sense the Father has such a pre-eminence that He is sometimes called in Scripture God, in an especial sense, as He who alone is God of none, while the Son and the Holy Spirit are of Him. This distinction of the Father is emphasized when the unity of God, in whom Christians believe, is asserted in opposition to the gods many and lords many of heathen worship (1 Cor. viii. 6) : "To us

there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we unto Him;" the whole universe has one origin, not two or more. While creation is ascribed to the Son as well as to the Father, it is said to be through Him who, as incarnate in Jesus Christ, is the one Lord. Yet not as if He were a second and inferior deity, or only the first and greatest of the creatures; for in the sequel of the same passage (ch. x. 16-21), the Lord, with whom we have communion, is broadly distinguished from the deities that are not God, to whom the Gentiles sacrifice. We are not therefore to press this passage so far as the Arians do, who argue, that because the Father is unbegotten and the Son begotten, therefore the Son is not of the same essence as the Father. This argument proceeds on the assumption that the essential notion of deity is merely the metaphysical one of an uncaused First Cause. But if, as we have seen, there is reason to think the essence of deity does not consist in anything so abstract, but in the fulness of all perfections, especially of those that are summed up in holy love, the reasoning of the Arians is not valid, and the admission that the Son and the Holy Spirit are, in a way incomprehensible to us, derived from the Father, does not necessarily imply that they are not truly God. The fact that notwithstanding those passages in which the Father is called God, the one God, or the only true God, all divine attributes, works, and worship are by the same inspired writers ascribed to the Son and the Spirit, shows that, in the view of Christ and His apostles, the pre-eminence of the Father is not inconsistent with the true deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and is a superiority, not in nature, but only in relation.

This leads to the recognition of a still closer oneness of the holy Three than that of counsel and that of origin, a oneness in nature or essence. This seems a necessary inference from the statements of Scripture. If the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are each truly God, if in Christian baptism we are solemnly dedicated to all Three, and if God be One, then these Three must be that one God, and God is declared in this ordinance of baptism to be Three

in One. This is a great mystery; we cannot comprehend it, or form a positive conception of it; but is it an absurdity? can we clearly see that it involves a contradiction? This is the proper question to raise; and if this can be answered in the negative, the doctrine need not be rejected on account of its being incomprehensible. Now, if it were maintained that God is Three in the same respect as He is One, that would clearly be a contradiction, which no rational mind could believe. But no Christian holds such an absurdity as that; what we maintain is, that while in one respect God is most truly and perfectly One, there is another aspect in which He is Three. In this general idea there is no difficulty; any one can apprehend some distinctions in the deity, as, for instance, many attributes, or many relations, or many manifestations of one God; and, on the other hand, as we are taught that Christ and His people form one body, in which are many members, and of which He the Head is divine, while the other members are human, so we might conceive of the Son and the Spirit of God as making up with the Father a unity of that kind. But neither of these notions is consistent with the representations of Scripture. It is comparatively easy to form a conception of how God may be Three in One in either of these ways. The former has been adopted by those who have been most zealous to maintain the unity of God, and it is generally known as the Sabellian theory, from its ablest advocate in the ancient Church, Sabellius, who was a presbyter in Ptolemais in the latter half of the third century.

This theory supposes that God, being originally and essentially a Monad or unity, expands Himself into a triad in the creation and government of the world, and especially in the salvation of the lost. He appears as the Father in the works of creation and providence, as the Son in the redemption by Jesus Christ, and as the Holy Spirit in the renewing and sanctifying of men's souls and the formation of the Christian Church. But these are merely different aspects and relations of God; they are persons only in that ancient classical sense of the term in which it might be said,

as it was by Cicero, that he, a single man, sustained three persons, that of the judge, of himself, and of his adversary. There are many representations in Scripture that require us to believe a greater distinction than this view admits, as when the Father and the Son speak to each other, the Son and the Spirit are said to have been sent by the Father, the Father is said to have loved the Son before the world was. The distinction is not merely of different manifestations or modes of working, but of modes of being; and the term person is used to denote a distinction that is greater than that of mere attributes or relations, but less than that of different gods, a relation which we cannot positively describe or conceive farther than this, that it admits the use of personal pronouns by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of and to each other, while yet they are one, not only in counsel and will and in origin, but in nature or essence.

Can it be said with any truth or modesty that we have such an understanding of the Divine Being as to see clearly that there can be no such distinction, or that any distinction greater than that of different manifestations, or permitting the use of personal pronouns, necessarily implies more Gods than one? Surely not; yet as long as that cannot be done, we must admit that for aught we know there may be such a distinction; and as the teaching of Scripture about Christ and the Holy Spirit points to such a distinction, it is no sufficient objection to say that we cannot explain or conceive positively what the distinction is.

The majority of Christians have thought that the incomprehensibility of this doctrine is no sufficient objection to its truth, and that every theory that offers a more conceivable notion contradicts some of the statements of Scripture or facts of Christianity. They have generally adopted, as a way of expressing what Scripture teaches, the statement that "there are three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory." For the term Person is sometimes used subsistence or hypostasis, and by it is understood a distinction such as already explained.

For substance the term essence, or being, or nature is sometimes employed, and by it is understood deity, or the sum of those perfections in virtue of which God is what He is.[1]

CHAPTER V.

RELATION OF THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE TO THOSE OF OTHER SYSTEMS.

THE Trinity in the Godhead is fully and clearly revealed in the New Testament; for it is the facts of Christianity, and especially those of the Person and character of Jesus Himself, that lead us, and indeed shut us up, to the conclusion that the Son and the Spirit of God are truly God, and, in unity with the Father, are the one living and true God. The unveiling of this mystery of the Divine Being also shows us how God is holy love in a deeper and more wonderful sense than we could otherwise know. But since the character of God as holy love is foreshadowed, though not fully revealed, in the Old Testament, so also is the mystery of the Trinity.

One indication of this may be found in the fact that the writers of the New Testament, from whose teaching the doctrines of the deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit have been derived, were Jews, brought up in the Old Testament religion, and that their writings are saturated with allusions to and quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures. The Apocalypse, for instance, which contains such distinct ascriptions of divine honour to Christ, and such marked recognition of the Spirit, is a thoroughly Jewish book. The same thing is true of Paul's Epistles and of that to the Hebrews, though

[1] On this doctrine in general, see Owen's *Vindication of the Trinity*, Howe's *Inquiry concerning the Possibility of a Trinity in the Godhead*, and Crawford's Baird Lectures, *The Mysteries of Christianity*, Lect. vi.

in the latter it is the Alexandrian rather than the Palestinian form of Judaism that we trace. The first Gospel, which is specially adapted to the Jews, contains the Trinitarian formula of baptism; in the first chapter of Luke, which has so decidedly an Old Testament cast, the deity of the Saviour is plainly implied; and even the doctrine of the Logos in the fourth Gospel is drawn much more from Jewish than from Gentile thought. It was indeed the historical manifestation of the Person of Jesus that gave His disciples a faith in God as Three in One, to which the Old Testament alone had not previously led its students; but when they turned to its pages after they saw in Jesus the Christ the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, they found in the Old Testament nothing to contradict, and much to confirm, what they had learned in their personal intercourse with Him.

What they found of this nature includes such things as these :—

(1.) A number of passages in which divine titles and attributes are given to the Messiah who was to come. Such are Ps. cx. 1, to which Jesus appealed in His last controversy with the Pharisees (Matt. xxii. 41–45), Isa. vii. 14, quoted by Matthew (i. 23), with which must be connected Isa. ix. 6; Ps. ii. 7, 2 Sam. vii. 14, Ps. xlv. 6, 7, quoted in Heb. i.; Micah v. 2, quoted in Matt. ii. 6; Zech. xii. 10, quoted by John (xix. 37); Zech. xiii. 7, quoted by Jesus (Matt. xxvi. 31); Mal. iii. 1 and iv. 5.

The expressions in these places would indeed seem enigmatic before the coming of Jesus, and could hardly have enabled men to believe beforehand such a wondrous thing as God manifest in the flesh; but when the truly divine character and life of the Saviour were actually seen and known, they would derive light from thence, and show that in honouring Jesus as God, men were but following hints already given in prophecy.

(2.) The Old Testament representations of the Angel of Jehovah, who speaks and is worshipped as Himself Jehovah,

would confirm this. It might no doubt be possible to understand these of a created angel, as indeed many who believe Christ's deity have done; but a much more natural and literal interpretation is obtained by applying them to the only-begotten Son, who, though Himself God, is yet sent by the Father into the world.

(3.) Of the same kind are the descriptions of the Wisdom of God in Proverbs, and of the Spirit of God throughout the Old Testament. These may be, in their original meaning, no more than personifications; but they afforded those forms of speech in which the disciples of Jesus were able to express, in some approximate way, the ineffable distinctions in the Divine Being revealed by Jesus Christ.

The peculiar use of plural nouns and pronouns in reference to God may have contributed to the same conclusion, though much stress cannot be laid on this.

These facts, however, suffice to bear out the view of most Christians, that the Jewish religion contained the germ, though not the full development, of the Christian doctrine of God as Three in One. Hence Christians have always been able to use the Scriptures of the Old Testament along with those of the New as a rule of faith and material of devotion and instruction; and indeed many parts of the New Testament cannot be fully understood without the Old. Had not the Law and the Prophets of Israel taught so emphatically the unity of God, the assertion of the deity of Christ might have been understood in a polytheistic way by those brought up in heathen notions; but Jews, on whom the belief of the divine unity had been so impressed, by a long course of providential training, as to be as it were a part of their very nature, could receive the fuller revelation of God in Christ without danger of being led to pagan conceptions of a second God.

If a Trinity in the Christian sense is possible at all, such a revelation as that made to Israel in the Law and the Prophets, and afterwards by Jesus Christ, would seem to be the most

suitable way of making it known; and indeed it is not easy to see how otherwise it could naturally and convincingly be conveyed to the minds of men.

On the other hand, modern Judaism, the religion of those Jews who rejected the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah and the Son of God, became a hard and fast system of exclusive monotheism, looking for a Messiah still to come as a merely human and national deliverer, to establish and enforce the Law as the unalterable expression of the divine will. This led to a conception of God inferior in moral character to that of Christianity. Without the recognition of some such distinction in the Godhead as the Christian doctrines of the deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit imply, the idea of self-humbling and self-sacrifice in God is impossible, the one single Supreme Being might be conceived as giving innumerable gifts, but not as giving Himself; He is simply above all, but not in all. Or at least if He is conceived as in all, immanent in the universe, this can only be at the expense of His transcendence; and so Judaism, when it rises above mere legalism, runs into a pantheistic conception of God, as in the philosophy of Spinoza. It would seem that a purely Unitarian view of the Deity must lead either to a deistic theory, that regards God merely as the Maker of all things, and the world as a machine entirely external to Him, or to a Pantheism, that identifies God with the universe. The synagogue, however, did not recognise Spinoza's Pantheism as a sound or legitimate doctrine, and thus the conception of God most consistent with modern Judaism is that of Deism. The theology of the Jews is in fact just Deism along with the belief of a revelation from God through Moses and the prophets. Spinoza, holding a philosophy of pure monism, also by a criticism of Scripture undermined its authority as a revelation.

Mohammed also, in his zeal against polytheism and idolatry, which he found rampant not only in the old heathenism of the Arabs, but in the worship of saints and images which had

crept into the Christian Church, asserted such an absolute unity of God as is inconsistent with the doctrine of the Trinity. God, he vehemently asserts, is but one, He neither begets nor is begotten; Jesus was indeed a prophet, but only a man; He promised another Paraclete or teacher to His disciples, but in this He referred to Mohammed, who was to come with the final and most perfect revelation of God's will in the Koran. Thus God's only relation to man is that of making known His will from without, and there is not realized what Jesus said of the Comforter whom He promised, "He shall be in you." So, when Mohammedans yearn for a closer and more inward fellowship with God, they can only obtain it by the mystic Pantheism of the Persian Sufis.

Similarly the Unitarian form of Christianity has tended either to Deism, as the Socinianism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did, or to Pantheism, into which more recent Unitarianism has been led. Unitarian Christianity is indeed essentially different from Judaism and Islam in this, that it recognises the supreme authority of Jesus as the revealer of God and Lord of men; whereas the modern Jews reject Him entirely, and Moslems subordinate Him to Mohammed. This makes possible for Unitarians, who regard Jesus as a mere man, to give Him entire obedience and supreme affection that may differ little from actual worship, and therefore entitles them to be regarded as Christians, especially if they believe that Jesus is really living now, and capable of blessing His servants; though we cannot but consider their theology to be a very defective exhibition of the Christianity of the New Testament, and on many vital points false and misleading.

Doctrinally, all the various forms of absolute Unitarianism, Jewish, Moslem, and Socinian, are simply antagonistic to the Trinitarian belief of most Christians.

These various forms of absolute and extreme Unitarianism are none of them primitive and original religions; they have all appeared as modifications of earlier systems, though sometimes

as reformations, professing to remove corruptions from received religions, and restore them to their pristine truth and purity. There would indeed be an exception to this if modern Judaism, with its denial of the deity of Christ, were the true interpretation of the Old Testament; for the religion of the Law and the Prophets cannot be explained as the mere natural development of any ethnic religion. But there is good reason to think that the Old Testament faith, though a strict monotheism, was not of the extreme kind that the Jews who rejected the claims of Jesus have adopted, but really contained adumbrations and anticipations of the Christian revelation of God as Three in One. The primitive monotheism or henotheism that may be traced, as we have before seen, in many early religions, was certainly not of that rigid Unitarian kind; in fact, its great defect was that it had not strength enough to prevent the division of the divine in nature among many separate beings, or the worship of subordinate powers alone with the one Deity recognised as supreme. Hence, besides the Unitarian theologies that stand to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in the relation of simple contradiction, there are some religions and philosophies that present analogies to it more or less remote.

In several of the polytheistic religions the deities worshipped are grouped together in triads. Such was the case in Egypt, where different triads were adored in each separate city or district: Osiris, Isis, and Horus in some places, and other groups in others. So also it was in the Babylonian and Assyrian religions, in which different groups of three were worshipped. In the mythology of Greece, Zeus, Poseidon, and Pluto divide the empire of the world; in the Capitol at Rome, Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva had three chapels in one temple. The Vedic period of Indian religion also had its triads, that of Dyaus, Aditi, and Varuna, and that of Indra, Agni, and Surya.

These various imaginations of the Deity as threefold are, however, not really analogous to the Christian doctrine; for they all abandon the unity of God, being merely the worship of three

Gods associated together only as presiding over different parts of the universe, or different processes in its history. The instinctive sense of unity in the Divine Being, that underlay even the grossest polytheism, led to the many gods of popular worship being grouped together under one head, a King or Father of gods and men. The Olympian system of the Homeric poems was an attempt of this kind; and the fact that in many religions quite independently the number three has been fallen upon for the deities chiefly worshipped, may be due simply to that being the smallest number to which they could naturally be reduced without coming to unity; two would suggest opposition and discord; but three might be conceived as harmonious, and yet varied enough to explain the apparently varying phenomena of nature. But in none of these mythologies is there a real monotheism; the triads are not three in one, but only three associated together.

In the Brahmanic religion of the Hindus, however, the triads of the Vedas would seem to have suggested a notion of triplicity that is developed in a remarkable way in the philosophic systems of India. The *Sankhya* (or synthetic) philosophy derives all things except *purusha* (or soul) from an original and eternal essence called *prakriti* (the producer), from which they all directly or indirectly emanate; and in this essence there are three *gunas* or elementary substances: *sattva*, goodness; *rajas*, passion or activity; and *tamas*, darkness or stolidity. This remarkable speculation, however, is essentially atheistic in its tendency, since the evolution of the universe from *prakriti* is entirely unconscious and unintelligent; the soul becomes conscious of the external world because it is united to *prakriti;* but it is merely an inactive spectator of its working, and its aim is by knowledge to be freed from *prakriti* entirely. The Sankhya philosophy is that which forms the basis of Buddhism, and its so-called Trinity is merely an attempt to explain how an unintelligent nature can be conceived to be the origin of all things. So far is it from the Christian doctrine, that it is not even theistic. In the Vedantic system, again, the principle of which is pure

monism (*advaita*), the only real being is one universal essence, of which all things are modes. This is called *Brahma*, and is described as containing in itself a trinity of Existence, Knowledge, and Joy, though it is without consciousness or activity. This is the purest Pantheism, and therefore entirely different from the Christian Trinity.[1] In later Hinduism this metaphysical trinity was expressed in the form of the well-known *Trimurti*, or triad of divine forms, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva, which is typified by the three letters of the mystic syllable *Aum*. But practically in popular religion this came to be just the worship of three gods.

The only use that can be made of these theories in connection with the Christian doctrine is to show how naturally and inevitably men's minds are led, when they try to account for all things by a single first cause, whether that be nature or God, to postulate some distinction in the original and eternal Being. This would seem to be a necessity of thought, though it may be doubted whether the making the distinction threefold is due to any such necessity, and not rather to an ancient sacredness in the number three.

The speculations of the Platonic and Neo-Platonic philosophy stand in a closer relation to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity; indeed, it has not been universally admitted that they are really independent of each other; for it has been supposed, on the one hand, that Plato may have owed something to a knowledge of the Hebrew wisdom; and, on the other hand, it has been maintained by many that the Christian Fathers, and even the writers of the New Testament, borrowed their doctrine of the Word and Spirit of God from the Platonic philosophy. Neither of these views, however, can be proved, and in all probability the Platonic philosophy and the Christian doctrine are in their origin mutually independent, though in their later history they have been variously mingled.

By Plato himself it is in his physical speculations that a three-

[1] I have taken the account of these systems mainly from Sir Monier Williams' *Hinduism*, where they are succinctly and clearly described.

fold principle of the universe is introduced. Highest of all is the Good, or absolute Being, as the source of all being; next comes the Idea or Intelligence; and thirdly, there is the Soul of the World, or principle of life and motion by which the actual universe is moulded according to the ideal archetype. The exact meaning of this theory is doubtful; and the later speculations of the Neo-Platonists only made it more intricate. Philo Judæus endeavoured to interpret the Old Testament in accordance with Plato's philosophy, taking the Angel of Jehovah, the Wisdom, and the Word of God to denote the second of Plato's principles, the Idea or Archetype of the universe, that is the revealer of God to men. But he did not go beyond a twofold distinction, probably because the Platonic soul of the world was too distinctly a created and inferior god to be identified with the Spirit of God in the Old Testament. If the Apostle John had Philo's doctrine in view when he wrote the prologue of his Gospel, he has so written as to imply that the Word is not a mere abstraction, but a living or personal Being, and that He is the same as Jesus the Messiah, points in which he differs entirely from Philo.

It is not to be wondered that Christian theologians should have sought to illustrate and explain the mysterious doctrine of the Trinity by means of the philosophy of Plato, which was so attractive to the thoughtful and devout, and so like in some respects to Christianity. Some of its principles have been really useful in theology. But those who attempted to show that the Platonic Trinity was the same as the Christian undoubtedly went too far, and somewhat perverted the genuine meaning of either or both. All that can be fairly gathered from the comparison is, that it shows that even unaided reason exercising itself on the problem of the origin of all things is led not only to recognise a God, but to postulate some distinctions in the First Cause of all things that are not unlike those that Christianity reveals in God. Only the difference is to be observed, that the Trinitarian theories of the philosophers, both of India and of Greece, sprang from an intellec-

tual need, that of finding a solution of the problem of the relation of the material world to the Mind from which it originated; whereas the Christian doctrine is founded on the historical facts of the life, and works, and claims of Jesus, and has as its chief value, that it shows how God is holy love. It is not an intellectual, but a moral and religious want that it primarily meets. It may indeed well be the case, that it is the same reality in the Divine Being that satisfies the quest both of philosophy and of religion; and if so, this would afford a wonderful confirmation of the doctrine of the Trinity. But the doctrine does not need such historical confirmation; it is proved by the revelation of God in Christ, even though all the Platonic and Brahmanic analogies should be proved to be vain conceits. At most, indeed, they are merely speculations as to some of the metaphysical problems of Theism, while the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is bound up with the specially moral conception of God in the religion of Jesus.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TRINITY IN RELATION TO GOD AS SPIRIT AND AS HOLY LOVE.

THERE is a confirmation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity to be drawn from the fact that both the previous conceptions involved in the kingdom of God, that of the Infinite Spirit and that of Holy Love, point towards this third one as necessary for their complete maintenance. Each of them, when thoroughly thought out, seems to presuppose some distinctions in God, such as those between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The essential point in the first is that God is personal in a

sense analogous to that in which we are personal, or that since man is made in the image of God, we may ascribe to God Intelligence, Emotion, and Will, truly akin to ours, though infinite, and free from all imperfection. Now all these mental and spiritual acts in us necessarily imply a distinction, and are quite inconceivable in an absolutely simple and undistinguished unity. All knowledge must be knowledge of something, all feeling and all desire feeling and desire of something. It is true the object need not always be really different from the subject; there may be knowledge of one's self, feeling of one's self, and if not desire and will, at least enjoyment of one's self. But even in these cases, when the subject and object are really the same, there is a relative distinction, and we must discriminate the act of knowing or feeling from the mind, which is, in the case supposed, both the subject and the object. If we truly ascribe knowledge and will to God, even when we conceive Him as eternally existing without any other being, and having only Himself as the object of His knowledge, must we not conceive some distinction of the subject knowing and the act of knowledge? We cannot conceive mind as absolutely simple, even though it should never have an object but itself; we must distinguish its being and its states or acts, and regard it as having certain faculties or powers. These have been generally reduced to three great kinds, the phenomena of knowing, feeling, and willing. The last is that which most essentially constitutes the being of the soul as a personal agent, for what a man wills that he is; knowing is the faculty or capacity that presents an image or representation of the soul's essential being; while feeling is that which unites both in the warmth of affection or love. These three kinds of power coexist in our own souls, they are inseparable from each other, and found together in every act of the soul; but they may and must be distinguished, and without the distinction of them we can conceive of no intellectual and moral life. Now in these essential faculties of the soul, it has been

thought by many there is a sort of image of the Trinity in the Divine Being. This thought has been expressed in various ways, and the faculties have been differently named, according to the psychological views of different times; but the general idea has been that there is in the human soul a faculty of knowing, which is a reflection or image of the soul itself, and a capacity of feeling, which is the ground of true happiness and love; and that these in some faint way adumbrate the relation of the Son to the Father as His Wisdom, Word, and Image, and of the Spirit as the peculiar communicator of the love of God.

To this analogy an obvious objection has often been made, that these faculties in our souls are not different persons, and are never, except in poetic language, expressed by personal pronouns, so that it would not prove so great a distinction as Scripture requires us to recognise between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But those who have used the analogy meet this by reminding us that we ought not to conceive of the Divine Being as having faculties such as we possess. The distinction of substance and accident, being and power, can find no place in an infinite and all-perfect Being. God's attributes are not really distinct from His essence; for there is nothing in God that is not God. Hence we cannot ascribe to God such a distinction of faculties as we have in ourselves. But since some distinction of knowing, feeling, and willing seems necessarily implied in spiritual life, we are led to ascribe to God such a distinction, that what are faculties in a finite and created mind, are in the Infinite and Eternal Being themselves God, though in some ineffable way distinguished each from the others.[1]

[1] This line of argument may be studied at length in the writings of the great theologians who have used it, among whom may be named Augustine, *de Trinitate;* Richard Baxter, "Reasons of the Christian Religion," *Works*, vol. xx. p. 484; Charles Leslie, *Dialogues on the Socinian Controversy;* Ebrard, *Christliche Dogmatik*, § 141–154.

To many minds, indeed, this line of argument has not appeared conclusive or safe, and a presumption against it has been drawn from the various forms in which the analogy has been put by those who have used it. But if we consider it as a tentative effort of the human mind to form some conception of what must be acknowledged to be a great mystery, though an article of Christian faith, and as fitted rather to show negatively that the idea of a Trinity is not inconsistent with the natural notion of God, than to deduce it positively from that; we may be inclined to deem it not destitute of value. Anyhow, it has exercised some of the greatest and most devout minds, and when pursued reverently and cautiously, with due remembrance of the mystery of the subject, it may be neither dangerous nor useless, but may serve to show that the Christian revelation of God as Three in One is closely connected with the Theistic doctrine that God is a living personal Spirit, in whose image man is made.

With the special Christian discovery of God as holy love the Trinitarian doctrine is connected by another line of thought, which has often been combined with the former. It starts from the principle that God, as the perfect Being, must be conceived as actually possessing every possible excellence, and that not merely potentially, but in actual exercise. The First Cause, Aristotle argued, is one whose essence is actuality (ἧς ἡ οὐσία ἐνέργεια, *Met.* xi. 6), or, as the schoolmen said, *Deus est actus purus*. We cannot ascribe to the eternally perfect Being the possibility of becoming greater or more perfect than He actually is. Hence there seems to be a necessity of assuming an infinite and eternal exercise of the divine power and perfections; and as no created and finite being can be an adequate object of such activity, we seem led to the conception of some distinction in the Godhead, such that God may be both the subject and the object of an eternal exercise of His powers of thought, will, and love. The Platonizing Fathers in the ancient Church dwelt especially on the intellectual aspect of this argument, and urged that, as the

Divine Being is an eternal Intelligence, He ever had the Logos in Himself, and contemplating Himself, generates a Thought which is called the Word.[1] In this form the argument is very abstract, and in so far as it is of value, does not differ much from that previously stated from the analogy of the human soul to the divine. But some modern theologians, who have thought that argument not completely satisfactory, have found a consideration that appeals more to our feelings, and less exclusively to intellect, in the contemplation of the divine love and the divine blessedness. God is love, essentially and eternally—that is, He is not only capable of loving, but actually loving. From everlasting He loves. But what can be an object of such love? Not the universe, which had a beginning; not Himself, for what is called self-love is not really love at all: it would seem there could not be any object of the eternal love of God, unless there were one to whom the eternal Father could say "thou," and who might in turn say to Him, as Jesus said on earth, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The necessity of conceiving the Divine Being as always and essentially active has led many to think that creation must have been eternal; and Pantheistic philosophers have represented God as attaining self-consciousness only in the consciousness of man. These theories show that the difficulty is not a fanciful one, and that if we are to conceive of God as always and essentially living and loving, we have only the alternative between the Pantheistic theory of an eternal world and the Christian doctrine of an eternal Son and Spirit of God.

A similar line of reasoning has been drawn from the blessedness of God, which is not only often mentioned in Scripture, but especially connected with the gospel and the triumph of the kingdom of God. He who bestows the highest blessedness on men, and whose reign is their chief end, must be Himself essentially and eternally blessed. Now we cannot conceive of true, still less perfect blessedness, without intelligent and loving

[1] An account of these speculations is given in Bp. Horsley's *Tracts in Controversy with Dr. Priestley.*

intercourse. The highest happiness that we know is in the fellowship and mutual communication of loving hearts and minds, such as we cannot conceive in one solitary person, who may say I, but has none to whom he can say Thou. It would seem, therefore, that the ever-blessed God must be capable of such loving fellowship; and if in His Being there is a Wisdom that before His works of old, or ever the earth was, was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him (Prov. viii. 22–31), and a Holy Spirit that searcheth all things, even the deep things of God, we can conceive, better than we could otherwise do, how the eternal and self-existent One "hath all life, glory, blessedness in and of Himself, and is alone and unto Himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creature which He hath made, not deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting His own glory in, by, unto, and upon them; He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things" (Westm. Conf. ii. § 2).[1]

It must always be remembered that these speculations, however interesting, are not the real and proper foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity. That doctrine rests on the testimony of Christ and His apostles; if their teaching, when fairly interpreted, does not bear it out, the philosophical considerations in its favour would not be a sufficient ground for religious faith; and, on the other hand, though these philosophical arguments should be proved inconclusive, the scriptural evidence would still remain intact. That evidence, moreover, goes back to solid historical ground in the life of Christ and of true Christians. There has lived on earth one perfectly sinless and holy man; He claimed divine attributes and prerogatives; the best and holiest of men

[1] See for modern statements of the argument from love, Dr. R. S. Candlish's *Fatherhood of God*, Lect. ii., also his *Exposition of the First Epistle of John*, ch. iv. 8, and his Introduction to Dr. Kidd's *Dissertation on the Eternal Sonship of Christ*. The argument from blessedness is strikingly put in Dr. Hugh Martin's work, *On the Atonement* (p. 254, and Appendix). In Germany similar reasonings are employed by Delitzsch (*Apologetik*, Erster Theil, § 25–28) and Dorner, *System der christlichen Glaubenslehre*, § 31, 32.

since have worshipped Him as God, and lived in fellowship with Him as an ever-present Saviour; He promised to send another divine Agent to dwell in His disciples' hearts, and they have recognised the Holy Spirit as fulfilling this promise. The doctrine of the Trinity is thus, historically and as a matter of fact, connected with the fullest revelation that has ever been made of God as holy love, and the only influence that has proved permanently and really effectual in raising men from the bondage of sin and of the world, and bringing them, even in this life, to holiness, peace, and joy in the kingdom of God.[1]

[1] See Wace, *Christianity and Morality*, Boyle Lectures for 1875, Lect. vii. "The Doctrine of the Trinity a Moral Revelation."

THE END.

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