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REVELATION AND MODERN THEOLOGY  
CONTRASTED.

“ One might go on to add that there is a great resemblance between the light of nature and revelation in several other respects. Practical Christianity, or that faith and behaviour which render a man a Christian, is a plain and obvious thing, like the common rules of conduct which respect our ordinary temporal affairs. The more distinct and particular knowledge of these things, the study of what the Apostle calls ‘going on unto perfection,’ and of the prophetic parts of revelation, like many parts of natural, and even civil knowledge, may require very exact thought and careful consideration. The hindrances too of natural and supernatural light and knowledge have been of the same kind. And as it is owned that the whole scheme of Scripture is not yet understood, so if it ever comes to be understood before the restitution of all things, and without miraculous interposition, it must be in the same way as natural knowledge is come at, by the continuance and progress of learning and liberty; and by particular persons attending to, comparing, and pursuing intimations scattered up and down in it which are overlooked and disregarded by the generality of the world.”—*Butler’s Analogy*, part II, chap. iii.

# REVELATION & MODERN THEOLOGY

CONTRASTED ;

OR,

THE SIMPLICITY OF THE APOSTOLIC GOSPEL

DEMONSTRATED.

BY

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## PREFACE.

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THE object of the present work is to develop the position which was assumed as the foundation of my Bampton Lectures, viz., that Christianity, as distinct from the theological systems of the different communities into which Christendom is divided, consists of a few simple principles which constitute its essence as a revelation; and to inquire what is really essential to it, and what are merely human additions. The importance of this distinction, in the interests of Christianity itself, can hardly be over-estimated in the present aspects of thought. The vast amount of subject-matter, involving a number of difficult philosophical, scientific, and historical problems, which has been identified with it by systematic and popular theology, has rendered the proof of its Divine origin one of so complicated a character as to require a special training to enable the inquirer to appreciate its cogency. But the urgent need of the present times is a proof which shall be level to the capacities of the masses of mankind, and capable of verification by them. In order to effect this it is necessary that Christianity should be reduced to that simple form in which it was proclaimed by our Lord Himself and His Apostles.

This simplification is needed, not only in the interests of our evidential position, but to meet the requirements of the ordinary Christian. Men, whose lot it is to be engaged in the active duties of life, require a simple religion, not a complicated theology, to satisfy their religious needs. It is hardly too much to affirm, that the vast amount of abstract and complicated matter which in the popular conception is identified with Christianity as a Divine revelation, has done more to shake the faith of thoughtful men than all the attacks of unbelievers. They feel that no small number of these positions rest on evidences of a very uncertain character; and they are therefore in danger of drawing the conclusion that this uncertainty extends to the foundations of Christianity itself.

Further: this simplification is urgently demanded in the interests of the missionary. Probably not less than seven hundred millions of the human race have yet to be brought into the fold of Jesus Christ. It is useless to invite these to embrace the complicated Gospel of Sectarian Christianity, for the simple reason that it is impossible to make it comprehensible to their uncultivated minds. If therefore they are to be converted to the Christian faith, the missionary must set before them a Gospel equal in simplicity to that which our Lord announced to His fellow-citizens at Nazareth that it was the purpose of His mission to proclaim. Christianity is intended to be the religion not merely of the cultivated few, but of the masses of mankind, and to be to them a veritable Gospel of good news. Such a religion must be one of extreme simplicity. But the complicated questions which enter so largely into systematic and popular theology, go far to convert Christianity from a religion into a philosophy.

It is under a deep sense of the necessity of effecting this separation, so urgently demanded by the requirements of the present times, that this work has been composed. The belief in the old systems of dogmatic theology has become widely shaken ; earnest and thoughtful men are demanding an answer to the question, What is that Christianity which the New Testament invites us to accept as a revelation from God ? The answers of the different sections into which the Christian Church is divided, are of the most varied, nay, too often contradictory character. The same is true both of systematic and popular theology. The question therefore becomes one of supreme importance, Is there not something underlying all these sectarian differences, which constitutes the essence of Christianity as a revelation ; and to which everything in sectarian Christianity is subordinate ? The present work is an attempt to answer this question.

LONDON, *March*, 1883.





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## ERRATA.

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Page 49, line 22, *read* of the Old Testament.  
,, 82, ,, 19, *for* idea *read* ideal.  
,, 102, ,, 17, ,, laid ,, let.  
,, 136, ,, 25, ,, attitudes ,, attributes.



## INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

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### WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

ST. LUKE places the narrative of our Lord's visit to Nazareth as the introduction to his account of His public ministry. His reason for doing so is, that in the discourse which our Lord delivered in the synagogue on that occasion, He definitely affirmed what was the end and purpose of His mission. The narrative is as follows:—

“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he entered, as his custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah, and he opened the book and found the place where it was written: the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them: This day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears” (Luke iv. 16-21).

Such was the Gospel which our Lord was anointed with the Divine Spirit to proclaim—a veritable message of good news to man; it is therefore a question, the importance of which cannot be exaggerated, Does our modern Gospel, viz., the version of it according to systematic, or according to

popular theology, resemble it in these its great fundamental principles ?

Let us suppose that an earnest inquirer into the claims of Christianity to be accepted as a Divine revelation, were to put to the different communities into which Christendom is divided, the question, What is the Christianity which you respectively ask me to embrace ? Full well might he be confounded by the divergent answers which he would receive. Its most numerous section, the Church of Rome, would propound a vast body of abstract dogmas of a highly complicated character, and would demand its acceptance under pain of exclusion from the Christian Church. Its next numerous section, the Greek Church, while propounding a system of theology little less complicated than that of Rome, would pronounce not a few of the dogmas insisted on by that Church to be unauthorized additions to the Christian faith. Four or five lesser sections of the Oriental Church would furnish him with as many different answers to his question, differing from these two Churches and from each other, on several profound questions of abstract thought. The number of divergent replies made by the various Protestant communities, it would be difficult to count. On one point only would there be anything approaching to unanimity, viz., that Christianity was identical with their own particular system, and not a few would pronounce those who failed to accept it, to be outcasts from the Christian fold.

Nor would his perplexity be diminished, if he consulted the writings of eminent theologians ; in these also he would find a still greater diversity of opinion as to what constituted Christianity than in the confessions of the different Churches ; and he would be not a little astonished to discover, not only that Christianity was an immensely complicated system of truth, but that that which one pronounced to be a verity essential to the Christian faith, another with equal confidence would pronounce to be a dangerous corruption of it.

But if, in his zeal for truth, he were to proceed to

investigate the claims of these conflicting systems, in what position would he find himself? He would be compelled to enter on the discussion of a vast array of metaphysical, scientific, philosophical, historical, and critical problems, not a few of which involve some of the profoundest questions of human thought, and concerning which, a whole lifetime devoted to their study would be hardly sufficient to enable him to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion.

But Christianity claims the allegiance of the whole family of man. Yet at the present moment nearly three quarters of the human race stand outside its pale; and even within its nominal territories, numbers refuse to accept it as a Divine revelation. Yet this vast unbelieving world must be persuaded to enter the fold of Jesus Christ; for the truth of Christianity is staked on its suitableness to be the universal religion of humanity. How then is it possible to persuade them?

One thing is obvious. All attempts to effect their conversion will be hopeless, until we can set before them clearly what constitutes that Christianity which we ask them to embrace. Although this seems a truism, it is simply astonishing how generally this necessity is overlooked.

Further, in order to effect this, it is absolutely necessary that Christianity should be presented to them in its simple elements, free from those complications of abstract thought which constitute the divergent systems above alluded to. It is obvious that such subtleties and refinements would be unintelligible to the masses of the heathen world. Consequently, if these are to be reached, the Gospel which they are invited to accept must approximate to the simplicity of that Gospel which our Lord announced to His fellow citizens at Nazareth that it was the purpose of His mission to proclaim, and must therefore be a veritable Gospel of good news to the poor, the miserable, the degraded, and even to the ignorant of mankind; one level to their apprehensions, and suited to their wants.

Nor is such a simplification only required in the interest

of those six hundred millions of mankind whom Christianity has as yet failed to reach, but it is no less urgently demanded in the interest of the members of the Christian Church. It is useless to close our eyes to the fact that the faith of multitudes in no inconsiderable number of those dogmas which have been in former times accepted as Christian verities, has been rudely shaken. Not only so, but various forms of positive unbelief have become widespread. Is it possible for the earnest believer in Christianity to regard this state of things with indifference? Are the foundations on which Christianity rests really weak? If they are not, what then are the causes of all these doubts and difficulties? They are many; but one of the chief is, that under the influence of the complicated creeds and confessions of faith which have been propounded by the various Churches and sects into which Christendom is divided, the popular mind has become thoroughly penetrated with the idea, that a multitude of dogmas, extending over a wide range of subject-matter, philosophical, scientific, historical, and critical, form essential portions of the Christian faith, and that if any widely accepted dogma connected with such subjects can be successfully controverted, Christianity cannot be a Divine revelation. Yet we are accustomed to hear the truth of such dogmas almost daily impugned by men of the highest eminence in various departments of thought; and it is a matter of notoriety that not a few which were formerly propounded by theologians with the utmost confidence as essential portions of Christianity, have had to be abandoned in consequence of the light which has been thrown on them by modern investigation. From this the inference has been drawn, that no inconsiderable portion of popular theology rests on a foundation which is equally unsound with those positions which theologians have been compelled to abandon. Further, the old method of solving doubts, by appealing to venerable authorities, has justly lost its efficacy; for it is only too clear that authorities equally eminent can be quoted in support of the most opposite

opinions. When, therefore, men whose duty it is to be engaged in the daily avocations of life, are told that the acceptance of the mass of dogmas above referred to is essential to the acceptance of Christianity as a Divine revelation, they feel that it is impossible to attain an individual conviction respecting such a mass of complicated subjects, and therefore distress of mind, doubt, if not actual unbelief, is the inevitable result.

To enable us to estimate the character and extent of the difficulties which are harassing the minds of thoughtful men, it will be necessary to review the chief causes which have produced this unsettlement of belief in popular Christianity.

The first of these in point of importance is the well-known fact, that theologians have laid down certain dogmas as verities, with the truth of which Christianity must stand or fall; and have afterwards had to beat a retreat before the gradually advancing tide of scientific knowledge. Of this the following are striking examples. Only a few centuries have elapsed since an immense consensus of theologians, under the influence of a particular theory of inspiration, affirmed that a belief in the Copernican system of the Universe was equivalent to a denial of the testimony of God, as recorded in the Bible. In making this affirmation, it is true, that they had the letter of Scripture in their favour. But scientific men have since demonstrated that the earth is the moving body, and that its motions are the cause of the phenomena on which the belief in the apparent motion of the sun is founded. The consequence has been, that theologians, after having denounced the theory in question as a heresy, have ended by confessing that its truth is compatible with the statements of Scripture; and that the denunciation of it was the result of an erroneous method of interpretation. But after renouncing this method of interpretation as inapplicable to the case in question, they still obstinately clung to its fundamental principles. Up to so late a period as the first thirty years of the present century, all the accepted systems of popular theology, and a vast

majority of those propounded by learned theologians, pronounced it to be an express contradiction to Scripture, to affirm that the world was not created in six natural days, or that it was brought into existence earlier than from six to seven thousand years from the present time. Many men now living can well remember the bitter denunciations with which geologists were assailed, as enemies of revealed religion, when they began to intimate that a vastly longer period of time had been occupied in God's creative work. Was not this expressly to contradict, not only the first chapter in Genesis, but the declaration in the fourth commandment, that "in six days God created the heaven, and the earth, the sea, and all that in them is"? But the science of geology has since been so firmly established in all its great principles, that theologians have been compelled to abandon their old positions, and to admit that such dogmas as had hitherto been accepted as unquestionable verities were founded on erroneous principles of interpretation.

In like manner it was affirmed to be an express contradiction of Scripture to question the universality of the deluge. Did not Moses expressly affirm that the high hills under the whole heaven were covered fifteen cubits and upwards, and that every living thing on the earth perished, except the men and animals which had taken refuge in the ark? It was found necessary to invent a number of the most stupendous miracles, respecting which the Bible says nothing, in order to render the belief in this universality consistent with obvious facts. But scientific investigation has since proved that this universality is in the highest degree improbable. The consequence is that the old position has been discovered to be not an essential portion of revelation.

So, also, it has happened with respect to the accepted belief in the antiquity of man. It was affirmed until within a very recent period, on the ground of the genealogies contained in the Old Testament, that man's first appearance on the globe cannot be dated earlier than six or seven thousand years from the present time, without denying the authority of the Bible; and not a few of the professed teachers of



religion still continue to tell their hearers, that Christianity is committed to the truth of this position. But so grave are the doubts which the study of the early history of civilization and, above all, of the science of language, have thrown on this dogma, that numerous eminent theologians admit, in their recent utterances, that there are no adequate data in Scripture for determining the date of the origin of the human race, or even for elaborating a system of chronology at an earlier date than the building of Solomon's Temple. The belief, therefore, that man made his appearance on the globe some thousands of years before the date assigned to it by the accepted systems of theology, is no longer affirmed to be inconsistent with the acceptance of Christianity as a Divine revelation, except by an inconsiderable body of theologians.

Other examples might be adduced, but these will suffice for my present purpose. The fact is therefore indisputable, that theologians have handled Scripture on such faulty principles, that they have laid down as truths indisputably Divine, a number of dogmas which have brought revelation into direct collision with some of the greatest discoveries of modern science, and that after having, on their first enunciation, denounced them as inconsistent with the belief that Scripture contains the record of a Divine revelation, they have been compelled to accept them as unquestionable verities.

Moreover, the general distrust arising from failures of this kind has been intensified by the pertinacity with which theologians have clung to various unsound positions, which they have only abandoned when further resistance had become impossible. The history of the conflict between science and revelation is full of such instances, and the consequences have been disastrous in the extreme. This process has been repeated again and again. Common sense ought to have suggested that, when a principle of interpretation, or a theory of inspiration, had led to a notorious error, as was palpably the case with respect to the great discoveries of

astronomy, the cause of this error should be carefully investigated, and the faulty principle which led to it abandoned for the future ; but, instead of this, they clung to the old principle of interpretation, and abandoned the particular dogma. The next advance of science was met by a similar resistance, and followed by a similar retreat ; and this by a third and a fourth, with similar results. We need not, therefore, wonder that large numbers of thoughtful men have arrived at the conclusion that, if the methods of investigation which have been employed by theologians have led them into such palpable errors in those cases where their results can be submitted to the test of verification, they are equally unreliable as guides to truth in other subjects, where this test is incapable of application. The result has been a widespread distrust in no small number of the dogmas of popular theology ; and as these have been identified with the essence of Christianity, there has arisen a corresponding distrust, if not positive unbelief, in its claims to be accepted as a Divine revelation. This distrust is no longer confined to men of philosophic culture, but is become widely diffused in almost every region of thought.

Another cause of this distrust is the general discredit into which the chief instrument of investigation employed by theologians has fallen, under the influence of modern scientific investigations of those processes by which truth is discoverable, and certainty attainable by man. Hitherto theologians have almost exclusively employed deductive reasonings in the investigation of religious truth, and neglected the inductive method. The latter, when had recourse to at all, has been almost exclusively used for the mere marshalling of texts, in entire disregard of the true principles of inductive inquiry. The belief was once almost universal, that there was scarcely a question, however profound, with which the logical intellect was not competent to grapple ; and that it was possible to excogitate vast systems of truth, by means of long processes of deductive reasoning, founded on a few *à priori* theories, or on texts of Scripture selected with

little regard to their meaning in the context in which they stood. On such a foundation no small portion of metaphysical theology has been erected.

But one of the results of modern investigation into the powers of the human mind, has been utterly to discredit this mode of inquiry. Science, it is true, once employed this method in the investigation of nature, in the same manner in which it has been so largely employed in theology; but while it confined itself to this, it was not only barren of all useful results, but led to the most erroneous conclusions. In one department of thought only has its use been attended with success: that of pure mathematics. The reason why it has succeeded here, while it has failed in every other department of thought, is, that this science is concerned only with two simple conceptions, viz., quantity and space; whereas those which enter into other subjects of inquiry are of a very complicated nature. Consequently, wherever this complication exists, long chains of deductive reasoning are liable to innumerable flaws, even in the hands of the most able reasoners. This danger is greater in theology than almost any other department of thought, because no other subject-matter is attended with equal complications.

But as the fact is now universally admitted, that all the great discoveries of modern science have been made by the use of the inductive method of investigation, aided by a careful but limited use of the deductive one; and that as long as the latter was exclusively used, error was the invariable result; the opinion has become widely prevalent that a method which has been attended with such results when applied to the various subjects of scientific inquiry, must be an equally unsafe guide, when applied to the study of revelation. Hence has arisen a general distrust in numerous dogmas of popular theology; and as these have been extensively identified with Christianity itself, a corresponding shaking of belief in it as a Divine revelation has been the result.

Another cause which has greatly contributed to bring about this result is the vast extent and the complexity of the questions, which most current systems of theology identify with Christianity; and the consequent despair which has been felt by ordinary men of arriving at any definite convictions respecting them. A few illustrations will enable the reader to estimate the danger which has arisen from this source, and to enforce the necessity of reverting to that simple aspect of Christianity which our Lord declared to the Nazarenes that it was the object of His mission to proclaim.

The first to which I ask attention is, the interminable metaphysical controversies which in different ages have agitated the Church, through the attempts of theologians to define in terms of human thought, the relations between the persons of the Godhead, and the mode in which the Divine and human are united in the person of our Lord. These subjects involve some of the profoundest questions of ontology and metaphysics; yet, accuracy of thought respecting them has been again and again declared to be essential to a right Christian faith. Council after council has been summoned to determine some of the most abstract questions which can engage the attention of the human mind, and the victorious party has embodied these dogmas in creeds, which must be accepted as Christian verities under penalty of anathema. Such questions, it is true, have happily lost much of their interest in the present day. Yet, under their influence, Christianity may be said in former ages to have been almost evaporated into a system of abstract metaphysics; and the impress of these discussions still remains deeply stamped on almost every creed and confession of faith in Christendom. Modern investigation, however, has established the important truth, that we have no faculties which enable us to penetrate into the abstract realities of being; and the firm conviction of this has shaken to its foundation the entire mass of metaphysical speculation, which was based on the contrary assumption;

and with it, the belief in those systems of theology which pronounce a body of dogmas of this description to be essential portions of the Christian revelation. It is obvious, therefore, that as long as these dogmas are proclaimed to be essential Christian verities, it imperils the belief in Christianity as a Divine revelation.

Another example of these abstract and complicated questions, the right belief in which has been identified with Christianity itself, is found in the great predestinarian controversy. The subject-matter involved in it is of prodigious extent, and in the highest degree abstract and metaphysical. Under this may be included the innumerable attempts which have been made to explain the origin of evil, and to exhibit in definite terms the scheme of human redemption, as it existed in the Divine mind, and has been carried out in the person and work of our Lord; in short, the entire Pelagian controversy, involving the question of man's state by nature, that of grace, and free will, and the mode of their mutual interaction.

I need hardly observe that this great controversy involves the entire scheme of the Divine government of the world, the nature of the Divine decrees and purposes alike in Creation and Redemption; a number of very abstruse questions respecting the human mind, and the mode in which the Divine Spirit acts on it; and, finally, the profoundly mysterious question of the permission of evil under the government of God. Respecting questions of this kind it will be only necessary to observe, that men of the most powerful intellect, and of the most unquestionable piety, have arrived at diametrically opposite conclusions; and after centuries of debate, we are no nearer their solution than we were at the commencement of the discussion. Yet numerous dogmas defining these subjects, not only form portions of the confessions of different communities of Christians, and have attained a wide acceptance in popular theology, but have even been propounded as verities to which the truth of Christianity itself is com-

mitted; nay more, dogmas have been set forth as articles of faith on these subjects, which are inconsistent with any conceptions which ordinary men can frame of holiness, justice, and mercy in God.

If, then, Christianity is truly such a Gospel of good news to man, as our Lord declared it to be in His discourse at Nazareth, we cannot be too speedy in disentangling it from this mass of metaphysical speculation which men of ordinary understandings cannot believe to be "good tidings to the poor," or a proclamation of "release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind," or a "setting at liberty of those who are bruised," or a proclamation of the "acceptable year of the Lord."

I will adduce one further illustration from a subject which is agitating the Church at the present day, and which, although as set forth in the New Testament, it is of the simplest character, has been obscured by both systematic and popular theology by a cloud of metaphysical subtleties. I allude to the controversy respecting the nature of our Lord's presence in the Holy Communion. On this subject the most divergent doctrines have been propounded by different schools of religious thought as essential portions of Christianity, extending from the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation, which affirms that the bread and wine are transformed into the actual body and blood of Christ, to the Zwinglian, which regards the Eucharist as a simple commemoration of His death. Between these extremes lie the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation, which affirms that our Lord's body and blood, and the bread and wine, are present in the consecrated elements at the same time; and the numerous forms of a doctrine of a real, though not a bodily presence of Jesus Christ in the sacred rite. The literature connected with this subject is of vast extent, and so far has a right faith respecting the nature of this presence been deemed essential to Christianity, that not only has diversity of opinion regarding it led to such a complete separation between two great Protestant communities, that

they refused to succour one another in the hour of their utmost need, and thereby risked the destruction of their common faith ; but by the Church of Rome deviations from her standard of orthodoxy have been visited with the most terrible penalties of heresy ; and dissidents innumerable have had to maintain their opinions at the burning stake.

My object in this place is not to determine what is the true doctrine, but to draw the reader's attention to the mazes of impalpable metaphysics involved in the discussion. Of this, both the Romish and Lutheran doctrines are striking examples. They are, in truth, not so absurd as they at first sight appear. But they can only be adequately understood by those who are acquainted with the subtle distinctions and hair-splittings of scholastic logic ; and are founded on the assumption of the truth of a system of metaphysics which is unintelligible to ninety-nine hundredths of mankind, and which, as well as the logic, has long ago been utterly exploded.

Scarcely less refined, although not so apparently absurd, are the metaphysical distinctions involved in the theories of a real presence of our Lord's body and blood, a presence which yet is not a corporeal presence, but is nevertheless distinguishable from a spiritual presence, *i.e.*, a presence in power and efficacy only. When these distinctions are closely investigated, it will be found that they belong to the regions of cloud land, or are mere wranglings about words, or else that they approach, as near as may be, to a contradiction in terms.

Two of the Evangelists inform us that our Lord rendered thanks to His Heavenly Father that while His divine mission was hidden from the wise and prudent, it had been revealed to babes. This being so, it is evident that the mazes of metaphysical speculation, and the refined logical hair-splittings above alluded to, can form no portion of that Gospel which he came to proclaim. They may be interesting as an intellectual exercise to those who have a taste for them ; but the time is come when they must be carefully distinguished from the Christianity which was taught by

our Lord or His Apostles. To continue to insist upon them as Christian verities is to impose an intolerable burden on men's shoulders, and to place a dangerous stumbling-block in the way of honest seekers after Christ. The unprejudiced reader of the New Testament cannot help rising from its perusal with the conviction that subtleties of this description never troubled the minds of the members of the Apostolic Churches.

Another cause which has greatly contributed to the present shaking of belief is the uncertainty of the principles which are applied, both by systematic and popular theologians, to the study of the Bible. The mischief which this has occasioned is widespread ; and, in consequence of this uncertainty, numbers of thoughtful men no longer know what to believe or what to think.

One of the chief causes of this uncertainty is that numerous schools of theology have held that the Bible is a book which may be made to yield an indefinite number of senses, and that edification is greatly promoted by spiritualizing certain portions of it—a mode of procedure which means neither more nor less than this, that where its natural meaning does not seem sufficiently edifying to the reader, he is at liberty to make it more so, by the unlimited use of his own imagination. The common sense view, that it ought to be interpreted on the same principles that we would apply to other writings, has been set aside on the ground that it differs from them in the fact that it has both a Divine and a human author, and that the former may have intended to convey a different meaning from that which was intended by the latter. Against this supposition, however, common sense rebels ; for it is obvious that, if its Divine Author had intended to convey a number of secret meanings, He would have furnished us with the means of ascertaining on rational principles what those meanings are ; in other words, He would have given us a key wherewith to unlock this hidden treasure. It is, however, a most certain fact that He has not done this. Consequently, in the absence of any principle to guide us in the interpretation of such Scriptures,



we have nothing to direct us but conjecture ; or, in other words, the free use of our own imaginations—that is to say, we may assign almost any meaning to them which we choose. By this means a book which professes to be the record of Divine revelations has been made to present to the thoughtful mind the characteristics of an ambiguous heathen oracle.

Nowhere has this mode of interpretation produced more disastrous results than in its application to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Under its influence their natural meaning has been set aside as unedifying, and a set of allegorical or mystical ones, the creations of the imagination, substituted in its place. It is hardly credible to what extent this mode of interpretation has prevailed in different ages of the Church, and how large a portion of popular theology is based upon it. By means of it a much clearer Gospel has been manufactured out of the Book of Leviticus than can be found either in the four Gospels or in the Apostolical Epistles. To put the matter plainly, this system of interpretation enables anyone to put his own ideas into Scripture, and then to enunciate them as oracles from heaven.

But the all-important question is not whether these modes of interpretation make Scripture more edifying, but whether we are furnished with any means of discriminating between the Divine truths, which are supposed to be hidden under its obvious meaning, and the creations of a mind fertile in the perception of analogies. It is certain, however, that we have none, except in a few cases where we have the guidance of Christ himself or His Apostles. It is a most striking fact that the only discourse which our Lord uttered, “in which he interpreted in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself,” has not been recorded by any one of the Evangelists.

This being so, it follows that the mass of theology which has been erected on this foundation is incapable of commending itself to the minds of those who desire to rest their faith on solid grounds of conviction. As, therefore,

the hollowness of this system is gradually becoming more and more apparent, the shaking of belief, where it has been extensively employed as an instrument for the discovery of truth, has been the unavoidable result.

Another of these dangerous methods of interpretation must be noticed. Popular theology has been in the habit of using the Bible as if it were a single book, the different parts of which are nearly equal in point of authority. Hence a large number of its dogmas are supported by an indiscriminate quotation of texts from all parts of the sacred volume, with little or no regard to their meaning in the context, or to the assertions of the New Testament, that the clearest revelations recorded in the Old are obscure in comparison with those made in the person of our Lord. But attention has since been strongly drawn to the fact that the Bible consists of a number of separate treatises, the composition of which extends over a period of more than a thousand years, each of which has a definite reference to the peculiar circumstances and modes of thought of the times when it was written. Also, that the Bible is the record, not of a single revelation, but of a number of revelations, adapted to the circumstances of those to whom they were addressed, and which were intended to be gradually progressive in the illumination which they imparted, until they culminated in the Christian Revelation. The mode of theologizing, therefore, above referred to, has become discredited in proportion as the true facts respecting the Bible have become known; and as it has been extensively identified in the popular mind with Christianity itself, a corresponding shaking of belief has been the natural consequence, just in proportion as the latter has been identified with the former.

Such are the chief causes which have produced that extensive shaking of faith in existing systems which at the present moment is so greatly disturbing the minds of religious men. May this movement of thought become the means of freeing Christianity from those human accretions with which

it has become incrustated, and thereby presenting it to the acceptance of mankind in that simplicity with which it was enunciated by our Lord and His Apostles, and in which form alone can it ever become the universal religion of mankind.

From the preceding considerations I deduce the following conclusions :—

First: if that overwhelming majority of the human race who at the present moment stand outside the pale of the Church are to be brought to embrace the Christian faith, Christianity must be presented to them in a simple form—one, in fact, which is level to their capacities, their opportunities of investigation, and their wants. This cannot be said of our cumbrous system of theology. In a word, we must be prepared to give a simple and intelligible answer to the question, What constitutes that Christianity which you invite us to embrace ?

Secondly : if Christianity is to retain its hold on thoughtful men, theologians must cease to propound as Christian verities, to be accepted under penalty of exclusion from the fold of Jesus Christ, a mass of dogmas, which are nothing more than the deductions of human reason from the facts of revelation, or superadditions to these facts, introduced into the records of revelation by the aid of the imagination, and then announced as verities resting on the authority of God.

Finally : in the interest both of the believer and of the unbeliever, it is necessary to exhibit Christianity, not as a system elaborated to meet the requirements of the logical intellect, but as a moral and spiritual power, mighty to energize on the heart and to influence the life. To effect this, it must be set forth in the simplicity in which our Lord presented it to His fellow-citizens at Nazareth, viz., as a veritable “message of good tidings to the poor,” as a proclamation of “release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind ; a setting at liberty of them that are bruised, and a proclamation of the acceptable year of the Lord.”

## CHAPTER II.

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### THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AS A REVELATION AND CHRISTIANITY AS A THEOLOGY.

To enable us to answer the question, What is Christianity? it will be necessary to lay down clearly the distinction between Christianity as a revelation and Christianity as a theology, because in the current systems of popular Christianity, the one is habitually confounded with the other. The result of this has been, that not only have a number of inferences, which are the mere deductions of human reason, been propounded with an authority which can properly belong only to Divine truths; but Christianity, as a revelation, has become credited with no small number of the difficulties which in reality only attach to it as a theology.

In order to make this distinction clear, it will be necessary to assign a definite meaning to the term "Revelation." This word is usually restricted to denote that knowledge of God which we attain from some other source than the use of our ordinary faculties. But this limitation of its meaning is obviously inaccurate, for as we possess no faculties which enable us to penetrate into the secrets of the Infinite, it is evident that we can possess no knowledge of God, but from such revelations of Himself as He is pleased to impart. Consequently, all our knowledge of God must be derived from revelation. The idea, therefore, which in

popular language is intended to be conveyed by the term "Revelation," would be more accurately expressed by "Supernatural Revelation," by which I mean a disclosure of such truths as our natural faculties are unable to discover, or can only do so imperfectly. This being so, it is important to determine in what way such knowledge of God can be communicated.

There are only two possible modes in which it can be imparted, viz. :—

First,

By an objective,

And, secondly,

By a subjective revelation.

An objective revelation consists of facts, which are manifestations of the Divine energies. As such they must constitute revelations of the Divine character and purposes, in the same manner as the actions of a man are revelations of his character and purposes. A subjective revelation consists of truth directly communicated to the mind of an individual.

Of revelations which are not supernatural, the created universe constitutes the great example. Being the result of the energies of God, it must constitute a revelation of the Divine character, of which those energies are manifestations. As such, it is distinctly recognized as a revelation by St. Paul in the following passage: "The invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity, so that they (*i.e.*, the Gentiles) may be without excuse" (Rom. i. 20, 21). So important is this brief statement of the Apostle, that I must draw attention to its chief points.

First, he clearly recognizes the created universe as constituting a revelation of God.

Secondly, he affirms that it specially reveals God's everlasting power and divinity, which, though in themselves things invisible, are therein clearly seen.

Thirdly, that this everlasting power and divinity of God is made manifest by the things that are made.

Fourthly, that this revelation is so clear as to leave the heathen without excuse in their ignorance of God.

The idea which is intended to be conveyed by the Apostle may be expressed as follows : As the works of man, when contemplated by the intellect, are manifestations of the existence, and to a limited extent of the character of the worker—although we may be unable either to see, or converse with the workman ; so the works of God constitute similar manifestations of His existence and character, although the Great Artificer Himself is invisible to mortal eye.

Of the second form of revelation we have an example in conscience, when it speaks authoritatively to the individual, "*It is your duty to do, or to forbear doing, this or that particular action.*" In this case, it reveals to man the existence of a moral law which it is his duty to obey ; and of a moral being, distinct from himself, in whom all moral obligation centres.

These authoritative declarations of conscience are also distinctly recognized by St. Paul as constituting modes of Divine revelation, in the following remarkable passage : " For not the hearers of a law are just before God : but the doers of a law shall be justified. For when Gentiles which have no law, do by nature the things of the law, these having no law, are a law unto themselves, in that they show the works of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing them, or else excusing them " (Rom. ii. 13-15).

Conscience is here affirmed by the Apostle to be a revelation of duty to each individual, and its voice to speak with authority. It should be observed that in this passage the word " law " is nearly equivalent in meaning to " written revelation."

The created universe and the voice of conscience, therefore, constitute the two ordinary modes in which God reveals

Himself to man, and may be aptly designated His natural revelations. But Christianity claims to be a revelation additional to these, one not communicated by the ordinary methods—in other words, to be a supernatural revelation. Here also in strict analogy with His previous revelations, God has employed both the objective and the subjective mode of revealing Himself.

Our Lord's divine person, His work and teaching, constitute the objective revelation of Christianity. The proof of this will be adduced hereafter; and therefore I shall not discuss it in this place. Of this revelation the Gospels constitute the record. The position in question may be briefly stated thus: As the universe is a manifestation of God's eternal power and divinity, so the person, the actions, and the teaching of Jesus Christ, as they are portrayed in the Gospels, constitute such a manifestation of His moral character and perfections, that it may be truly said, "He that hath seen Jesus Christ, hath seen the Father."

The remaining books of the New Testament contain the results of a number of subjective revelations, made to different individuals; and intended to be supplementary to its great objective revelation, and to be explanatory of its meaning.

This being so, it follows that Christianity, as a Divine revelation, consists of two factors—viz., the portraiture of our Lord's person and the record of His teaching, as they are presented to us in the Gospels, and the various communications of truth made to apostolic men, of which the remaining books of the New Testament constitute our sole existing record. The claims which have been made on behalf of tradition to be a record supplementary to them, and the relation in which the Scriptures of the Old Testament stand to those of the New, will be considered in the two following chapters.

Assuming these positions to be correct, it necessarily follows: First, that only statements of truth made in the *ipsissima verba* of the sacred writers can justly claim to

possess a direct Divine authority. Secondly, all deductions from them, inasmuch as they necessarily involve rational processes of the intellect, must contain a human factor of some kind ; and must therefore be dependent for their truth on the validity of the intellectual processes which have been employed in their elaboration. Consequently, such deductions, even when estimated at their highest, can only claim to be deductions from revealed truths made by the logical understanding ; and, as such, are subject to the imperfections to which our various intellectual processes are liable.

We are now in a position to lay down the distinction between Christianity as a Revelation and Christianity as a Theology.

Christianity as a revelation consists exclusively of the two factors above mentioned—viz., the portraiture of our Lord's person, and the record of His actions and teaching as they are depicted in the Gospels ; and of the various truths explanatory of their meaning, which are contained in the remaining writings of the New Testament.

Christianity as a theology is a human science, whose function it is to deal with the facts given in revelation in a manner similar to that in which other sciences deal with the facts given in nature. There is, however, this difference. In God's revelation of Himself in nature we have no explanation given of the meaning of the Divine facts. These must be ascertained, systematized, and explained by the aid of our rational faculties alone ; but in God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ not only are the facts given, but various explanations of them, which form a part of the revelation itself. These it is the function of theology to disentangle from the subject-matter with which they are united, to systematize, and to explain.

Christian theology, therefore, is a science, precisely in the same sense in which the other sciences are sciences, both being the creations of our rational faculties, exerting themselves on the study of different, yet definite, kinds of subject-matter. Both, therefore, as instruments for the



discovery of truth, must be dependent on the validity of the processes employed in its investigation.

Further : All scientific deductions are dependent for their conclusiveness on the nature of the subject-matter which forms the object of investigation. Thus, when it involves only one or two of the most definite conceptions of the human mind, such as space and number, and the logical processes are valid, the conclusions of science possess the validity of demonstrations. But when it is only probable, its conclusions vary through every stage of probability. When, on the other hand, it consists of a number of abstract conceptions, which are difficult to realize in thought, as is the case in the higher metaphysics, its conclusions become uncertain and indefinite in exact proportion to the indefiniteness of the conceptions involved in the subject-matter. Nothing can afford a stronger proof of the uncertainty in which investigations of this kind are involved, than the fact that men of the highest mental powers have arrived at conclusions of the most opposite character ; whereas, to doubt the truth of the simple deductions of geometry would justly be obnoxious to the charge of insanity.

Now it is the peculiarity of theology as a science, may we not say, its misfortune, that it embraces within the field of its investigations the utmost variety of subject-matter, of which some portions are simple ; others vary through almost every degree of probability ; and others are in the highest degree abstract and indefinite. While it deals with the first of these, its conclusions possess the same degree of certainty as those sciences which occupy themselves with subject-matters equally clear and definite ; but when it attempts to deal with the last, its conclusions possess no greater degree of certainty than pertains to questions of abstract metaphysical philosophy. It need scarcely be added that a large number of the subjects embraced within the wide range both of systematic and popular theology, are of a highly abstract character.

In offering these remarks, it is not my intention to say anything in disparagement of the attempts of scientific theologians to ascertain and systematize the truths given in revelation, or to deduce from them their legitimate inferences by the application of sound scientific principles to their investigation. This is, in fact, the proper function of theology, as a science, precisely as it is that of the physical sciences to ascertain, systematize, and interpret the facts of nature. My sole object is to draw emphatic attention to the obvious distinction which exists between Christianity as a revelation and Christianity as a theology; because it is a general practice to claim for the latter the degree of infallibility which can only justly be demanded on behalf of the former. The consequence of this is, that in popular estimation Christianity as a revelation has become weighted with the mass of difficulties which only really appertain to Christianity as a theology. The effect of this on belief has been most pernicious.

The result of these observations may be summed up in the two following propositions :—

1. Christianity, as a theology, is a human science; and its conclusions possess the same, but no greater degree of certainty than other sciences which occupy themselves with a similar subject-matter.

2. The only truths which can claim the character of infallibility, are God's express revelations, in the precise form in which they have been communicated.

## CHAPTER III.

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### THE VALUE OF TRADITION AS A RECORD OF THE CONTENTS OF THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

IN endeavouring to separate the essence of Christianity as a revelation, from those human additions with which it has become incrustated during the centuries of the past, it will be necessary to take careful note of the data and materials by which alone this reconstruction can be effected, their nature, and their relative value. We have already laid down, that the writings of the New Testament constitute our sole authorities on this subject. But as a claim has been asserted by a very numerous section of the Christian Church on behalf of Catholic tradition, to be accepted as a trustworthy source of information respecting Apostolical Christianity, it will be necessary to give it a brief consideration. The following facts must be admitted as true :—

1. The contents of the Synoptic Gospels, during the thirty or forty years which preceded their publication, were handed down in the Churches in an oral form, aided by imperfect memoranda. This oral Gospel must have embraced many incidents and discourses connected with the ministry of our Lord, besides those recorded in our present Gospels, which are confessedly selections out of a much greater number. So numerous were they, that the

author of the fourth Gospel has not hesitated to use the following hyperbolical language in reference to them:—  
“And there are many other things, which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written, every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written” (John xxi. 25).

2. The nature of the case renders it certain that the Church must have preserved, in a form more or less accurate, a general outline of this oral Gospel for a considerable time subsequent to the publication of our existing Gospels; for not only would many of its incidents be stored up in the memory of its members, but a considerable number of the witnesses of our Lord’s ministry must have survived as late as the last quarter of the first century.

3. The Churches must also have been in possession of a very large body of Apostolic teaching, beyond that which is contained in the Apostolical Epistles, which, not having been reduced to writing at a sufficiently early date, has failed to vindicate for itself a place among our Canonical Scriptures. It is, therefore, a fact which admits of no reasonable doubt, that the Apostolic Churches must have been acquainted with a number of the actions and discourses of our Lord, additional to those which are recorded in the Gospels, and with a large body of Apostolic teaching, additional to that which we read in the Epistles.

4. If any authentic record of this teaching could be discovered, it would possess a Divine authority equal to the contents of our present canon. On this point the declaration of St. Paul is conclusive, for he places his utterances and his Epistles precisely on the same level in the following passage:—“So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions ye have been taught, whether by word or by an epistle of ours” (2 Thess. ii. 15).

But while all this must be admitted as unquestionably true, the reader will perceive that the question at issue is, not whether our Lord, or his Apostles, performed actions,

or uttered discourses, additional to those which are recorded in the canon, but whether any trustworthy record of them has been handed down in writings external to it. My position is, that none such exists. This must be admitted to be the case with respect to the actions and discourses of our Lord, even by those who advocate the claims of tradition to constitute a record of Apostolical Christianity supplementary to the canon; for the fact is indisputable, that the entire range of patristic literature (the spurious Gospels being excepted) reports only about twelve actions and sayings of our Lord which differ from those recorded in the Gospels. These really add nothing to our knowledge of His actions or His teaching.

This fact is a most remarkable one; for nothing is more certain than that such reminiscences must have remained in the Church in the utmost freshness, for a considerable number of years after the termination of His ministry; and that they could not have become extinct until some time after the second generation of Christians had passed away. We know also on express testimony, such as that of Papias, that these reminiscences were highly valued, and by some preferred even to written documents. Yet with the trifling exceptions above alluded to, patristic literature has allowed the whole of them to perish.

But it is urged, although tradition has failed to hand down any account of our Lord's actions or teaching, additional to that contained in the Gospels, yet it may be justly regarded as a trustworthy informant respecting that large mass of Apostolic teaching of which the canon furnishes us with no record, or only an obscure one. The following considerations, however, prove that it speaks with so uncertain a voice as to render its testimony valueless in reference to our present inquiry.

1. On account of its vagueness. Those who make this claim on behalf of Catholic tradition are by no means agreed within what period of time it is a trustworthy informant. Do its limits extend to the first thousand, or to

the first three hundred, or to the first hundred years, which followed the close of our Lord's ministry? If we confine it to the first hundred years, the extant fragments of genuine Christian literature are so small, that they furnish us with little information beyond that which we read in the pages of the New Testament. But if we extend it to the first four centuries of our era, as is done by not a few of its advocates, it becomes so voluminous as to require the study of almost a lifetime to master its contents. Its bulk, therefore, renders it a matter of the greatest difficulty to disentangle the alleged genuine traditions of Apostolical teaching from the mass of extraneous matter in which they are incrustated. In proof of this, it is sufficient to observe that its most learned students are at issue among themselves as to what portion of its contents do, and what do not, contain records of genuine Apostolical traditions. So great is this uncertainty, that their disputes have made it evident, even to those who are not experts in this species of literature, that high patristic authority can be quoted on either side, in support of numerous opposite doctrines; and that their statements on these subjects can only be brought into harmony by the aid of a number of reasonings of such a character as proves only too plainly that they have been adduced in support of a foregone conclusion.

This being the state of the case, it is clear that that which is designated Catholic tradition becomes an utterly untrustworthy guide to the vast majority of the members of the Christian Church, as to what really constituted Apostolical Christianity, since, from the extent of the literature embraced in it, their only knowledge of its testimony must be derived from the authoritative utterances of a small number of experts, the value of whose judgments they have no sure means of testing. But when to this is added the further fact above alluded to, that the experts are at issue among themselves as to what is the real nature of its testimony, the old proverb becomes directly applicable, "When doctors disagree, who shall decide?" The inference

which sensible men will certainly draw is, that the evidence must be so uncertain as to render it of little value.

2. On account of the interval of time which separates their testimony from authentic sources of information. As the early patristic writings are extremely brief, and afford us but little information additional to that which is supplied by the canon, it is necessary for those who seek for a more expanded system of theology, to have recourse to writers of a much later date. Of these the earliest (with the exception of Justin Martyr) were separated from the time of our Lord's ministry by an interval of not less than one hundred and fifty years; from the last survivor of the Apostolic College, by nearly ninety; and from later authorities, by proportionate distances of time. To put the case simply: we are invited to accept as witnesses to what constituted Apostolical Christianity, writers whose knowledge of it must have been more complete in proportion to their remoteness from authentic sources of information.

But all sound canons of historical criticism lay down, that the value of tradition as a trustworthy informant, depends on the interval which separates the traditionary reminiscences from the events themselves. When this is considerable, its testimony is no longer reliable. Further: tradition is a far more trustworthy source of information respecting events than respecting doctrines. These latter are certain, after considerable intervals of time, to receive a colouring from the tone of thought of those through whom they are transmitted. This is proved alike by the experience of the past and of the present. To quote one well-known instance out of many: the doctrines of Socrates were not committed to writing by himself, but were left to be handed down to posterity through the reminiscences of his followers. What has been the result? Two of the most eminent of his disciples have published dialogues, which profess to be records of his conversations; but the Socrates of Plato differs so widely from the Socrates of Xenophon, that hardly two critics agree as to what are the doctrines

which were held by the philosopher himself, and what have been coloured or superadded by his two disciples. Yet in this case the interval of time during which they were transmitted orally was comparatively brief; whereas the great Christian writers of the close of the second century are separated from our Lord's ministry, and the deaths of St. Paul and St. John, by periods of one hundred and sixty, one hundred and twenty, and ninety years respectively. During such intervals all experience proves that it would have been impossible to hand down a body of abstract dogmas, as intricate as are those of Christian theology, by means of oral tradition, without their being coloured or added to by the minds of those through whom they were transmitted, unless we assume the existence of a continuous miracle, of which there is no evidence. The result is, that it is now impossible in patristic literature to distinguish genuine Apostolical teaching from the additions which it has received in the course of transmission, or from the colouring which the writers in question have imparted to the traditions which they accepted as genuine.\*

\* As the Synoptic Gospels were not composed until from thirty to forty years after the close of our Lord's ministry, and the fourth Gospel from fifty to sixty, it may be objected that His actions and discourses have been coloured while passing through so long a period of oral transmission. This difficulty is met in my fifth and sixth Bampton Lectures, in which I have proved that our Lord's person, work, and teaching formed the centre of Apostolical Christianity; that they constituted the one foundation on which the Church was built; that they were the sole ground of its cohesion as a society, and lay at the foundation of the daily religious life of the individual Christian. This being so, as we learn from the third Gospel, they formed the subject of the habitual catechetical instruction of the converts, and must therefore have been constantly kept in the most lively recollection. Consequently the different Christian communities must have possessed an instrumentality for accurately handing down an account of the actions and teaching of the Founder of the Church, such as was possessed by no other society. The case was wholly different with the various Socratic schools, which were so far from having been erected on the person, work, and teaching of the great



Further : the failure of patristic tradition to hand down any account of our Lord's ministry, additional to that recorded in the Gospels, affords the strongest confirmation of my argument. Here, if anywhere, it would have been successful. We know for certain that materials for doing so must have existed in abundance during the first century, and that traditionary reminiscences, more or less accurate, survived during the early years of the second. Yet, with the exceptions above referred to, the whole of them have perished.

Nor can it be said that the failure was owing to the fact that they were either uninteresting or unimportant. Uninteresting they could not have been ; for our Lord's divine person constituted the inmost life of these primitive societies, which would therefore have eagerly treasured up every genuine account of His actions or His sayings. That many of His discourses, of which no record has been preserved, were not unimportant is also clear. What would we not give at the present day to possess those which He uttered to His disciples during the forty days which elapsed between His resurrection and His ascension ? If these had been preserved, it would have saved the Church from endless controversies and disputes. It is therefore absurd to assume that tradition, which has failed to accomplish the easier task, has succeeded in one which is far more difficult.

A single illustration of my position will suffice. Few subjects have been more fiercely debated in the Church than the importance of the sacraments as means of grace, and the mode of their operation on the human mind. It is not my intention here to discuss the truth or falsehood of

philosopher, that they were not even named after him. The fourth Gospel rests on a different basis. It professes to be the reminiscence of an actual eye-witness who had received a promise from his Master of supernatural assistance to his memory, to enable him to report His teaching accurately. As, however, it would occupy an undue space to discuss this subject adequately in the present work, I must refer the reader to the Lectures in question.

any of the sacramental theories. It will be sufficient for our present purpose to observe, that the adoption of the extreme view on either side involves a complete modification of our opinions, as to what constitutes the essence of Christianity. High theories on this subject represent the sacraments as the most important of the means by which God acts in the sanctification of man ; affirming that when they are administered by duly authorized persons, they possess a mysterious efficacy, different from every other means of grace ; that they can be only thus rightly administered by persons who can trace a commission to do so in direct succession from the Apostles ; and that when they are not thus duly administered, they lose their spiritual efficacy, and are, in fact, no sacraments at all. One view even goes the length of affirming that they are continuations of the Incarnation. These positions have rendered it necessary to metamorphose the Christian ministry into a priesthood ; to maintain a rigid doctrine of Apostolical Succession ; to affirm that those bodies of Christians who are destitute of it are outside the pale of the Catholic Church, and to consign them to what the holders of these opinions choose to designate, "The uncovenanted mercies of God." Doctrines of this kind are sufficiently startling ; and if they can be proved to be Apostolic, it is clear that they must constitute one of the most important elements of Christianity.

Now, the point to which I wish to draw the reader's attention is as follows:—Whether the sacramental theory be true or false, it is evident that it is of a very elaborate character. It also extends over a wide range of subject-matter, and involves a number of dogmas which touch on some of the most abstruse questions of human thought. As instances of these I may refer to the great controversy about Baptismal Regeneration, and the logical and metaphysical questions involved in the various theories as to the nature of our Lord's presence in the Eucharist. Is it possible that abstract dogmas, like these, can have been transmitted by oral tradition, during a period of several centuries,

with any approach to accuracy? I ask this question because, if these dogmas form an essential portion of Christianity, tradition is our only source of information on the subject. Those who maintain the truth of the doctrines above referred to, do not pretend that they can find them elaborated in the New Testament. The utmost that can be urged is, that the sacramental theory is there in embryo; and that there are passages from which this theory might be inferred, if it could be proved from other sources to have been the teaching of Christ or His Apostles. The only way in which even the appearance of plausibility can be given to this proof is by invoking the testimony of writers who flourished long after the Apostolic age, *i.e.*, at a period when such traditions would be held to be worthless, if adduced in proof of an event in ordinary history.

This being so, it may be justly asked, which of the patristic writings are authoritative on this and kindred subjects? for they are very numerous, very intricate, and their most learned students give very different reports as to the nature of their testimony. But this is not my point. It is as follows:—It is impossible to transmit a complicated mass of dogmas, such as those which are involved in the sacramental system, for any number of years, by means of oral tradition, without their being added to, subtracted from, or variously coloured by the minds of those by whom they have been transmitted. It is one thing to hand down by oral tradition, during a space of from thirty to forty years, our Lord's command, "to make disciples of all nations, by baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," and by teaching them to "observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," or the simple account of the Eucharist, as its institution is recorded by the Evangelists; but quite another to hand down, during several centuries, an accurate account of a mass of complicated, and frequently impalpable metaphysical dogmas, such as those above alluded to.

Yet it must be admitted by the warmest advocates of this

theory, that if such dogmas formed a portion of Apostolical Christianity, the number of years during which they must have been handed down by the sole means of oral tradition, must have been very considerable. We search for them in vain in the earlier extant remnants of patristic literature. The utmost that can be urged is, that these, like the New Testament, contain the system in embryo. Before it can be discovered in anything resembling the form in which it has been propounded in these latter ages, we must advance whole centuries in time; but that it should thus be handed down "pure and undefiled" by such an instrumentality, is so completely at variance with all our knowledge of the action of the human mind, that it would involve the existence of a standing miracle in the Church. It is true, that those who propound theories of this kind, have not been slow to claim for it a superhuman guidance on subjects of this nature; but when they are asked for a proof of its existence, nothing is forthcoming but a number of the most barren generalities. It would be easy to adduce similar instances of complicated dogmas, which it would be impossible for oral tradition to hand down with anything approaching to accuracy for a considerable number of years; but these will be sufficient for our present purpose.

I by no means intend that these remarks should be taken as implying a desire to depreciate the value of patristic testimony, either to facts or beliefs, as they were accepted by the Church within the period of the historical recollections of those who have reported them. Such testimony to actual facts is of the highest value to the historical student; and when given by writers who flourished within a short period after the close of the Apostolic age, it affords a presumption that the things alluded to may have been of Apostolic origin. But even if this be admitted, it would be very far from affording proof that everything for which Apostolical authority can be adduced, was intended to be a perpetual obligation on the Church, or to form an essential portion of Divine revelation. Of this it will

be sufficient to cite one remarkable example. Again and again does St. Paul exhort the members of the Churches, to which he writes, to "greet one another with a holy kiss." Yet the practice is become obsolete, except in the Oriental Church, on one particular day in the year, viz., Easter day.

I conclude, therefore, that in all inquiries as to what constitutes the essence of Christianity, our only trustworthy sources of information are the Scriptures of the New Testament; and that alleged traditions, which date many years subsequent to the Apostolic age, are simply valueless.

## CHAPTER IV.

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### THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT; THEIR RELATION TO CHRISTIANITY AS A REVELATION.

It is a matter of paramount importance in reference to our present inquiry, to consider this subject with the utmost care, because the Scriptures of the Old Testament are habitually quoted, as of equal authority with those of the New, in proof of doctrines which are identified in current popular conceptions with the essence of Christianity. Nor is this all. The current views of the relation of the Old Testament to the New have encumbered Christianity as a revelation, with no small number of the difficulties on which the popular objections to it are founded. From this source has originated the contest between science and revelation, and all those objections to Christianity which have been founded on the imperfections of the moral teaching of the Old Testament.

The point, therefore, which I propose to consider in the present chapter is, not the value of these Scriptures for enabling us to build up a great system of theological truth, but the relation in which according to our Lord and the Apostles, they stand to Christianity as a Revelation; and how far we are entitled to use them as materials for determining what constituted the essential principles of Apostolical Christianity, as distinct from its

subsequent developments as a theology. Under this head I shall not include the Messianic prophecies, which will be considered by themselves in the next chapter.

The following facts are so certain as to be beyond dispute. It will be therefore only necessary to enumerate them.

1. Christianity is unquestionably erected on the Scriptures of the Old Testament as its basis, and is a growth out of Judaism. Our Lord and His Apostles concurred in affirming that these Scriptures spake of Him. Apart from their existence and authoritative reception, not a single book of the New Testament would ever have been written. The existence of the Old Testament was, in fact, a precondition of the existence of the New.

2. Our Lord and His Apostles regarded them as authoritative to those to whom they were addressed, and for whose use they were intended. Numerous passages referred to, and quoted by them, are frequently declared by them to be Divine utterances and to possess a Divine authority.

3. But while Christianity has grown out of Judaism, it has superseded its entire system, including its ceremonial and ritual worship, its sacrifices, its symbolism, its typology, its political legislation, and no small portion of its moral teachings. But while thus superseding them, it affirms that it is the complete realization of whatever truth underlay these institutions; and that they, having been thus realized, are become for all future time nugatory and worthless. The fact that a system which has been erected on another system as its basis, and which has even recognized its Divine authority, has yet utterly superseded all its institutions, is unique in history. Yet such is the relation in which Christianity stands to Judaism.

4. The position which the New Testament takes in relation to the Old is, that the old dispensation was imperfect; that it was instituted for temporary purposes, and that its teaching was not intended to embody truth in a perfect form, but was an accommodation to the moral and spiritual condition of those for whom it was intended. So important

are the positions included under this head, that I must support the chief of them by the authority of the writers of the New Testament.

1. They expressly affirm that its entire ritual and sacrificial worship, with its various external ordinances of purification, did not possess the elements of eternal truth, but were mere symbols and shadows of it. Thus, speaking of the tabernacle and the worship celebrated therein (let it be observed that what was true of the tabernacle worship was equally true of the temple worship with all its rites, ceremonies, and purifications), which formed the centre of the entire system of Judaism, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes :—

“ Which is a parable for the time now present, according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices, that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshippers perfect, being only (with meats and drinks, and divers washings) carnal ordinances imposed until the time of reformation ” (Heb. ix. 9, 10).

“ For there is a disannulling of the former commandment, because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law made nothing perfect), and the bringing thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God ” (Heb. vii. 18, 19).

“ For if that covenant had been faultless then would no place have been found for a second. But, finding fault with them, he saith, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah ; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, for they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in their minds, and in their hearts will I write them ; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen and



every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord ; for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest of them ; for I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more. In that he saith, ‘A new covenant,’ he hath made the first old. Now that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away ” (Heb. viii. 9-13).

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, they can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make them perfect that draw nigh. Else would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshippers once cleansed, would have had no more conscience of sins ” (Heb. x. 1, 2).

While the writer of these passages considered the Mosaic dispensation as a shadow of good things to come, it is inconceivable that he could have regarded it as throwing any light on Christianity as a revelation. In his view Christianity throws light on it, not it on Christianity. In the first of them he affirms the Mosaic ordinances to be “mere parables” for the time then present, incapable of making the worshippers perfect as touching the conscience. Nay more, they are mere carnal ordinances, consisting of meats, drinks, and divers washings, imposed only until the time of reformation. It would be hardly possible to find words which could affirm more definitely that the Jewish dispensation was an accommodation, intended to subserve certain temporary purposes, and that when the times of reformation came it would cease to possess any further value.

The second quotation is equally explicit. It declares that under the Christian dispensation there is a disannulling of the foregoing commandment, because of its weakness and unprofitableness. Can any words be stronger ? In the third passage the sacred writer has expressed his own views respecting the imperfect and transitory nature of the Old Testament dispensation, in the words of one of its own prophets, whose deep spiritual insight revealed to him the

fact that it was to be superseded by a more spiritual covenant at some period of the future. The concluding words, which are a commentary of the author of the Epistle on the utterance of the prophet, distinctly affirm that the Old dispensation, having reached that period when it had become completely out of date, was on the eve of vanishing away.

But still more conclusive of the views of the writer of this Epistle as to the relation in which Judaism stands to Christianity is the fourth of the above quotations. "The good things to come" mentioned in it are beyond all question the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. To these he affirms that the law did not stand in the relation of *an image* (εἰκὼν), but of a *shadow* (σκία) to the reality.

Let the reader attentively consider the distinction between the two figures which the sacred writer here uses to define what the law is, and what it is not. An image or likeness (εἰκὼν) though devoid of life, is a vivid delineation of the reality, of which it is the image. But a shadow (σκία) is only an unsubstantial outline of it. What, then, is the necessary consequence? If we have the reality before us it is a mere waste of time to try to get a better conception of it by contemplating its image; far more useless would it be to gaze on its unsubstantial shadow. Yet this is the relation in which the author affirms that the entire system of Judaism stands to Christianity. No words could more strongly assert its relative imperfection.

Let us now hear St. Paul. Equally decisive is his protest against incorporating Judaism with Christianity. Not to mention his other Epistles, that to the Galatians is one emphatic denunciation of those who attempt to do so. It will be sufficient to quote only two passages, as clearly setting forth the position taken by the Apostle. After a long series of arguments bearing on this thesis he thus writes:—

"What then is the law? It was added because of transgression, till the seed should come, to whom the promise hath been made. . . . Is the law then against the

promises of God? God forbid, for if there had been a law given which could have made alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law. Howbeit the Scripture hath shut up all things under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. For before faith came, we were kept in ward, under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. So that the law hath been our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor" (Gal. iii. 19-25).

Again: "Howbeit at that time, not knowing God, ye were in bondage to those which by nature are no gods; but now that ye have come to know God, or rather, to be known of God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again. Ye observe days and months, and seasons and years. I am afraid of you lest by any means I have bestowed labour on you in vain" (Gal. iv. 8-11).

In the first of these passages, the Apostle's positions respecting the law are explicitly set forth as follows:—

1. The law was introduced, *not because it was desirable in itself, but because of transgressions*; and was intended only to continue until the coming of the Messiah.

2. Those who lived under the legal dispensation were, as it were, *shut up in ward*, waiting for the dispensation of the Gospel.

3. The law performed the same function in relation to Christianity, as the *tutor* or guardian slave in ancient families to the children of the head of the household. His duty was to conduct them to their teacher. Under the Christian dispensation this teacher is Christ. The function of the law, therefore, was to conduct those under it to Christ. I say, those *who were under it, i.e., Jews and Judaizing Christians*, because the whole of the Apostle's reasoning, both in this Epistle and in that to the Romans, is founded on the fact that the Gentiles were not under it, nor subject to its obligations; for in the latter Epistle he makes

the distinct affirmation, that the Gentiles have not the law, although he declares that they are under sin.

4. As the authority of the tutorial guardian ceased when he had conducted his ward into the presence of his teacher, so that of the legal dispensation ceased when it had conducted those subject to it into the presence of the great teacher, Jesus Christ.

In the second of the above quotations the legal institutions are declared by the Apostle to be weak and beggarly elements, when viewed in the light which is imparted by the Christian revelation. It is hardly possible that a Jew who, like St. Paul, had been brought up in the strictest principles of Judaism, could have written thus of the Mosaic institutions, forming as they do one of the prominent features of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, without qualification, if he had regarded them as throwing a light on the great truths of Christianity as a revelation, additional to that communicated by our Lord or His Apostles, or as forming an essential portion of it. He unquestionably regarded the Jewish dispensation as having been intended to lead those subject to it up to Christianity, and to educate the Jewish people for its reception; but this is a very different position, and is certainly not the view propounded by popular theology of the use which should be made of the Jewish Scriptures as exponents of Christian truth.

Equally decisive is the language which St. Peter addressed to the Church at Jerusalem, when it was assembled for the express purpose of considering the relation in which Jewish and Gentile Christians were to stand to each other in the newly erected kingdom of God:—

“Now, therefore, why tempt ye God to put a yoke on the neck of the disciples, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear?” (Acts xv. 10). Surely, if the Apostle had regarded them as containing an implicit Gospel, descriptive of our Lord’s atoning work in all its minute circumstances, he could never have spoken of it as an

intolerable yoke. Yet a Gospel according to Leviticus has, in fact, been represented by a certain school of theologians as a clearer revelation on these subjects than anything which is contained in the Apostolical writings.

But there is a higher authority to refer to than even the teaching of Apostles—viz., that of the Great Master Himself. What, then, does He say respecting the relation in which that revelation, of which He constitutes the centre, stands to the former revelations, of which the Old Testament constitutes the record? If we accept the fourth Gospel as an authoritative record of our Lord's utterances, the answer to this question need not detain us long. He affirms in it again and again, that the revelation made in His own person and teaching transcends the light imparted by all former revelations, as much as that of the sun does the light of the feeblest star. In it He is uniformly represented as speaking with an absolute knowledge of God, and affirming that His person is so complete a revelation of His moral character that "he that hath seen him hath seen the Father." Half the Gospel might be quoted in proof of this; but as it is a subject which it will be necessary to consider fully hereafter, I will not enter on its discussion here.

But while our Lord makes these lofty claims on behalf of Himself, He at the same time recognizes the Divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures. What, then, is the authority which He assigns to them? It is that of witnesses to Himself; not as throwing additional light on the revelation which He imparted. The relation in which He regarded them as standing to Himself may be briefly set forth in two of His sayings recorded in this Gospel. "Ye search the Scriptures," He says, addressing the Jews, "because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they *that bear witness of me*" (John v. 39). Again, "If ye believe Moses, ye would believe me, *for he wrote of me*" (John v. 46).

The same view is taken by the Synoptics, only it is not so prominently set forth as in the fourth Gospel.

While they describe our Lord as habitually referring to the Scriptures of the Old Testament as speaking of Himself, and affording proof of His Divine Mission, they uniformly represent Him not as receiving light from them, but as throwing light upon them. Two passages will be sufficient to refer to as illustrations. Speaking of His teaching by parables, and his reasons for unfolding truth in plain terms to His disciples, He says :—

“ But blessed are your eyes, for they see ; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things that ye see, and saw them not ; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not ” (Matthew xiii. 16, 17). Again, speaking of John the Baptist, our Lord says, “ Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist ; yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he ” (Matthew xi. 11).

In the first of these passages our Lord affirms that the light communicated by His revelation indefinitely exceeds the illumination possessed by the most eminent men of the Old Testament dispensation ; in the second, that the light which is enjoyed “ by him who is little in the kingdom of heaven ” surpasses that which was enjoyed by the greatest prophet of that dispensation. This being so, however valuable may be their testimony to Christ, and however important their utterances may have been to those to whom they were addressed, the attempt to throw additional light, by means of them, on our Lord’s person and teaching, bears a close analogy to invoking the aid of a taper to add to the illumination afforded by the mid-day sun.

But further : our Lord definitely affirms that portions of the moral teaching of the Old Testament were so imperfect that they could have no standpoint conceded to them in the kingdom of God. Thus we read, “ They say unto him, Why did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement, and to put her (*i.e.*, a man’s

wife) away? He saith unto them, Moses, for your hardness of heart, suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and he that marrieth her, when she is put away, committeth adultery" (Matthew xix. 8-10). We have here a most definite assertion that our Lord recognized imperfections in the moral teaching of the Old Testament, and that in this particular instance, its teaching was not an enunciation of absolute morality, but an accommodation to the barbarism of the times. This opens a most important question, whether the same is not true of all those aspects of its moral teaching which fall below the standard of the New. What light, then, do our Lord's utterances throw on this subject?

In the sermon on the Mount our Lord furnishes us with a definite explanation as to the relation in which His work and teaching stood to that of the older dispensation:—

"Think not," He says, "that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law till all things be accomplished. Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew v. 19, 20).

The meaning of this passage depends on assigning a correct signification to the word "fulfil," which is here given as the rendering of the Greek word *πληρόω*. The ordinary English reader understands by it the realization of a prediction uttered in the past by an event precisely corresponding to it in the future. This, however, is obviously not its meaning here, because, although it is possible to speak of "fulfilling" the prophets in this sense, to speak of thus fulfilling the law would be destitute of meaning. But as our Lord

speaks of Himself as having come to “fulfil” both the law and the prophets, it is evident that the primary meaning of the word, which is, in fact, its only natural meaning, is the one intended, *i.e.*, *to fill up full, or fully realize*. This is a sense which it not unfrequently bears in ordinary language, as, for example, in the words which occur in one of the prayers in the Post Sacramental Service of the Church of England, where the congregation pray that “they may be *fulfilled* with God’s grace and heavenly benediction.” Getting rid, therefore, of the ambiguity of the word “fulfil,” our Lord’s utterance may be expressed as follows:—“Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to realize the idea which underlies them; for till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall by no means pass away from the law until all things be accomplished.” Our Lord must be the best commentator on His own words.

The remainder of the chapter is an example of the mode in which He regarded Himself as “the Fulfiller of the law,” *i.e.*, the realizer of its true meaning. In this capacity He proceeds to deal with some of the most sacred precepts of the Old Testament dispensation. Thus, he teaches that while the two commandments of the Decalogue, “Thou shalt not kill” and “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” were founded on the eternal principles of moral obligation, they still but imperfectly realized the requirements of the moral law of the kingdom of God. He therefore proceeded “*to fill up full, or realize* the idea which underlay them, the first by proclaiming the positive law of love, and the second by proclaiming the positive law of purity. In a similar manner He dealt with the law of oaths, that of retaliation, and that which, while it required the love of one’s neighbour, permitted the hatred of one’s enemy. Thus, for the precept which forbids perjury, He substitutes the higher principle of avoiding swearing altogether; for the Jewish law of retaliation, the duty of not resisting him who is evil, &c.; for the precept of loving one’s



neighbour and hating one's enemy, the principle of universal forgiveness and love—love for one's enemies being substituted for hatred of them, as the law of the kingdom of God, the members of which are to aim at being perfect even as their Father who is in heaven is perfect.

Such was our Lord's mode of "fulfilling the law," by substituting a higher ideal of duty for a lower one. In accordance with His teaching, although the law embodied the fundamental principles of moral obligation, it only imperfectly realized their complete idea. This underlying idea our Lord sets forth as the moral law of the kingdom of God; He annulled all those precepts which were inconsistent with it, as being mere accommodations to the condition of the times.

The following will briefly express the exact meaning of our Lord's declaration as to the relation in which He stands to the Old Testament dispensation as "*the fulfiller of the law and the prophets.*" Of the imperfect truths which underlay its ritual and ceremonial worship He is the substantial reality and embodiment. All the aspirations for higher and better things which animated the hearts of its great men and saints receive in Him their complete satisfaction. His teaching, while it supersedes everything that was imperfect in the teaching of the Old Testament, is the realization of its underlying idea. To sum up all in a single sentence: our Lord, as "*the fulfiller of the law and the prophets,*" is the embodiment of every element of eternal truth which they contain, free from the imperfections of the imagery in which it is enfolded, and from the imperfect moral atmosphere of the times to which it was accommodated.

In connection with this subject there is one point which requires special notice. There is nothing in which our Lord's teaching so strikingly contrasts with that of the historians, prophets, and psalmists of the Old Testament, as in the indulgence which they grant to the principle of revenge. The reader can hardly fail to observe that this

feeling pervades them from one end to the other. One very striking example will be sufficient. The Psalmist in his captivity at Babylon sung as follows :—"O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed ; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee, as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones " (Psalm cxxxvii. 8, 9). A more revengeful utterance can hardly be imagined. Similar expressions are common in these scriptures ; and their authors seem wholly unconscious that there was anything in this spirit which was evil. This feeling, however, is utterly repudiated by our Lord ; and in place of it He propounds the law of mutual forgiveness and love, in these remarkable words—"I say unto you, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you " (Luke vi. 27, 28).

So, again, we have a striking illustration in the account of our Lord's journey to Jerusalem, which is given us by the same Evangelist. Being desirous of resting for a night in one of the villages of the Samaritans, its inhabitants refused to receive Him. The historian continues—"And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them ? But he turned, and rebuked them. And they went to another village " (Luke ix. 44-46). To this passage the revisers add in the margin—"Many authorities read, 'even as Elijah did.' " Some others—"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of ;" and a few others—"For the Son of man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

It is of little importance in reference to our present argument, whether these additional words were really uttered by our Lord ; for whether they were or not, there can be no doubt that the proposal to call down fire from heaven to consume these contemners of our Lord, was suggested by the example of Elijah calling down fire to consume those who despised him. They would naturally argue : If Elijah was justified

in this act, how much more would they be justified in so doing in vindication of a Prophet who was far greater than Elijah. But our Lord's rebuke amounts to an assertion that the act of Elijah, although followed by a miracle, was inconsistent with the principles on which the legislation of the kingdom of heaven was founded.

How, then, stands our argument? In one instance our Lord has definitely affirmed that there was a precept in the Old Testament inconsistent with absolute morality, and an accommodation to the imperfect morality of the times. It was given, as He affirms, on account of the hardness of the hearts of those to whom it was addressed. This being so, we are justified in concluding that all its moral principles which run counter to our Lord's teaching, originated in a similar cause, and therefore can form no portion of the Christian revelation. They may be "written for our admonition" and our warning, and, so far, for our instruction; but not for our guidance. Our Lord sums up, and even more than realizes in His person, His works, and His teaching, the substance of which the law was an imperfect shadow.

We cannot better express the relation in which the Christian revelation stands to the Scriptures of the Old, *Deus* than in the opening words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the contrast is thus definitely set forth:—

"God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers, in the prophets, by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews i. 1-3).

This passage affirms that the revelations of which the Scriptures of the Old Testament are the record, are not a single revelation, but were made in various frag-

ments (πολυμέρως), and were communicated in various modes (πολυτρόπως). They were, therefore, partial and imperfect, and were communicated through the agency of a number of imperfect men (ἐν τοῖς προφήταις). Contrasted with this is the great revelation of the Gospel. It does not consist of many fragments, but is one harmonious whole. It was not communicated in divers manners, but once for all in the person of the Son of God. The prophets, through whom the former revelations were communicated, were imperfect men. The Christian revelation is given in the person of One who is Divine, being the effulgence of the Divine glory, and the very image of His substance. It would be hardly possible to affirm more definitely the inferiority of the one set of revelations compared with the perfection of the other.

From these facts an important consequence follows. The prevailing habit of using the Scriptures of the Old Testament as though they constituted the record of one great revelation, the parts of which are equal in importance, and which may be justly referred to on all matters of faith and practice as an authority little inferior to that of the New, is unsound in principle. These revelations being all fragmentary, their discoveries of truth were necessarily imperfect. They are also directly addressed to the special circumstances of the Jewish people at particular periods of their history, or designed as messages to them in relation to it. Consequently the instruction which they convey to us is *not direct, but inferential*; i.e., before it is capable of being applied to Christian times, it must be translated into the altered forms and conditions of Christian thought; and even then it only admits of application to modern times, as far as the circumstances are the same. In a word, these revelations were only intended to form a portion of the education of the Jewish nation, as a preparation for the advent of Christianity.

This being so, it will be necessary for the clear eluci-

dation of this subject to take a brief survey of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, their character, and their affirmations respecting themselves.

The revelations, of which they are the record, naturally divide themselves into three groups—the law, the prophets, and the hagiographa. The first of these consists of a number of moral precepts, which were intended to regulate the daily life of the Israelite, a political code specially adapted to the circumstances of the Jewish people, and a minute system of rites and ceremonies, adapted to the religious wants and ideas of the times then present. But in the prophets and the hagiographa the moral element is the chief characteristic. To such an extent is it predominant, that the most enlightened men among them had attained to a clear perception of the inherent worthlessness of all ceremonial and sacrificial ordinances, as possessing in themselves no moral value; and regarded them as accommodations to the low condition of the Israelitish nation in the earlier periods of their religious education. Some of these utterances are so remarkable that it will be necessary to set them before the reader. Thus Isaiah writes in a well-known passage:—

“To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of rams, or of he goats. When ye come before me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. . . . Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Isaiah i. 11-17).

I am quite ready to make every allowance for the plea that

the language here employed is poetry and not prose, and also that the writers of the Old Testament were in the habit of expressing comparative preference by direct antithesis. Still, after every abatement is made on this account, it must be allowed to be a strong depreciation of the sacrificial and ritual systems compared with the obligation of moral duties. Our sense of this will not be diminished when we remember that the things thus spoken of are authorized, nay, commanded, by the express ordinances of the Levitical law.

Equally striking is an utterance of Jeremiah :—"I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them *in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices* : but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people : and walk ye in my ways that I have commanded you " (Jeremiah vii. 22, 23).

This passage seems to affirm that the Levitical code formed no portion of the original covenant made between God and the people of Israel at Sinai. The words, "I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices," can hardly mean less than this. The essence of the covenant, therefore, was the moral law of the ten commandments, which must be intended by the words, "This I commanded them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people : and walk ye in my ways that I have commanded you." Assuming this view of the prophet to be correct, the Levitical code must have been given, to use St. Paul's language respecting the whole of the legal institutions, "*because of transgressions*," as an accommodation to the moral and spiritual condition of the people.

I have already referred to the remarkable passage of this same prophet, which declares that it was the Divine purpose to make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, of a character wholly different from that of the Levitical dispensation.

The following passage of Amos is equally decisive :—" I hate and despise your feast days ; and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them : neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take away from me the noise of your songs ; I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment come down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream " (Amos v. 21-24).

After making every allowance for poetic language and Hebrew idiom, it seems impossible to arrive at any other conclusion than that the writer of this passage must have regarded the Levitical institutions as belonging to an inferior order of things ; and that the moral element of the prophetic teaching was the all-important part of religion.

Very similar is the testimony of Micah. It matters not, in reference to the point under consideration, whether, with Bishop Butler, we view a portion of it as the record of a conversation between Balak and Balaam, or the whole as the utterance of the prophet. " O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherewith have I wearied thee ? testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and I redeemed thee out of the house of servants ; and I sent before thee Moses, and Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim to Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God ? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old ? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of lambs, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ? " (Micah vi. 3-8).

Here again the writer must have regarded the whole round of ritual purifications as belonging to a low order of things.

In opposition to it he expressly affirms that all that God requires of man is "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God."

Nor are such sentiments confined to the prophets. The following passage forms a portion of that deep expression of penitence and humiliation, the Fifty-first Psalm :—"For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it thee; thou delightest not in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm li. 16, 17).

Again :—"Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices and thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goat out of thy folds; for every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the beasts of the mountains; and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most High; and call upon me in the time of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Psalm l. 7-15).

The same truth was even perceived by gifted men at an earlier period of the history. Thus Samuel, the founder of the prophetic order, addresses Saul :—"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. xvi. 22).

These are striking utterances, but the same idea, with one or two exceptions, runs throughout the whole of the prophetic writings. When we consider that most of the practices above referred to, were strictly enjoined by the Levitical institutions, the energy of the prophetic language may well excite our surprise. I am aware that it has been urged, that it is the abuses of the ritual and



ceremonial system which are referred to, and not the system itself. Still, we cannot help being struck with the fact that these denunciations are not accompanied by any injunction to keep strictly within the ordinances of the Levitical law, which undoubtedly authorized, nay, commanded the observance of no small number of these rites. Whether, therefore, we view these prophetic denunciations as absolute, or only relative, is of no importance, as far as our present argument is concerned. Language such as that above quoted could only be used by persons who entertained a low opinion of the intrinsic value of the Levitical ordinances.

This view of the case is confirmed by the remarkable fact that numerous prophets, and great men of the old dispensation, habitually disregarded in their own practice several of the express injunctions of the Levitical code. This fact confronts us in every part of the history. To take a single example. Nothing is more strict than the declaration that the only proper place for performing the ritual worship was the one sanctuary, which was to be erected in the place which the Lord should choose. But this was habitually disregarded by judges, prophets, and kings. Local worship was continued even in Judah, but in the northern kingdom the practice was habitual; and it received the sanction of even so stern a reformer as Elijah, without one word to imply that his practice in this respect must not be drawn into a precedent by others. It is true that the author of the book of Kings speaks in terms of mild condemnation of the allowance of the worship celebrated in the local sanctuaries by several of the better kings of Judah, but the practice did not call forth the stern denunciation of the prophets; nor did those of the northern kingdom think themselves in duty bound to incur the danger of attending the worship and the festivals, which could be only lawfully celebrated at Jerusalem. Between the death of Samuel and the termination of the prophetic period the entire history

fails to record a single instance of a sacrifice offered by a prophet, with the exception of David, and one, offered on a special occasion, by Elijah.

Again, the Levitical law is decisive that certain acts of worship could be only acceptably performed through the medium of a priest; and it enacts severe penalties against those who in this respect violated its injunctions. Yet various kings, among whom was David, performed priestly functions without scruple, and without one word of warning that their example must not be followed by others; and that, too, at a time when the people were addicted to such practices. Equally remarkable is the fact, which we learn from the book of Nehemiah, that the feast of tabernacles had never been once celebrated according to the legal institutions, between the days of Joshua and his own. Yet the writings of the prophets do not contain a single protest against this neglect.

It will doubtless be urged that these judges, kings, and prophets had a special exemption from the duty of observing the Levitical law; but of such an exemption the history gives us not the smallest intimation. When we remember that the people at large were addicted to the practice of unauthorized forms of worship, we should have expected from such eminent persons a rigid adherence to the Levitical institutions, or, at least, some distinct statement that they had a special exemption from their observance; and that their example in this respect was not to be imitated by others. But neither do the historians nor the prophets contain a single warning of this description.

The above considerations, therefore, prove beyond reasonable question, however the facts themselves may be explained, that the prophets must have considered the ritualism of the Old Testament to be an inferior dispensation; in fact, an accommodation to the moral and spiritual condition of the times. To use the words of the

author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, it was a mere shadow of good things to come; and not even their image, portraiture, or likeness. This being so, it requires no proof that now, when we possess the revelation made in the person of our Lord, no additional light can be thrown on the Divine reality by gazing on what is at best only its unsubstantial shadow.

Let us now briefly consider the contents of the Old Testament itself, and how far we are warranted in placing them on a level with the Scriptures of the New, as co-ordinate portions of the Christian revelation.

1. A large portion of the Old Testament consists of the writings of the prophets. These profess to be the records of a number of revelations made to particular individuals. Their subject-matter falls under two heads:—(1) The announcement of the setting up of a kingdom of God at some period of the future, which was to be the realization of that theocracy which had been so imperfectly realized in the ages of the past; and a description in imperfect outline of the person of its king. (2) A number of revelations, which constitute special messages to the people of Israel, and occasionally to the surrounding nations. These are uniformly called forth by particular circumstances in their history; and bear a direct relation to them. Consequently, although they possess a deep interest to the theologian as tracing the processes of the historical developments of revelation, and as preparing the way for the coming of Christ, it is evident that they can impart no additional light to Christianity as a revelation.

2. Another considerable portion of the Old Testament consists of a body of writings, giving a history of the Israelitish nation, not, however, a history in the ordinary sense of the term, but one in which it was the purpose of the writers that the religious element should predominate over the civil and secular. Such a body of writings is most valuable to the student in tracing the gradual development of revelation, and to the ordinary

Christian, in the way of example and of warning; but it is evident that a history of the Hebrew nation can form no portion of that revelation which is described by the Apostolic writer as "God speaking to us in his Son."

3. The hagiographa.—Four of these books require but little notice, as it is impossible to assume that they can impart additional light to Christianity as a revelation, viz., the book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, and Esther. The first of these is simply a collection of maxims, setting forth the principles of worldly prudence. The second, whether written by Solomon, or as many think, long after his time, may not inaptly be designated "the confessions of a disappointed worldling." With respect to the Song of Solomon, nothing is more obvious, than that all the Christianity which it contains must be put into it by the imagination of the commentator, before it can be found there; its history is, in fact, a striking illustration of the mode in which human imaginations can be manufactured into oracles of God. As to the book of Esther, it is sufficient to observe that the name of God does not occur in it from one end to the other.

The book of Psalms, however, is of a very different character. It consists of five books of hymns, a considerable portion of which were specially adapted for the worship in the temple. The entire collection may be described as a record of the religious experience of several of the most eminent saints of the Old Testament dispensation. In it are set before us their struggles after holiness, the nearness of their walk with God, and their earnest aspirations after something higher and better than that which they possessed. This has made it an invaluable treasury of experimental religion to all ages of the Church; notwithstanding the imperfections, such as the indulgence of the spirit of revenge, which are patent on its surface. So far it is instructive to the Christian beyond any other book in the Old Testament, yet the imperfections above alluded to, so contrary to the teaching

of our Lord, make it clear that it cannot form a portion of Christianity as a revelation.

The book of Job is likewise a book of worldwide sympathies. In it is discussed a problem which has always been, and ever will be, of the deepest interest to the mind of man, viz., the reasons of the apparent imperfections of God's providential government of the world. The result of the discussion is to prove that the solution of these and kindred questions, transcends the power of the human intellect. But the important point in relation to our present argument is, that this book is frequently used in modern theological discussions for the purpose of proving certain doctrines, notwithstanding the fact that the Divine voice, which is introduced at the conclusion of the argument, expressly declares that the speeches of Job's friends did not affirm of God that which was right. This is also in great measure true of those of Job himself, for although the same Divine voice gives a general approbation to the principle maintained by him, yet the patriarch himself confesses with respect to the details of his argument, "Therefore have I uttered things that I understood not, things too wonderful for me that I knew not." In the face of these assertions, the use which has been made of this book in religious controversy is simply surprising.

The widespread tendency in all ages of the Church to appeal to the imperfect moral teaching of the Old Testament as authoritative under the Christian dispensation, has been attended with far more disastrous results to Christianity than have arisen from all the attacks of unbelievers; for it has sanctioned, as matters of Christian practice, principles of action, which were mere accommodations to the low moral and spiritual condition of the Jews at particular periods of their history. No sin has more defiled the Christian Church than that of persecution; yet it is only possible to defend it by appealing to certain passages in the Old Testament as authorizing it. The same observation is true with respect to those offensive wars, and the frightful scenes enacted in

them, which have been so common among Christian nations ; and which the Church has too frequently consecrated by the celebration of "Te Deums" for the success of the victorious party. A similar defence has been set up even within our own recollection for the most unhallowed institution of slavery.

One further point is too remarkable to leave unnoticed, viz., the metamorphose of the Christian ministry into a Levitical priesthood. It has been only possible to impart to this change even the appearance of Divine authority, by making the Scriptures of the Old Testament a co-ordinate portion of the Christian revelation.

A few examples will suffice to show the extent to which the morality of the Old Testament is superseded by that of Christianity. First, the Hebrew law of war.

As the extermination of the Canaanites may be considered a special case, I shall not adduce it here ; but with respect to the Midianites we read the following injunction :—" Kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him ; but all the women children that have not known man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves (Numbers xxxi. 17, 18). If it be urged that there is something special in this case (the whole transaction is a terrible one) we have in the following passage the ordinary Jewish law of war :—

"When thou comest nigh to a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if they make thee an answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be that all the people that are found therein shall be tributaries unto thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it. And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thy hand, thou shalt smite every male therein with the edge of the sword ; and the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself" (Deut. xxi. 10-14).

I need hardly observe that this precept was acted on

through a considerable period of the earlier history, as is witnessed by the conduct of David in his wars. How, then, does the case stand? Precepts of this description must fall under the category of those which the more enlightened prophets pronounced to be "*Statutes which were not good, and laws whereby men could not live;*" or, to adopt the words of our Lord, they must have been given "*because of the hardness of their hearts.*" In a word, they were given because of the low moral condition of the times and imposed because the people were unfitted for anything higher and better.

For a fuller elucidation of this subject I must refer the reader to the elaborate work of the late Professor Mozley, entitled "*Ruling Ideas in the Early Ages ; or, Lectures to Graduates.*" The learned and orthodox Professor clearly perceived that the old explanations of the various classes of actions above referred to were no longer tenable; and therefore he felt himself compelled, in the interest of truth, to take new ground. In this work he adopts the general principle above put forward; but, in addition to this, he lays down that, while an alleged Divine authorization, sustained by a miraculous attestation, was a sufficient warrant for actions of this kind during ages of moral darkness and degradation, yet under the light of Christianity such an alleged attestation would not only afford no warrant for such practices, but would prove that the message enjoining them was not from God. Respecting this explanation I wish to express no opinion. It will be sufficient to observe that practices of this description are contrary both to the letter and the spirit of our Lord and His Apostles; and therefore it is clear that those portions of the Old Testament in which they are enjoined or sanctioned by the example of its great men can form no portion of Christianity as a revelation.

In studying the Old Testament the student should never lose sight of the fact that the moral teaching of its earlier books, and of no small portion of its later ones, contem-

plated mankind in their national, and not in their individual capacity, and dealt with them as such. One of the results of this was that the innocent became involved in the consequences of the sins of the guilty; children in those of their parents; and individuals in those of the nation or clan of which they were members. Hence the wholesale slaughters with which the history abounds. A few great men, it is true, such as Abraham and Ezekiel, clearly perceived that this was contrary to the principles of eternal justice; but such an accommodation to the sentiments of the times underlies a large portion of the morality of the Old Testament. With the birth of Christianity, however, the practice of dealing with a man as a mere unit of a nation has passed away; and in place of it has been substituted that of appealing to his conscience as an individual. The contrary practice is an unquestionable imperfection in the moral teaching of the older dispensation; and, as far as it is tainted with it, it can form no rule of duty, nor can its morality be cited as an example for Christian times.

3. The most ordinary reader of the Old Testament Scriptures cannot fail to be struck with the degree in which they are pervaded by the spirit of revenge, the only exception being some of the precepts in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, and, negatively, the Song of Solomon and the book of Job. Of this spirit the book of Psalms affords, as already observed, a striking example, and forms the best illustration, as its authorship extends over the entire period of the history. Invaluable as it is as a treasure-house of religious experience, it does not contain, from one end to the other, a single good wish for the enemies of the psalmists or a prayer for their conversion. On the contrary, they are almost uniformly consigned to destruction. It is true that those called the maledictory Psalms have been explained by some as prophetically denouncing judgments on the wicked, and by others as uttered in the person of the Messiah; and that, as such, they are supposed to be denunciations of destruction, not



on the enemies of the psalmists, but on His own. But this explanation in the latter case completely fails ; for the actual Messiah, instead of denouncing vengeance on His persecutors, prayed for them.

The case, however, does not rest on particular passages, but on the spirit which pervades the entire book. In contrast to this spirit, it will be sufficient to cite the words of our Lord Himself:—" Love your enemies ; do good to them that hate you ; bless them that curse you ; and pray for them that despitefully use you " (Luke vi. 27). And again :—" Love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Highest, for he is kind towards the unthankful and evil. Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful " (Luke vi. 35, 36).

4. Closely connected with the state of mind above referred to is the manner in which even the great men of the Old Testament, at least during the early periods of the history, habitually dipped their hands in blood. In conformity with the spirit of the age, they thought nothing of shedding blood like water. Of this spirit the right of the avenger of blood to slay the accidental homicide is a striking illustration. So inveterate was this evil habit that, to save the innocent man from destruction, Moses found it necessary to institute the cities of refuge, where the accidental homicide was obliged to remain during the lifetime of the High Priest. If he were discovered beyond their limits, the blood-avenger might slay the most innocent man with impunity. Strange to say, theology has manufactured this imperfect institution into a type of Jesus Christ.

Taking these great men as a whole, it is obvious that their characters stand in marked contrast to that which the sermon on the Mount describes as the ideal of Christian morality. One thing, however, respecting them deserves to be noted. They are real characters, portrayed in their failings, as well as in their excellencies. The former, in fact, predominate, and the latter consist almost exclusively

of the virtues of the heroic type; whereas, those of Christianity are the milder virtues. Such characters may have been recorded for our admonition, and in some cases for our instruction; but they can throw no light on the teaching of Him who is the complete embodiment of holiness in His own practice.

5. The Jewish law of polygamy and divorce is another striking example. Polygamy has in all ages proved the curse of Oriental society, has degraded the woman into a slave, and rendered a sound religious and moral education of children all but an impossibility. But it was more than tolerated under the Old Testament dispensation. Thus not only did Abraham, Jacob, and David practice it without scruple, but Nathan in his message of rebuke to the latter for the murder of Uriah uses the following words—prefacing them with the usual prophetic utterance, “Thus saith the Lord”—“I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master’s house, and thy master’s wives into thy bosom, and I gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given thee such and such things” (2 Sam. xii. 7, 8). With respect to the Mosaic law of divorce our Lord’s utterance is conclusive. It was given to the Jews “because of the hardness of their hearts.” The practice of polygamy is equally condemned by the following declaration:—

“From the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh: so then they shall be no more twain, but one flesh” (Mark x. 6-8). Although this utterance is specially directed against the Jewish practice of divorce, it is clear that the principle announced in it is inconsistent with that of polygamy.

It would be easy to cite an indefinite number of other cases of moral imperfection from the pages of the Old Testament, but these, which constitute the most striking

ones, will be sufficient to establish the points which we are seeking to prove, viz., that its morality, taken as a whole, cannot be referred to as a guide for Christians; that such portions of eternal truth as underlie its teaching, and which it only imperfectly sets forth, are fully realized in that of our Lord; and that those portions of it which were a concession to the imperfect morality of the times, are by Him abrogated and repealed.

The question therefore which St. Paul proposed in the course of his argument in the Epistle to the Galatians may not inaptly be put here—"What then is the law?" and the answer may be returned in the words of the same Apostle—"It was added because of transgression, till the seed should come, to whom the promise hath been made." And again—"And the law came in beside, that the trespass might abound" (Romans v. 20). But the promised seed has come; and constitutes in His own person the great objective revelation of God. What follows? That the light of the twinkling star is superseded, nay, extinguished, in that of the mid-day sun.

Let me now place before the reader the conclusions which result from the preceding facts and considerations.

1. The position occupied by the Scriptures of the Old Testament is that of witnesses to Christ. As such they are habitually appealed to by our Lord and His Apostles.

2. The writers of the New Testament habitually appealed to them as affording proof of our Lord's Messiahship when they addressed Jews, or Proselytes, who acknowledged their Divine authority; but not as throwing light on the revelation made in His person, which they affirm to be so complete in itself as to require nothing to supplement it. Thus viewed, they form an important attestation to the truth of Christianity even at the present day.

3. These Scriptures are invaluable to the theologian to enable him to trace the gradual evolution of revelation, and as containing the history of the mode of education adopted by God, whereby the Jewish people were gradually

elevated into a condition of thought which rendered them capable of receiving the ideas of the Christian revelation, and of becoming the seed plot in which those ideas could take root and germinate.

4. The facts recorded in the Old Testament, to use the language of St. Paul, are examples to us, and are recorded for our admonition ; those referred to by him being chiefly adduced in the way of warning.

5. The imperfect and partial revelations which were made through the prophets are not only fully realized in the Christian revelation, free from all their defects and imperfections, but are absorbed in the perfection of the revelation made in our Lord's person and teaching.

6. Its moral teaching, as far as it is based on eternal truth, is more than realized in His moral teaching ; but as far as it was an accommodation to the low moral and spiritual condition of the times, it is superseded.

7. In the Scriptures of the Old Testament the character of God is presented to us under two aspects—one, that of the eternal Governor of the universe, holy, just, and merciful ; the other, as invested with the attributes of humanity, and even with not a few of those of its lower types. These latter are beyond all question accommodations to the moral and spiritual atmosphere of the times ; and as such are superseded by the Christian revelation, which emphatically affirms that the moral perfections which shine forth in the person of Jesus Christ are the moral perfections of God.

Lastly, St. Paul thus defines the relation in which the Scriptures of the Old Testament stand to Christianity :—

“Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work ” (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17).

The functions of the Old Testament therefore are, not to throw a clearer light on the revelation made in our Lord's person, work, and teaching, but to bear witness to Him.

The following passage of the great Apostle places the contrast of the two covenants in a striking light :—

“Having, therefore, such a hope, we use great boldness of speech ; and are not as Moses, who put a veil on his face, that the children of Israel should not look steadfastly on the end of that which was passing away : but their minds were hardened, for until this very day, at the reading of the old covenant, the same veil remaineth unlifted ; which veil is done away in Christ. But unto this day, whensoever Moses is read, the veil lieth upon their heart. But whensoever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit ; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all with unveiled face, reflecting as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit” (2 Cor. iii. 12-18).

Moses’ veiled face, according to the view of the Apostle, is a symbol of the imperfect and veiled truths of the Old Testament dispensation. That veil is taken away in Christ, who is “the image of the invisible God,” through whom Christians are transformed from glory to glory, and in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

## CHAPTER V.

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### THE MESSIANIC PROPHECIES : HOW FAR ACCEPTED BY OUR LORD.

As no portion of the Scriptures of the Old Testament is so frequently appealed to by the writers of the New, as the prophetic delineations of a future kingdom of God, and of the person of its King, this subject requires a separate and careful consideration. In doing this I shall assume the truth of a position, of which the proof will be given in a subsequent chapter, namely, that the conception of a kingdom of God is fundamental to our Lord's teaching. The source of this conception is beyond all question the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament. It is therefore of the highest importance to consider their declarations on this subject, the degree in which this idea was adopted by Him, and the mode in which He applied it to Himself.

It is impossible for the most cursory reader to peruse the Gospels without arriving at the conviction, that the expectation of the speedy manifestation of a kingdom of God was widely diffused among the Jewish people at the commencement of our Lord's ministry. Of this the proclamation with which He opened it, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," is a sufficient proof. If it had been otherwise, the proclamation would have been unintelligible, unless it had been accompanied with explanations of which the Gospels contain no trace. It follows, therefore, that the conception

must have been already current; and that our Lord accepted the fundamental idea involved in it, as the foundation of His own teaching. On the other hand, the Gospels render it certain that He introduced a number of very important modifications into the popular conceptions concerning it.

The book of the Old Testament in which the idea receives its most definite embodiment, is the book of Daniel. It is here that it first receives the specific designation of "the kingdom of God." It will be sufficient to cite two of the Messianic passages of this book, as fixing its general character. The first is from Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and its interpretation:—"Thou sawest until a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image on his feet, which were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, and the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone which smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Dan. ii. 34, 35). The prophet's interpretation is as follows:—"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms; and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. ii. 44).

These passages, taken with their context, make the distinct affirmation that at some future period it was the purpose of God to set up a kingdom, which should differ in character from every kingdom which had previously existed. Its superhuman origin is strikingly delineated under the image of a stone cut out of a mountain without hands; its gradual expansion, by the reiterated blows which it inflicts on the great image, the symbol of all earthly power, until it has ground it to powder; and its universal character, by the gradual growth of the stone into a great mountain, until it fills the whole earth. This kingdom also, the prophet informs us in the interpretation, was destined to consume

and break in pieces all the various earthly powers, and was to endure for ever.

The second passage forms a portion of the Vision of the four wild beasts coming out of the sea. By these were intended to be symbolized a number of world powers, pursuing purely earthly ends. During some period of the reign of the last of these, the prophet says :—"I beheld until the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels like burning fire. A fiery flame issued and came forth from before him: thousands, thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. . . . And I saw in the night visions; one like unto the (a) Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days; and they brought him near before him. And there was given unto him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. . . . And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given unto the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him" (Dan. viii. 9-11, 13, 14, 27).

In this vision, not only is the kingdom, but the person of its King presented to our view. One resembling a Son of Man, comes seated on the clouds, the emblem both in the Old and the New Testament of the presence of the superhuman. The Eternal, robed in holiness, and surrounded by the ministers of His power, is seated on His judgment throne, about to take cognizance of the iniquities which had been perpetrated by the world dynasties of the past. A Son of Man appears, coming in the clouds of heaven; is conducted into His presence, and placed by His attendants before His throne. His worthiness to take the place of the ungodly world powers is immediately recognized; dominion



is given unto Him; and under Him the saints, hitherto down-trodden, enter on the inheritance of the kingdom of God—a kingdom which is destined to embrace all nations, and to endure for ever.

The knowledge of the contents of these visions was beyond all doubt widely diffused among the Jews at the period of the advent; and the circumstances of the times must have produced an intense desire for their speedy realization. Consequently, those who heard the solemn announcement made by the Baptist, and by our Lord, that “the kingdom of heaven was at hand,” could not fail to identify the kingdom thus announced with the kingdom spoken of by the prophet, and with its Messianic King. This, therefore, forms the groundwork of the idea of the kingdom of God, as it was adopted by the Jews, and as it was accepted by our Lord.

But numerous other Scriptures had likewise contributed to its elaboration, especially in the form which it assumed in the popular anticipations. The writings of the prophets and the psalmists abound with anticipations of a future kingdom of God, far more glorious than any manifestation of it which had been witnessed in the past. This kingdom presented itself to their minds as a complete realization of the idea, which was involved in the old theocracy. Consequently, its King was frequently portrayed as an ideal David, who would realize the true conception of a theocratic King. The truth is, that the entire history of Israel proves that the theocracy—even under its best kings—had never fully realized the idea which underlay it, and that under its bad kings it had proved little better than a failure. Moreover, the times during which the prophets lived, were for the most part periods of national apostasy. But in the midst of the darkness of the present, bright visions of its realization in the future, by means of some special Divine manifestation, presented themselves to their minds. Hence it came to pass that their delineations of it, and of the person of its King, were couched in imagery which in its literal meaning affirmed that the future kingdom

of God would be a theocracy formed on the Old Testament model, but on a grander and more expanded scale.

But the theocracy, as it is depicted in the Old Testament, bears unquestionable marks of moral imperfection. Among these it will be sufficient to refer to the sanction given by it to deeds of blood, and other excesses in war, such as those referred to in the preceding chapter. As a matter of fact, all its great judges and kings were warriors, and warriors of a barbarous type, among whom David, its most perfect embodiment of a theocratic king, forms no exception. Hence it has come to pass that language, tinged with various degrees of moral imperfection, has been used by prophets and psalmists in their delineation of the kingdom of God and of the person of its King, who is not unfrequently depicted as an earthly conqueror, who enters into possession of his kingdom through scenes of blood. While this portion of the prophetic delineation formed its most prominent aspect in the eyes of our Lord's contemporaries, it was repudiated by Him as inconsistent with its true ideal, as is proved by the whole of His teaching as recorded in the Gospels. Now that the King has come, and explained the true nature of His kingdom in such a manner as, in accordance with His own declaration, it never entered into the minds of prophets, and kings even to conceive, we are justified in spiritualizing those portions of the prophetic delineations ; but to our Lord's contemporaries the idea of doing so was very unlikely to have occurred, especially when one of the most prominent features in the character of the historic David, was that of a warrior after the Jewish model, who had no mercy on his foes.

Such being the case, we need hardly wonder that the possibility of harmonizing the character of a mighty conqueror of the Davidic type with that of a King of righteousness and peace—not to say, with that of a lowly sufferer,—in the person of the Messiah, presented great difficulties to their minds. It will therefore be necessary to take a brief survey of these prophetic delineations of the

kingdom of God and of the person of its King, to enable us to see how far they were accepted by our Lord, and how far they contain an element which He rejected in consequence of their being expressed in forms of thought derived from the imperfections of the times in which they were uttered, and to which they were accommodated. The prophecy of Daniel above quoted, represents the kingdom of heaven as one of gradual growth, and differing from every human institution. This idea was adopted by our Lord, who uniformly proclaimed it as one which was purely spiritual and moral.

The Psalms need not detain us long. In those which are obviously Messianic (and they are few in number), an idealized King of the old theocracy forms the ground-work of the conception of the Christ. In those which are typically Messianic, an idealized David, free from the imperfections of the historic David forms the groundwork of the same conception.

But the 22nd Psalm takes a different position. In it the Messiah is portrayed as a triumphant sufferer. The entire delineation corresponds only to one person known to history, and is directly applied by our Lord to Himself. With respect to this Psalm it will be sufficient to observe, that after delineating one who passes through every stage of suffering—such sufferings in fact as were never endured by the historic David—until he is brought into the “dust of death,” the Psalmist proceeds to describe His sufferings as resulting in a marvellous triumph. The latter portion of this delineation is so remarkable that it will be necessary to quote it. The sufferer, who describes himself as having been brought to “the dust of death,” suddenly exclaims:—

“I will declare thy name unto my brethren ; in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. . . . My praise shall be of him in the great congregation : I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The meek shall eat and be satisfied : they shall praise the Lord that seek him : your

heart shall live for ever. All the ends of the earth shall remember themselves, and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations. All they that be fat on earth shall eat and worship: all that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none shall keep alive his own soul. A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and declare his righteousness to a people that shall be born, that he hath done this" (Psalm xxii. 22-31).

We have here depicted one who passes through every stage of suffering until it terminates in death, yet whose sufferings result in a glorious triumph—a triumph won not for himself only, but for the benefit of others. The effect of his sufferings is to be that "All the ends of the earth shall remember themselves, and turn to the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him:" the meek are to be satisfied; those that seek the Lord are to praise him, and live for ever; the great ones on the earth shall worship him, and those that go down to the dust shall bow before him; and through him shall the righteousness of God be proclaimed to a people yet unborn.

Such is the Psalmist's delineation of the triumphant sufferer, which, in conjunction with Isaiah's delineation of the suffering Servant of Jehovah, was accepted by our Lord as containing the true idea of the character of the King of the kingdom of God, and of the Messiahship which He claimed. But of this more presently, when we consider the great prophecy of Isaiah.

The book of this prophet, apart from all controversies whether it is the work of one or more authors, naturally divides itself into two portions, viz., the first thirty-nine and the last twenty-six chapters. The first of these contains several delineations of the kingdom of God, and of the person of its King, but the second possesses this peculiar advantage, that the Messianic conception, which from time to time reappears in its opening thirteen chapters,

is made to centre in a single character, who is designated as "the Servant of Jehovah," who, there is strong reason to believe, is also the great deliverer of the remaining thirteen.

In the earlier division of the prophecy, the first forecast of the future kingdom of God (chapter ii.) is in the form of an expanded Jewish theocracy, differing from it only in the fact, that idolatry would be abolished, that wars would cease under it, and that the Gentile nations would be invited to participate in its blessings. Still it is conceived of in a purely local form: for Jerusalem is not only to be its capital, but the centre of its worship; nor does the delineation of it contain a single intimation that the Mosaic ritual was to be abolished; on the contrary, men are represented as exhorting one another to go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.

That portion of the prophetic delineation which involves the local imagery, was rejected by our Lord when He announced the great truth, that the hour was then come, when the sanctity of local worship should be abolished. "Woman, believe me the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor at Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. . . . God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship in spirit and in truth."

The next Messianic delineation, (chapter ix.) is in the form of an idealized Davidic king who is invested with attributes so divine, as in their literal sense to be capable of realization in no being purely human. Thus the prophet writes:—"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even for ever" (Isaiah ix. 6, 7).

Here again it is evident that the fundamental Messianic

conception is that of a Davidic King, who would realize the idea of the old theocracy; for he is described as sitting on David's throne, and ruling over his kingdom. The conception therefore is essentially national and local. Such must have been the idea which this description conveyed to the mind of a Jew prior to the advent.

The 25th and 26th chapters are eminently Messianic. The concluding verse of the 24th chapter forms their introduction. This affirms that a time would come when the moon would be confounded and the sun ashamed; when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously. The two chapters in question constitute two triumphant hymns, descriptive of this event and its triumphant issues. The first of them contains the following remarkable passage:—

“And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he shall destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall be taken away from off all the earth; for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord: we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill” (Isaiah xxv. 6-10).

The second hymn concludes with the following promise of a Resurrection.

“Thy dead men shall live: together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her slain. . . . For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for

their iniquity ; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain " (Isaiah xxvi. 19-21).

These two hymns could not fail to create in the minds of those who acknowledged their Divine authority, an anticipation of the advent of a kingdom of God, of which the predominant character would be holiness, and peace : and in a somewhat more indefinite form, the expectation of a resurrection, to enable the saints, who had died before its advent, to enjoy its blessings. Still the whole imagery is entirely local. The feast of fat things made to all nations is to be spread at Jerusalem. There also " death is to be swallowed up in victory." Moab also is to be trodden down as straw. Of the second hymn it is expressly stated that it will be sung in the land of Judah ; and the earth is described as disclosing her blood, and no more covering her slain. Thus the most spiritual conceptions of the kingdom of God are united with imagery which is essentially local and temporal.

Many other Messianic passages, containing glowing descriptions of this kingdom, are found in this portion of the prophecy. Every one of them, however, is distinguished by the same characteristics, and is closely interwoven with denunciations of vengeance against the neighbouring nations. The conception which invariably underlies them is that of a theocracy, of which Jerusalem is the centre. The sword also—not persuasion—was to be the instrument employed in its establishment. The following passage will give us a lively idea of the imagery in question.

" Come near, ye nations, to hear ; and hearken ye people : let the earth hear, and all that is therein ; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury is against all their armies : he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. And all the hosts of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll : and all their hosts shall fall down, as the leaf

falleth off from the vine, and as the falling fig from the fig-tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumæa, and on the people of my curse, to judgment. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and of goats, and with the kidneys of rams: for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozra, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumæa" (Isaiah xxxiv. 1-6).

On this terrible description, which is continued throughout the chapter, follows an equally striking one of the peaceful character of the kingdom of God:—"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. . . . Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God shall come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he shall come and save you. The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break forth, and streams in the desert. . . . No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; and they shall obtain joy, and gladness; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah xxxv.).

This latter passage is beyond question intended to be descriptive of the kingdom of God, and the former of the destruction of the enemies of the Jews, by which its erection was to be preceded. Both are couched in imagery essentially local and temporal. Thus, in the latter passage, the redeemed of the Lord are described as coming to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. This temporal and local imagery, however, formed the mere colouring in which the great truth was embodied in the prophet's mind; and as such, it was rejected by our Lord as



forming no portion of the essential idea of that kingdom which He came to erect, and which, even in the prophetic conception of it, was to include the Gentile nations. With respect to the scenes of terror and of blood by which it was to be introduced, it will be sufficient to quote our Lord's saying, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here; or, Lo there," and His declaration before Pilate, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered unto the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

But by far the most important of these predictions are those contained in the twenty-six concluding chapters. It has been objected that the prophet viewed them as destined to receive their realization in the triumphant return of the Jews from Babylon; nor can it be denied that this event forms the historical foreground of the prophecy. But it is also evident that the prophet's anticipations of the glories of the future kingdom are couched in such exalted language, that even the highest flights of poetic imagination would have hesitated to apply it exclusively to the event in question. At any rate, it is a simple fact, that it has never been even remotely realized, either in a spiritual or in a literal sense, in any event in Jewish history prior to the Advent.

As the discussion of this remarkable prophecy would occupy a larger space than can be afforded to it in the present work, I must ask the reader carefully to study it as a whole, if he would form a correct opinion as to the degree in which it contributed to the formation of the idea of the kingdom of God, as it was accepted by our Lord's contemporaries; and how far it was adopted by Himself. It will be sufficient to observe that its chief features, as delineated in the former portion of the prophecy, are here set forth on an enlarged scale. Still its fundamental conception is that of a theocracy, but of a theocracy which is expanded into an universal reign of God on earth. The Jewish people, however, are still its privileged race, and Jerusalem the

capital of its King and the centre of its worship, although the Gentile nations, and even the whole world, were to participate in its blessings. How this union of a world-wide religion with the localism of Judaism was to be effected, the prophet has nowhere explained; but the concluding passage of his prophecy proves, that he considered that the rites of Judaism would continue to be permanent institutions in the kingdom of God:—

“And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, and Javan, and to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord, out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, *to my holy mountain Jerusalem*, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord; and *I will take of them for priests, and for Levites*, saith the Lord. For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that *from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me*, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh” (Isaiah lxvi. 19-24).

A veil then of imagery, derived from the local and the transitory, and from the moral and spiritual atmosphere in which the prophet lived, enshrouded his most exalted forecasts of the spiritual and the eternal. Out of this imagery our Lord's contemporaries, using, as they did, a strict literalism of interpretation, and making no allowance for the forms of thought in which the prophets clothed their ideas, elaborated the conception of a mighty conqueror, who, by the use of such

means as were sanctioned by the old theocracy, would establish Jewish supremacy, and with it, the institution of Judaism throughout the world.

What to do with the suffering Servant of Jehovah was a problem which they passed over in silence; at any rate, the Gospels prove that in the popular anticipations of the kingdom of God at the period of our Lord's ministry, this portion of the prophetic delineation was entirely ignored.

But this portion of the prophecy demands our particular attention as setting before us more than any other passage in the Old Testament that aspect of His Messianic character on which our Lord so strongly dwelt in His teaching, and which had passed out of sight in the popular conceptions of it, viz., that the King of the kingdom of God was to suffer, and to die, before He entered into His glory. I refer to the delineation of the Servant of Jehovah, which the prophet sets before us in shadowy outline in no less than nine different places between the 41st and 52nd chapters, until in the closing verses of the 52nd chapter, and throughout the whole of the 53rd, he presents us with the full portraiture of the suffering and the triumphant "Man of Sorrows."

It is usual for the ordinary reader to view the portraiture of the Man of Sorrows as a distinct prophecy, having no connection with anything which has preceded it. The Man of Sorrows is in the 52nd chapter distinctly designated by the title of "the Servant of Jehovah," and it is impossible on any sound principles of criticism to avoid identifying him with the character whom the prophet has not less than nine times before referred to in the ten previous chapters under the same designation. It is true that this Servant of Jehovah is there more than once presented to us in the character of *an Ideal Israel*, who is to be the means of bringing back the actual Israel to the Lord his God, and to become a light to the Gentile nations. Of this aspect of the prophetic delineation we have the following remarkable example:—  
"Listen ye islands to me, and hearken ye people. The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of

my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth as a sharp sword, and in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me. And said unto me, *Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.* Then said I, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now saith the Lord, that formed thee from the womb, *to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him*: Though Israel be not gathered; yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord; and my God shall be my strength. And he said, Is it a light thing *to be my servant* to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel? I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth" (Isaiah xlix. 1-6). This passage presents us with two speakers, Jehovah, and an idealized Israel, who is clearly distinguished from the actual Israel. Whatever might have been the original conception, from which that of the ideal Israel was derived, the language here applied to it clearly marks out the whole passage as Messianic. Thus Jehovah affirms that it is the mission of this idealized Israel to bring the actual Israel back to Him. In this work the ideal Israel expresses his firm determination to persevere, notwithstanding all the difficulties he may encounter. To it, as the Servant of Jehovah, he has been called from the womb. Still he contemplates the possibility of his mission to the actual Israel proving a failure. In that case he is to become a light to the Gentiles, and God's salvation unto the ends of the earth. Throughout the whole of the remainder of the chapter exalted Messianic attitudes are attributed to him; and he is described, in conjunction with Jehovah, as carrying on the work of redemption.

Again, in the 50th chapter, the same character is presented to our view in the following declaration:—"The Lord hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks

to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. . . . Who is among you that feareth the Lord, *that obeyeth the voice of his servant*, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God" (Isaiah l. 5-11).<sup>1</sup>

Here the Servant of Jehovah begins to appear in the character of a sufferer; but a sufferer supported by a firm trust in God. To this, after the interval of another chapter, which consists of alternate utterances of Jehovah and his Servant, follows the great delineation of the Man of Sorrows, who is thus identified by the prophet with the Servant of Jehovah of the previous chapters, in which he had been invested with the highest Messianic attributes.

"Behold, *my servant* shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him; but that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider" (Isaiah lii. 13-15).

On these words follow the great prophetic delineation of the triumphant Man of Sorrows, which is too well-known to need quotation.

The attentive reader cannot fail to observe that the Servant of Jehovah of these chapters is the same character throughout; a divine, yet a suffering human one. In the 42nd chapter, where he is first introduced, he is invested with attributes in the highest degree Messianic.

"Behold," says the divine speaker, "my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighted; I have put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed

shall he not break nor smoking flax shall he not quench ; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he hath set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law. . . . I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, I will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house " (Isaiah xlii. 1-7).

Taking these delineations as a whole, it is evident that the prophet meant to set before us the portraiture of one who, while he was possessed of exalted Messianic attributes, was at the same time to be a human sufferer, but whose sufferings were to end in a glorious triumph. This is precisely the aspect of the Jesus of the Gospels ; and the whole delineation is again and again referred to, both by our Lord and by the writers of the Gospels, as constituting the greatest testimony of the Scriptures of the Old Testament to His Messianic character ; and as such it was accepted by Him as the true enunciation of the idea of the Christ.

The identity of the Man of Sorrows and the sufferer of the 22nd Psalm is complete. Both depict sufferers, who after they have sunk to the lowest depths of humiliation, ending in death, attain a triumph not only glorious to themselves, but fraught with results in the highest degree beneficial to the kingdom of God. Whether an ideal Israel constitutes the actual framework of the one, or a suffering David of the other, it is evident that the delineation itself, in the natural meaning of the language in which it is depicted, has been realized by one only who is known to history, Jesus Christ our Lord. It has been necessary to dwell somewhat minutely on these two delineations, because they form the root and groundwork of that Messianic character to which our Lord laid claim ; and on which he so strongly insisted during the concluding part of His ministry.

Yet it is quite certain that it did not so commend itself to the minds of His contemporaries. We, at the present day, are very inadequate judges of the difficulty which even thoughtful men must have felt prior to its realization in the person of Jesus Christ, in conceiving the possibility of the union of the conception of a suffering and a triumphant Messiah in the same person. Even the reiterated explanations of our Lord had failed to induce the Apostles to accept it as a possibility. Thus the Evangelists repeatedly inform us that the meaning of His sayings on this subject "was hid from them, neither did they understand the things which were spoken;" nor did they realize the unpalatable truth until it was made palpable to them by the crucifixion. As far as the public were concerned, they had seized on all that was material and earthly in the prophetic delineations, and ignored all that was spiritual and eternal.

From the 53rd chapter to the end of the prophecy, a great Messianic character, who is engaged in carrying out the work of redemption—which in the 53rd chapter is assigned to the Servant of Jehovah—is from time to time presented to our view. It is true that this Messianic character is nowhere designated by this special title in the remainder of the prophecy. Still the delineations in the chapters immediately following the 53rd, stand in the closest connection with the triumphant issue of the sufferings of the Man of Sorrows; and have all the appearance of being a continuation of the same subject. There seems, therefore, sufficient reason for inferring that the Redeemer of the concluding portions of the prophecy is the same person as the Servant of Jehovah of the preceding twenty-three chapters. If this be so, it follows that we have a great Messianic delineation, which forms a continuous whole, extending from the 40th to the 66th chapter. I have already drawn attention to the fact that our Lord has in the most express terms appropriated a portion of this latter delineation to Himself in His discourse at Nazareth. Still there were unspiritual elements in it, which He repudiated as inconsistent with the idea which underlay

the genuine Messianic conception, of which the following may be cited as an example :—" Who is he that cometh from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah ? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength ; I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat ? I have trodden the winepress alone ; and of the people there was none with me ; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury ; and their blood shall be sprinkled on my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come ; and I looked and there was no man, and I wondered that there was none to uphold ; therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me, and my fury it upheld me, and I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth " (Isaiah lxiii. 1-6).

Here we have the same Messianic speaker as in the 61st chapter, depicted as a conqueror over Edom, with his garments stained with the blood of his enemies, taking vengeance on them like another David ; the imagery employed being borrowed from a King of the old theocracy. Jesus Christ, in effecting the work of redemption, trod the winepress alone ; and of the people there was none with him, but His spiritual conquests were effected, not by pouring out the blood of His enemies, but by the shedding of His own ; the garments of the conqueror from Bozrah are dyed in the blood of the Moabites ; those of the great Spiritual Conqueror in His own—" I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

The remaining Messianic prophecies, almost without exception, assume the form of an expansion of the old theocratic idea ; and its king is an idealized David, who at some future period was to realize its true conception. Of this the following prophecy of Jeremiah is a striking example :—

" Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise



unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice on the earth (land?). In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name, whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, the Lord liveth who brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but the Lord liveth who brought up and who led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them, and they shall dwell in their own land" (Jer. xxiii. 5-8).

This imagery admits of no question respecting the source from which it was derived. The prophetic conception of the kingdom of God is that of the old theocracy, idealized under the reign of an ideal David, who is to execute judgment and justice in the land, of which the restored exiles from Babylon were to enjoy the benefit. Their restoration was to resemble Israel's deliverance from Egypt, only it was to be an event far more marvellous. Under it Israel and Judah were to be saved, and dwell safely in their own land. The localism of the imagery is therefor unmistakable. Now that the Divine reality, thus dimly set forth under the image of the temporal, has come, the Christian reader readily allegorizes expressions so completely national, as Israel and Judah, as a typical representation of the Catholic Church; but it was hardly possible for a Jew prior to the Advent to attach any other meaning to the words than that his exclusive privileges were to be continued to him under the kingdom of the Messiah.

Yet the same prophet gives us one of the most spiritual delineations of the kingdom of God which is to be found in the Old Testament. I allude to the passage, already quoted, containing the promise that the time was coming when God would make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, and which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews affirms to have received its realization in the institution of the Catholic Church. In proof of

its spirituality, I need only cite the following words :—  
“After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws in their inward parts, and I will write them in their hearts. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them” (Jeremiah xxxi. 31, 33).

This passage is a striking example of the prophetic mode of delineating the spiritual and the eternal under the imagery of the local and the temporal, and of the manner in which the former was adopted and the latter rejected by the writers of the New Testament. The prophet emphatically sets forth that the inward spirit of man was to be the especial region of the theocracy of the New Covenant, and that its laws were to be no longer engraven on tables of stone, but to be written on the heart. Yet nothing is more strikingly local than the concluding portion of this very delineation, in which the whole is made to centre in the returned exiles from Babylon :—“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall go forth over against it from the hill Gareb, and shall compass about it to Goath. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate towards the east, shall be holy unto the Lord; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down for ever” (Jeremiah xxxi. 38-40).

Here again the localism is unmistakable; yet this passage stands in the closest connection with one of the most spiritual of the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, and one which the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has affirmed to have received its fulfilment in the foundation of the Christian Church. I am aware that there is a school of prophetic interpreters who affirm that the whole of the local and material imagery of the prophetic delineations will yet be literally accomplished at some period

of the future, including the restoration of the sacrifices and the temple worship. Those however who hold these views are silent as to whether the whole of the rites of purification, carnal ordinances, and minute ritual of the elder dispensation, respecting which an Apostle has said that they constituted a burden which "neither we nor our forefathers were able to bear," are to be observed in the perfected kingdom of God. With persons who hold that a restoration of this kind is consistent with the teaching of the New Testament, it is useless to argue. What our Lord and His Apostles did was to distinguish between the outward form of the prophetic delineations and the eternal realities which underlay them. The one they accepted; the other they passed over in silence. The popular theology of the period of our Lord's ministry, on the contrary, eagerly grasped at the shell, and threw away the kernel which it contained.

The remaining prophets contribute hardly anything additional to the Messianic conception. With them it is uniformly depicted in imagery derived from the theocracy. Thus the Messianic forecasts of Ezekiel are delineated on this model in a manner so marked that they could hardly have failed to produce on the mind of the ordinary reader the impression that they were destined to receive their realization in the restoration of the Jews from Babylon. Nay, the nine concluding chapters of his prophecy contain an account of a number of visions, in which is set before us a reconstructed temple, with an extremely elaborate ceremonial worship, as constituting an essential feature of the restored theocracy, of which an ideal David was to be the king. His entire description of it could hardly be otherwise regarded by a Jew before the Advent than as promising a restoration of the theocracy in a more perfect form, and on an enlarged scale, with its entire ritual and ceremonial worship, in the future kingdom of God. These Messianic delineations however are nowhere referred to in the New Testament, unless the description of the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse be an exception.

A well-known passage in the prophet Joel must be here referred to as affording another illustration of the mode in which our Lord and His Apostles distinguished spiritual and eternal truth from the imagery of the local and the temporal in which it was embodied in the prophet's mind. He thus writes:—"And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions ; and also upon the servants and on the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered ; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call. For behold in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people, and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land " (Joel ii. 28-32 ; iii. 1, 2). The prophet then proceeds to announce, in a passage too long for quotation, a gathering of the Jews out of all nations whither they had been carried captive ; a sale of the sons and daughters of their oppressors to those Jews whom they had sold into slavery ; and a summons to Jews and Gentiles to gather themselves together to war in the valley of decision, when the Lord is to appear as the deliverer of His people, after which a long period of peace and prosperity is to be their lot in the land of Canaan, while their Gentile oppressors are to continue in desolation.

This portion of the prophecy forms a continuous whole. But it should also be observed, that the passage which I have quoted is closely interwoven with a summons to the

fellow-countrymen of the prophet to repentance, in consequence of a plague of locusts—the plague itself being described in imagery of the highest poetry. Then follow promises of renewed favour to the people on their sincere repentance, couched in language equally poetic; and in the closest connection with these, the Messianic prophecy, already quoted, which is introduced with the words—“And it shall come to pass *afterwards*, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh.”

It must be evident to the reader that the imagery here employed by the prophet is derived from circumstances in the midst of which he lived, and is pre-eminently local and temporal. Yet we have the direct declaration of St. Peter immediately after the illuminating influences of the Divine Spirit had been communicated to the primitive believers on the day of Pentecost, that its true meaning was realized on that day in the descent of the heavenly Comforter on the Christian Church.

“And they were all amazed,” says the historian, “and were perplexed, saying one to another, what meaneth this? But others mocking, said, “They are filled with new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them saying, Ye men of Israel, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be it known unto you, and give ear unto my words. For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing that it is but the third hour of the day; but this is that which hath been spoken by the prophet Joel.” He then proceeds to cite the central portion of the prophecy word for word, ending with the words—“Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

What, then, was the view which was taken of this prophecy by the Apostle? It is evident that he threw aside the whole of the temporal and local imagery—the blood, the fire, the vapour of smoke, the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood—although these expressions were actually quoted by him; and affirmed that all that was essential and eternal in the prophetic utterance was realized in the outpouring of the Divine Spirit on the

Church, and in the declaration then authoritatively uttered, of the efficiency of sincere repentance to procure remission of sins. "This," he says, "is it which was spoken by the prophet Joel."

Notwithstanding this declaration of the Apostle, those who contend that the prophecies of the Old Testament must receive a fulfilment to the letter, affirm that the events of the day of Pentecost were only their partial realization. Consequently, they are compelled to assume that their temporal and local elements are yet destined to be realized at some future period. But respecting such a literal fulfilment, not only is the Apostle absolutely silent, but he declares that the thing spoken of by the prophet was actually realized on that day. Moreover, if the letter of these prophecies must be realized, then it follows that before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes the sun must be literally turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, an alternative which few reasonable men will be willing to accept. But the plain fact, that the realization of this local symbolism in the Christian Church is utterly inconsistent with the teaching of Him who affirmed that the time had arrived when men should neither at Mount Gerisim, nor yet at Jerusalem, yield a specially acceptable worship to the Father; but that it would be equally acceptable in every place, when offered in spirit and in truth, is conclusive against these literal interpretations. How can the restoration of a local and a ritual worship be possible in that Church where there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, but where Christ is all and in all?

The remaining prophecies add little to the Messianic conception. Even the one in Micah which assigns Bethlehem as the place whence the "Ruler" was to issue, who was to be great unto the ends of the earth (land), is clothed in imagery derived from the immediate surroundings of the prophet. It is as follows:—"But thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come

forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting. Therefore shall he give them up, until the time that she that travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. *And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall he raise up against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders*" (Micah v. 2-6).

Let it be observed that in this prophecy, "He that was to be the ruler in Israel," "whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting," is expressly described as a defence of Israel against the Assyrian power; yet long prior to the Advent this power had utterly perished. Those, therefore, who cling to the literal fulfilment of prophecy must assume that this power, which has now for more than twenty centuries no longer existed, will again revive, to be again destroyed by the coming of the Messiah. But, according to St. Matthew, even the Jewish priests and scribes had learned to disregard that portion of the prophetic delineation which was derived from the circumstances of the times:—

"And Herod, gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, inquired of them where the Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet. And thou, Bethlehem, land of Judah, art in no wise least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come forth a Governor, which shall be shepherd of my people Israel" (Matthew ii. 4-6).

The same remarks are true of the prophets who flourished after the exile, if we accept the concluding chapters of Zechariah as belonging to that date. These form a most

striking portion of those writings which have contributed to the Messianic conception ; and one passage has been referred to by the author of the fourth Gospel as having received its realization in the fact of the piercing of our Lord's side :—"They shall look on him whom they have pierced." Yet all the passages in this prophet which can be referred to as possessing a Messianic character are interwoven with imagery intensely local, from which they do not admit of a grammatical separation. The view which would interpose an interval of more than two thousand years between the advent of the Messiah and the realization of the local imagery of the Messianic portions of this prophecy, not only tears the entire prophecy into disjointed shreds, but renders it necessary to assume that the Jewish rites and ordinances will be restored in the future kingdom of Christ—a theory which sets at naught the plainest statements of the New Testament. In proof of this it will be sufficient to cite the passage referred to in the fourth Gospel :—"In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem ; and he that is feeble among them in that day shall be as David ; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications : *and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced*, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son ; and shall be in heaviness for him, as one that is in heaviness for his firstborn. And in that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning in Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart ; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart ; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart ; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart ; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart" (Zechariah xii. 8-14).



Further proof is needless ; but I will notice the last Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament, because our Lord Himself has given us the sense in which He accepted it :—

“ But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing on his wings ; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves for the stall. And I will tread down the wicked ; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day when I shall do this, saith the Lord of Hosts. Remember ye the law of Moses, my servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord : and he shall turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse ” (Malachi iv. 2-6).

The Jews of the period of the Advent, adhering to the letter of this prophecy, expected that the prophet Elijah would appear again in bodily reality on this earth, to introduce the Advent of the Messiah. In a similar manner, modern literalists are expecting the appearance of the prophet before the consummation of all things ; for it is an obvious fact that no event has yet occurred which can satisfy the letter of the prediction. At the time of the Advent, as the Gospels witness, a great expectation of His reappearance unquestionably prevailed ; and beyond all doubt this passage not only formed the foundation of it, but, taken in the letter, justified it. Our Lord, on the other hand, rejected the letter, and adopted the spirit of the prophetic utterance, as the following passages conclusively prove :—

“ And the disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elijah must first come ? And he answered and said, Elijah indeed cometh, and shall restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they listed. Even so shall the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist ” (Matthew xvii. 10-13). Again :—“ And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth

violence, and men of violence take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah, which is to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matthew xi. 12-14).

These two passages are conclusive that in our Lord's view John the Baptist was the Elijah of Old Testament prediction. "If ye are willing," He says, "to receive it, this is Elijah which is to come." The prophet, therefore, in announcing the coming of Elijah, did not announce the coming of the literal Elijah, but of one in his spirit and power. For this reason our Lord added the words usual with Him when He proclaimed a truth which His hearers would find difficult of acceptance:—"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Again, the prophet writes:—"Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. And who shall abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he shall be like refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap. And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may be unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years" (Malachi iii. 1-4).

This passage is thus referred to in the angelic message to Zachariah in St. Luke's Gospel:—"And he shall go before his face, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him" (Luke i. 1).

Yet here again the prophetic imagery is strictly local and national. The persons purified are the sons of Levi; and in the Messianic kingdom the offering of Judah and Jerusalem is to be pleasant to the Lord, *as in the days of old*, as in former years. But in the Evangelist the messenger who

was to go before the face of the Lord to prepare His way, is identified with John the Baptist, who was to precede the Messiah in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Such are the chief Messianic Scriptures of the Old Testament. Of these our Lord claimed to be the realization, *i.e.*, that "he filled up to the full" every element of eternal truth which underlay them; but, at the same time, He treated everything in them which was national and local as the mere imagery in which that truth had taken form in the prophet's mind, and which formed a portion of the atmosphere of thought which he habitually breathed. Respecting these Scriptures the position taken by the New Testament may be aptly expressed in the words of St. Peter:—

"To him bear all the prophets witness" (Acts x. 43).

Their function, then, is that of witnessing to Christ; not of throwing additional light on the fulness of the revelation made in His person, work, and teaching, or on that subsequently communicated to the Apostles and prophets of the New Testament dispensation, whose illumination is expressly affirmed by our Lord to transcend that of the greatest prophet of the Old. As being, therefore, the complete realization of the prophetic Scriptures, and of the legal institutions, He stands to them in the relation of the substance to the shadow: He throws light on them, not they on Him. The darkness, says St. John, is passed, and the true light now shineth.

## CHAPTER VI.

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### THE NATURE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE SUPERNATURAL ENLIGHTENMENT AFFORDED TO THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

As our knowledge of the contents of the Christian revelation is exclusively derived from the writings of the New Testament, it is necessary to consider how far, and by what means, our Lord's primitive followers were qualified for handing down this knowledge to posterity ; and what were the limits of the supernatural enlightenment afforded them. I say, supernatural enlightenment, because the Gospels themselves make it certain that without an aid of this description even the Apostles would have been utterly unfitted for the work in question ; for we are expressly informed that even as late as the termination of our Lord's ministry, they very imperfectly comprehended either the nature of His person, His kingdom, or His teaching. Their ideas on these points still continued to be deeply coloured by the mode of thought in which they had been educated. His teaching was regarded by them through the distorted medium of their popular Jewish prejudices and prepossessions. If, therefore, they had proceeded to obey His commands to lay the foundations of the Church, without being furnished with additional enlightenment on these subjects, Christianity in their hands would have resolved itself into a mere Jewish sect. It was, therefore, necessary,

in order to qualify them to found the Christian Church, and to furnish future ages with an accurate account of the Christian revelation, that they should receive such enlightenment as to its true meaning as would enable them to record it free from all those admixtures which would have been otherwise introduced into it by men who contemplated it in the light of their own educational prepossessions.

Our knowledge of the nature and limitations of this supernatural enlightenment can only be derived from our Lord's promises made to the Apostles; from their own assertions on the subject, and from the facts and phenomena which are presented by the writings of the New Testament. Other information respecting it we have none. All *à priori* theories as to what it must have been are utterly valueless, just as they are as to the mode of the Divine acting in Creation and Providence.\* The under-estimate and the over-estimate of the degree of this supernatural enlightenment has been attended with equally disastrous results.

We will first consider our Lord's promises.

The Synoptics record one which, on account of its special character, we need only briefly notice. The promise in question is, that when they were called to answer before the governors of the world for their obedience to His commands in publishing His Gospel, the Divine Spirit would suggest to them the subject-matter of their defence. It is as follows:—

“But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak, for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you” (Matt. x. 19, 20).

It is evident that the occasion being thus special, the promise is no less so; and consequently it can form no guide respecting the general enlightenment possessed by the Apostles.

But St. John's Gospel records the three following specific

\* The worthlessness of these theories has been fully exposed by Bishop Butler in part ii, chapter iii, of his “Analogy.”

promises of supernatural enlightenment to qualify the Apostles for their appointed work.

1. "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said unto you" (John xiv. 26).

2. "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me, and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning" (John xv. 26, 27).

3. "I have many things to say unto you; but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth; for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak, and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you. All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine; therefore, said I, that he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John xvi. 12-15).

The first of these promises is an assurance of such supernatural aid to the Apostles as would enable them to understand the true meaning of our Lord's teaching; and also that such assistance would be imparted to their memories as would enable them to furnish an accurate account of it, free from any colouring, which it would have been in danger of receiving from their own preconceptions and prejudices. This promise is conveyed in the words—"He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said unto you."

The second affirms that because the Apostles had been with our Lord from the beginning, they should bear testimony to the facts of His ministry; and that this their testimony should be supplemented by that of the Divine Spirit, which consisted of the various supernatural gifts bestowed on the Apostles and other members of the Church.

The realization of these two promises would be the requisite qualification to enable the Apostles not only to give a correct account of our Lord's actions and teaching, but to make a selection of those portions of it which were intended to be transmitted to future ages, as constituting the essence of the Christian revelation.

The third promise requires a more minute consideration. Our Lord prefaces it by informing the Apostles that He had many things to say to them, which up to that time, owing to their prejudices and prepossessions, they had been unable to bear. Respecting these special subjects He promises them the illumination of the Divine Spirit to *guide them into all the truth*.

This promise has been frequently represented as though its realization conferred on the Apostles a general infallibility on all kinds of subjects incidentally connected with the Christian revelation; and on this foundation theories of inspiration have been erected and applied to the entire Bible, which alike contradict the facts and the phenomena of Scripture. Nothing, however, can be clearer than that the promise is limited to guidance into those truths which our Lord had yet to unfold to the Apostles, but which up to that time they had been unable to bear.

Next, it is important to observe that the promise is not one of sudden enlightenment, overbearing the natural faculties, but of *guidance into truth*. Now guidance into truth is a gradual process. This being so, the account which St. Luke gives us of the mode in which the scruples of St. Peter respecting the admission of Gentiles into the Church were overcome, will give us an accurate idea of the thing intended, for this was beyond all question one of the many things which our Lord had to say to the Apostles, but which up to that time they had been unable to bear.

We learn from St. Luke that shortly before the conversion of Cornelius, St. Peter's Jewish prejudices had been already so far modified that he had taken up his residence in the house of a tanner, a trade which a strict Jew would have

considered unclean. Still the Apostle held that the Jewish ceremonial law, including its distinctions about meats and drinks was binding, and that submission to the right of circumcision was a necessary preliminary to the admission of a Gentile into the Christian Church, and that he would have felt scruples in holding friendly intercourse with an uncircumcised Gentile. Up to this time, that truth, so obvious to us, "that God is no respecter of persons, and that in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him," was entirely foreign to his convictions. The following were the processes of his gradual enlightenment on this all-important subject:—

The Apostle, at the regular hour of prayer, goes up to the house-top to pray. While thus engaged he becomes hungry, and desires food. During its preparation he falls into a trance. The vision takes the form of his waking thoughts. He sees a great sheet <sup>let</sup> laid down from heaven (let) filled with various animals, the majority of which were unclean according to the Mosaic law. While he is contemplating them he hears a voice from heaven, directing him to kill and eat. He remonstrates against the injunction to partake of unclean food. The voice directs him not to call unclean what God had cleansed. This scene is thrice repeated, and the whole is finally drawn up into heaven. Still Peter was perplexed as to the meaning of the vision. While he was meditating on it, three messengers from the Gentile Cornelius present themselves before the gate. The Apostle then receives a direct Divine injunction to accompany them without doubt or scruple. On arriving at Cæsarea, he receives from Cornelius an account of a vision, in which he had been directed to send for him. Then it was that the great truth burst on his mind that all who work righteousness are alike acceptable to God, without distinction of race or nation. During his address to Cornelius and his friends the Divine Spirit was imparted to the assembled Gentiles, in the same manner as it had been to the circumcised believers, and on witnessing it the Apostle inferred that it was the



Divine pleasure that the former should be admitted into the Church without submitting to the rite of circumcision.

Such is one of the practical commentaries afforded by the history as to the mode of the realization of that promise of our Lord which we are now considering. The whole process might have been rendered unnecessary by an instantaneous communication of supernatural illumination to St. Peter's mind; but such was not the method adopted. Up to this time he had continued ignorant of this great truth; and even now that the time was come when it must be revealed, his enlightenment, in accordance with the promise, was a gradual process. As we learn elsewhere from the history, this guidance was not unfrequently one by which the Divine pleasure was inferred from the events of Providence by aid of the rational faculties, of which the account of St. Paul's first visit to Europe is a striking example. The words of the historian are as follows:—

“And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and when they were come over against Mysia, they essayed to go into Bithynia: and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not. And passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And when he had seen the vision, straightway we sought to go forth into Macedonia, *concluding that God had called us to preach the Gospel unto them*” (Acts xvi. 6-10).

This passage presents us with a singular mixture of the Divine with the human. The body of missionaries did not receive a positive direction from the Spirit to go into Macedonia. They drew the conclusion that such was their duty from St. Paul's vision, united with their having been previously forbidden to preach the Gospel in the places specified. It was, in fact, an inference of their reason, although a very obvious one.

It is clear that a guidance of this kind could have con-

ferred no general infallibility on those various subjects, which are only incidentally connected with Christianity, extending, as they do, over a wide range of human thought, and involving deep questions of philosophy, science, history, and criticism.

But the promise itself particularizes one subject on which this illumination was to be specially vouchsafed. "*He shall glorify me,*" says our Lord. The views of the Apostles respecting their Master's person were dark and uncertain up to the close of His ministry. They caught, it is true, occasional glimpses of His superhuman character, and confessed Him as the Christ, and even as the Son of God. But the great truth, that "in him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily," was only gradually unfolded to the minds of the original Apostles. This truth, therefore, it was the special function of the heavenly Comforter to disclose. The results of the full illumination afforded to them will be found in the Epistles of St. Paul and of St. John, and also in the Apocalypse.

It follows, therefore, that the supernatural enlightenment which our Lord promised to the Apostles was confined to a very definite class of subject-matter. It was limited to these four points.

1st. The Divine Spirit was to refresh their memories as to His actions and teaching, in such a manner as would enable them to hand down a correct report of them to future ages.

2. He was to guide them into all the truth of the things which He had to say to them, but which on account of their Jewish prejudices they had been unable to bear during the period of His ministry.

3. He was to unfold to them the entire truth respecting His Divine person and work.

4. He was to declare unto them "the things that were to come." This last promise was explained by our Lord immediately before His ascension, that it did not include a knowledge of the times and the seasons of the various

manifestations of His kingdom which the Father had reserved under His own authority.

These form the whole of the promises of supernatural enlightenment which are recorded in the Gospels, except the general one that the primitive believers should receive the Divine Spirit to qualify them for their appointed work. Let us, therefore, now consider the evidence furnished by the Epistles as to the actual subjects on which these revelations were imparted. On this point St. Paul makes the following general affirmation:—

“For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ in behalf of you Gentiles, if so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which hath been given me to you-ward, how that by revelation he made known to me the mystery, as I wrote afore in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit, to wit, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers in the promise in Christ through the Gospel. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which hath from all ages been hid in God, who created all things, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. iii. 1-11).

This passage is explicit as to what constituted the chief subject-matter of the revelations made to the Apostles and prophets of the Christian Church. They consisted of supernatural enlightenment on the two following subjects:—

First: respecting the person of our Lord, here designated ‘the mystery, and the unsearchable riches of Christ.’”

Secondly : the great truth in all its multiform bearings, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers in the promise in Christ through the Gospel.

Briefly stated, therefore, the Apostolic revelations centred around two subjects, viz., the Divine person of Jesus Christ, and the institution in Him of the Catholic Church.

Such being the general subject of these revelations, the Apostle in this declaration also makes the following specific affirmations respecting them :—

1. That the Church of God is a society, in which all national distinctions and special privileges are abolished.

2. That its bond of union is the Divine person of our Lord.

3. That His person, work, and teaching contain all possible spiritual illumination.

4. That the disclosure of these truths which had been kept secret during the eternal ages, constituted the great revelation which was imparted in the Spirit to the Apostles and prophets of the Apostolic Church.

5. That one of the purposes of this revelation is, that it should constitute to the principalities and powers, in the heavenly places, a great disclosure of the manifold wisdom of God. In point of efficacy, therefore, it is not confined to the human race.

6. That this disclosure of the Divine purposes is the end sought to be realized by all the dispensations of the past.

I must ask the reader's attention to the following passage in the above quotation :—"As I wrote afore in few words, whereby when ye read, ye may perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ."

The "*few words*" in question are obviously the two preceding chapters of the Epistle. By reading these, says the Apostle, "*ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ.*" What, then, is the mystery referred to? Clearly the great truth that both Jew and Gentile should be united in Christ in one great spiritual community—a truth

which in past ages had been kept secret in the Divine mind, but which was now revealed in the spirit to the saints.

I draw particular attention to these words, because it has been commonly supposed that in these two chapters the Apostle sets forth certain abstract truths respecting the Divine decrees, and the secret purposes of the Divine mind in connection with the plan of human redemption. The words in question, however, distinctly affirm that from these two chapters may be perceived the extent of the writer's knowledge in the mystery of Christ; and this mystery is expressly defined to consist of two things, viz., the revelation made in the Gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ, and of the Divine purpose to create in Him a great spiritual society, in which all holy things are to be ultimately united in one communion and fellowship. Hence it follows, that the subjects in question are not treated in their general character, as mere abstract truths, but only as far as they bear on the institution of the Catholic Church, and its relation to Christ its Head.

The concluding words of the 2nd chapter are so important, as proving that the Apostolic revelations here referred to centred around these two subjects, that, notwithstanding their length, it will be necessary to quote them.

“Wherefore remember that aforetime, ye Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision, by that which is called Circumcision in the flesh, made with hands, that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, being strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus, ye that once were afar off, are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both (*i.e.*, Jew and Gentile) one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, that he might create in himself of twain (*i.e.*, of Jew and Gentile) one new man (*i.e.*, the Catholic Church), so making peace; and might reconcile them both (*i.e.*, Jew and

Gentile), in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and he came and preached peace to you that were afar off (*i.e.*, the Gentiles), and peace to them that are nigh (*i.e.*, the Jews), for through him we both (*i.e.*, Jews and Gentiles) have access in one Spirit unto the Father. So then ye (*i.e.*, Gentiles) are no longer strangers and sojourners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. ii. 11-22).

This passage is so explicit as to need only a few remarks. The Apostle's imagery is derived from the ancient commonwealths, which consisted of a body of citizens, (*πολίται*), and of resident foreigners (*μέτοικοι*), of whom the latter were devoid of all political rights. These the Gentile portion of the Church had resembled in their heathen state, but in Jesus Christ they were made fellow-citizens (*συμπολίται*) with the saints, and of the household of God; *i.e.*, they were admitted to all the privileges of the members of the Church, on terms of perfect equality. These two therefore, the citizens and the aliens, Jesus Christ had united in Himself in one great spiritual community, by abolishing through His death the whole system of Jewish legalism, which, encircling as it did the entire life of the Jew, formed a wall of partition and a ground of enmity between him and the Gentile believer. Now through Him both had access in one Spirit unto the Father. The remainder of the Apostle's illustration is taken from a temple of which Jews and Gentiles constituted the stones. These in Jesus Christ,—although once at enmity,—are to grow for an habitation of God in the Spirit in the perfected state of the Catholic Church.

It follows, therefore, from this statement of the Apostle, that the person of our Lord, and the union in Him of Jew

and Gentile in one great spiritual community, constituted the main subject of the Apostle's revelations, around which his other statements of truth centre.

But affirmations of this kind are not confined to this single Epistle. Similar ones are made in that to the Colossians. To them the Apostle writes :—

“Whereof I am made a minister according to the dispensation of God, which was given me to you-ward, to fulfil the Word of God, even the mystery which hath been hid from all ages and generations, but now hath it been manifested to the saints, to whom God was pleased to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians i. 25-27).

According to this declaration the mystery which had been hidden from all ages and generations, but which, when he wrote, had been manifested to the saints, consisted in the Divine person of our Lord, and the institution in Him of a great spiritual community in which there was to be no distinction of race or nation.

It is difficult at the present day to understand how the disclosure of what to us seems so obvious a truth, as the union of mankind in one great society in Christ, should have been spoken of by the Apostle as involving a mystery so profound as to excite his wonder and admiration ; and it is this which prompts the ordinary reader to imagine that the passages which we are considering must contain discoveries of higher and more abstract truths. But we must remember that to the Jew his exclusive privileges seemed in the highest degree natural, whereas to us, after eighteen centuries of light, it seems exactly the reverse. According to our habits of thought, it is the institution of the exclusive system, and not its abolition, which constitutes the difficulty. In order to appreciate such utterances we must carry our thoughts back to a time when the revelation that God was *no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feared Him and wrought righteousness was accepted of Him*, was a

startling truth even to the mind of an Apostle who had for several years enjoyed the illuminating influences of the Divine Spirit, and had listened to the teaching of the Great Teacher Himself. We may, therefore, judge of the difficulty which the acceptance of this truth presented to the mind of an ordinary Jew who had been trained from his childhood in the belief that he was the exclusive inheritor of the privileges of the kingdom of God, and who could adduce such strong arguments from the Old Testament Scriptures as those above referred to in confirmation of his belief. A similar statement is made by the Apostle in the Epistle to the Galatians. Thus he writes:—

“But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me through his grace to reveal his Son in me that I might preach him among the Gentiles” (Galatians i. 15, 16).

As St. Paul had not been a witness of our Lord’s ministry his case differed widely from that of the other Apostles. Having no personal acquaintance with our Lord’s teaching he affirmed that his knowledge of Christianity was derived exclusively from revelation. This point is strongly insisted on in the two opening chapters of this Epistle. But the statement above quoted, taken in connection with its context, proves that these revelations centred around two definite subjects.

1. The Divine person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord. This must have included the chief facts of His ministry, the most important points of His teaching and instruction as to their meaning.

2. The great end and purpose of this revelation, as set forth above, and referred to here in the words—“To reveal his Son in me that I should preach him among the Gentiles,” to the exposition and enforcement of which the entire Epistle is devoted.

The Epistle to the Romans contains a similar affirmation:

“Now, unto him that is able to stablish you, according to my Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according



to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is now made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith" (Romans xvi. 25-27).

What is the mystery here spoken of as kept in silence through times eternal, but now made known unto all the nations, which the Apostle designates "His Gospel," and the preaching of Jesus Christ? Clearly the revelation referred to in the passages previously quoted, and which the first eleven chapters of this Epistle are occupied in explaining and enforcing.

But, as has been already observed, the case of St. Paul differed from that of the other Apostles, in that he had not had the benefit of hearing our Lord's teaching, or of witnessing the events of His ministry. In two passages he informs us that this deficiency was supplied by the knowledge in which he was deficient having been communicated to him by immediate revelation. Writing to the Corinthians, he tells them that he received the account of the institution of the Holy Communion from the Lord—"For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you" (1 Cor. xi. 23); and again, with respect to the facts of our Lord's death and resurrection, he writes:—"For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received" (1 Cor. xv. 3).

The above are the chief passages in which St. Paul definitely informs us what constituted the subject-matter of the revelations imparted to the Apostles and prophets of the Apostolic Church. Let it be observed that they form the exact counterpart and realization of those promises of enlightenment, through the agency of the Divine Spirit, which our Lord made to the Apostles prior to His departure.

We must now consider briefly the mode in which the two factors, the Divine and the human, co-existed in the minds of the Apostolic writers. This is rendered clear by the whole tenor of the Epistles. With certain exceptions,

to be noticed presently, the superhuman factor formed a portion of their habitual consciousness, and was inseparable from it. It exhibits itself in the form of a Divine element in the closest connection with a human one. Thus we never find in them a statement prefaced by the formula so usual in the Old Testament, "Thus, saith the Lord." In this respect their utterances resemble those of Jesus Himself, but with this obvious distinction, that whereas His utterances are uniformly represented as flowing from an illumination, and as resting on an authority inherent in Himself, theirs are always described as a borrowed light, and as resting on an authority which was not their own. Cases however occur in which the writer distinguishes between his ordinary consciousness and his knowledge specially derived from Divine illumination. Thus St. Paul writes :—

"But to the unmarried I give charge, yet not I, but the Lord " (1 Cor. vii. 10).

Then, in the closest connection with these words, he adds :—

"But to the rest, say I, not the Lord " (1 Cor. ix. 12).

Again, "Concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful " (1 Cor. ix. 25).

Also, "She is happier if she abide as she is : and I think that I also have the Spirit of God " (1 Cor. vii. 40).

Again, "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord ; but if any man be ignorant let him be ignorant " (1 Cor. xiv. 37, 38).

It should be observed that in these passages the Apostle is laying down practical rules for the guidance of the Church, not for all time, but under the pressure of very special circumstances. Some of these, the last especially, he wrote with the full consciousness of possessing authority from Christ to enjoin them ; but, with respect to others, he felt that he was merely giving the results of his own

sanctified human judgment. But he gives us no hint as to the principle on which he made this discrimination; it is therefore impossible to say whether it was through a Divine illumination then specially imparted, or as a deduction from his original revelations, which, like all knowledge thoroughly acquired, had become inseparable from his ordinary consciousness.

The last of these passages requires further notice, because it was addressed to prophets who possessed the ordinary gift of inspiration, but were nevertheless guilty of making an improper use of it. This fact renders it certain that the prophetic gift did not confer on them a general infallibility. This is also proved by another precept of the Apostle:—"Let the prophets speak by two or three, and let the others discern (or, as in the margin, discriminate)" (1 Cor. xiv. 29).

What were the others to discern or discriminate? Clearly, whether the utterance of the speaking prophet was in conformity with the analogy of Christian truth; for the Apostle adds:—

"The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets; for God is not a god of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor. xiv. 31, 32).

These passages clearly recognize the presence of a human element in their utterances. Yet the prophets held a rank in the Church immediately after that of an Apostle.

But the following passage is by far the most important in its bearing on this subject. In it, and in its immediate context, St. Paul, while defending his apostolical authority against his Judaizing opponents, thus writes:—

"Would that ye could bear with me in a little foolishness; nay, indeed, bear with me." Here follows a reference to his disinterested labours at Corinth, and a stern denunciation of the conduct of his opponents, which it will be unnecessary to quote. He then proceeds, "Let no one think me foolish; but if ye do, yet as foolish receive me, that I may also glory a little. That which I speak I speak not after the Lord, but

as in foolishness in this confidence of glorying. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. For ye bear with the foolish gladly, being wise yourselves. . . . I speak by way of disparagement, as though we had been weak. Yet wheresoever any is bold (I speak in foolishness) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as one beside myself.) I am more." Here follows the well-known list of the Apostle's sufferings. He then proceeds, "I must need glory though it is not expedient, but I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord." Having spoken of his rapture in vision into the third heaven, he adds, "On behalf of such a one will I glory, but on my own behalf I will not glory; save in my weaknesses. For if I should desire to glory I shall not be foolish, for I shall speak the truth; but I forbear, lest any should account of me above that which he seeth me to be, or heareth from me. . . . I am become foolish; ye compelled me" (2 Cor. xi., xii.).

Nothing can be more distinct than the Apostle's affirmation throughout this entire passage, that he was not writing in virtue of the supernatural illumination which had been imparted to him, but in his purely human character. "*That which I speak,*" says he, "*I speak not after the Lord, but as in foolishness in this confidence of glorying.*" How it has ever been supposed that such expressions as "I speak in foolishness," "Would that ye could bear with me in a little foolishness," "Let no man think me foolish, but, if ye do, as foolish receive me that I may glory a little," "I speak as one beside myself," can be utterances of the Divine Spirit it is difficult to conceive. Yet what the Apostle thus spoke in foolishness, compelled, as he says, by the conduct of his opponents, is no less than the entire contents of the 10th, 11th and 12th Chapters of this Epistle; in fact the whole of that self-commendation to which the conduct of a section of this Church had compelled him. To affirm that he wrote passages of this kind at the dictation of the Divine Spirit,

or as a record of his revelations, is to contradict his own express assertions.

From this follows a very important inference respecting other passages in the Epistles in which the human personality of the writer is put prominently forward. Taking the above passage as our guide, we are justified in drawing the conclusion that in his various utterances about himself, although he may not, to use his own words, be speaking "in foolishness in a confidence of glorying," yet he is not speaking in the light of the revelations which had been imparted to him, or from the dictation of the Divine Spirit.

Further : portions of these Epistles set before the reader a portraiture of the religious experience of the Apostle, *i.e.*, they depict the mode in which the great truths of Christianity operated on his own mind. In this respect they bear a close resemblance to large portions of the Book of Psalms. While the record of this experience is highly edifying, it must nevertheless constitute a human element in the Epistles. This is rendered evident by the fact that the experience of the other Apostolic writers differs from that of St. Paul. Of this important fact no attentive reader of the Epistles of St. John, St. Peter, St. James, and St. Jude can entertain a doubt. Their respective writers contemplated the truths given in revelation, from the standpoint of their own particular individuality. In perusing these epistles the reader instinctively feels that he is in a different atmosphere of thought and feeling. No one can mistake a paragraph written by St. James for one written by St. Paul, or St. John ; nor is the distinction between the mode of thought of the two last-named writers less unmistakable. Moreover, this experience is not set forth as one which it is necessary for every Christian to pass through, or as descriptive of the perfect working of Christianity in every human spirit, but solely as his own individual experience. This subject, however, will be more fully discussed when we consider the data and materials which the Epistles afford in aid of our present inquiry.

A very important point now demands our consideration. No inconsiderable number of the statements in the Epistles are propounded not as the results of the supernatural enlightenment of the writer, but as inferences, either from the revelations which had been imparted to him, or from principles which were held in common by himself and those whom he is addressing. In other words, they are truths arrived at by reasoning processes. Are we then to accept these truths as guaranteed by the Divine Spirit, or are they one of the human elements in the Apostolic writings? In reply to this question I observe, in conformity with the principles laid down in a former chapter, that truths which are deduced from other truths, *as far as they are the result of such deductions*, cannot be revelations; and that this must be true, even if they are deduced by the strictest rules of logic from revealed truths. In such a case, while they would justly rank as truths of a very high order, they must be carefully distinguished from the revealed truths themselves, for the very conception of such a truth is that it is infused into the mind independently of the action of its ordinary faculties, and is accompanied with the assurance that God is its author. A revealed truth must, therefore, be one, which is perceived intuitively by direct spiritual vision, without the intervention of any process of reasoning, inductive or deductive. But all inferential truths fail to satisfy this condition; for from the nature of the case they depend for their validity on the correctness of the logical processes by which they are arrived at.

This must therefore be true of all those positions in the Epistles, which are deduced from other principles by processes of reasoning—as far as they are the results of such processes, and not derived from any higher source of enlightenment. I make this qualification because it is quite possible that truths may have been originally communicated by revelation, which the writer endeavours to impress on the minds of those whom he is addressing, by reasonings suited to their mental capacities and habits of

thought, and which would have failed to commend themselves to their acceptance on his own simple affirmation. This is the object with which no inconsiderable number of the reasonings in the Epistles are put forth by their respective writers. Their purpose is, not to bring conviction to themselves, but to those to whom they write. Let us take as an example the great controversy respecting the obligation to observe the Jewish law under the Christian dispensation. A large portion of two of the most important Epistles in the New Testament is occupied in the discussion of this question; and various arguments are adduced in proof of its abolition. Yet the great truth of the abolition of Judaism was communicated by revelation to the Apostles and prophets of the Apostolic Church, and was not arrived at by any process of reasoning. These arguments, therefore, were not intended for their own conviction or enlightenment, but for that of those to whose prejudices and prepossessions this truth must have been supremely unpalatable. In other words, their reasonings are intended to persuade, not to prove.

This opens to us the very important question, are the logical arguments in the Epistles guaranteed to us as scientifically correct; or did the Apostolic writers in dealing with such questions adopt principles of reasoning and exegesis which were accepted in common by themselves and those whom they were addressing? In other words, did our Lord promise to the Apostles the illuminating influences of the Divine Spirit, not only to guide them into the knowledge of those many things which he had to say unto them, which up to that time they had been unable to bear, but also to impart to them a power of reasoning which would be in all cases infallible in their interpretation of the Old Testament?

In answer to this question, I observe in the first place that the promises of supernatural enlightenment which were made by our Lord to the Apostles do not contain a hint that it would be one of the functions of the Divine Spirit to

impart to them the power of accurate logical reasoning. He was to refresh their memories with respect to what our Lord had done and taught, and to enlighten their understandings as to its true meaning; he was also to guide them into the full truth of the many things which our Lord had to say unto them; but not one word is said about conferring on them the power of accurate scientific reasoning and exegesis. If such a power was conferred on the Apostles, it is certainly not included in any of our Lord's recorded promises of supernatural enlightenment.\*

Nor is its existence consistent with the facts of the Epistles. These prove that the reasonings employed by the Apostolic writers are not such as can be reduced to the form of scientific logic, but such as were current in the schools of thought in which they had been born and educated. We find in them, as we do in all healthy intellects which have not been trained in scientific processes of reasoning, much that is logically correct; but it is no less certain that we frequently find in them reasonings which no rules of logic can recognize as accurate. If it is urged that we are bound to accept these reasonings in virtue of the inspiration of the writers, my answer is that the entire question resolves itself into a simple matter of fact—viz., are the reasonings in question logically sound or are they not? Supernatural illumination may guarantee the truths which they enforce, but it cannot guarantee their reasonings; for it is a self-evident truth that neither supernatural illumination, nor inspiration, can make valid reasonings which are scientifically invalid.

\* A passage in St. Luke's Gospel (xxiv. 44, 45) may perhaps be urged as affirming that infallibility in this respect was conferred by our Lord on the Apostles. It is, however, evident that the "opening of their minds" there referred to, was limited to enabling them to understand the testimony of the Scriptures to His sufferings and death; and to removing those carnal conceptions of His kingdom in which they had been educated, and which the literal interpretation of portions of the prophetic writings went far to justify.



A few examples will suffice for illustration. In the Epistle to the Galatians, the Apostle thus endeavours to lead the Judaizers whom he is addressing, to accept that freedom from the burden of the Mosaic law, which formed so prominent a part of the Gospel which had been revealed to him :—

‘For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the handmaid, the other by a freewoman. Howbeit the son of the handmaid is born after the flesh ; but the son of the freewoman is born through promise. Which things contain an allegory ; for these women are the two covenants ; one from Mount Sinai, having children to bondage, which is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem that now is : for she is in bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not ; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not : for more are the children of the desolate, than of her that hath a husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Howbeit what saith the Scripture ? Cast out the handmaid and her son, for the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman. Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of the handmaid, but of the freewoman. With freedom did Christ set us free. Stand fast, therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage ” (Gal. iv. 22-31, and v. 1).

It is scarcely necessary to observe that it is impossible to exhibit the reasonings contained in this passage in any form which can be recognized by scientific logic as valid.

But it will doubtless be urged, that we are bound to accept these allegorical interpretations of the Scriptures of the Old Testament in virtue of the Apostle’s inspiration. To this the answer is obvious. His argument is addressed to persons who questioned his Apostolical authority. In dealing with these, therefore, it would have been useless to

fall back on his inspiration as a ground for accepting his interpretations. Consequently, unless this mode of interpretation had been accepted by those whom he was addressing, it would have been powerless to produce conviction. The answer of his opponents would have been a very simple one:—"We have no evidence, other than your bare assertion, that such interpretations of historical facts were intended by the writers of the Old Testament Scriptures. How can we be assured that the two women, Sarah and Hagar, are the two covenants? What authority have you for saying that Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and that it answers to Jerusalem that now is? Or, that because the son of the handmaid was expelled from Abraham's family, we, the legitimate descendants of Abraham and Sarah, are no longer bound to obey the precepts which were delivered by God to Moses? Of all this you give no proof; and we decline to accept it on the authority of one, whose revelations we hold to be not genuine." But if, on the other hand, this mode of reasoning was accepted by his opponents, *i.e.*, if it was the one adopted by the Jewish Schools, the argument from their point of view would have been conclusive.

A similar mode of reasoning is adopted in another well-known passage in this Epistle, founded on the use of the singular word "*seed*" (σπέρμα) instead of the plural (σπέρματα) "*seeds*." The Apostle writes as follows:—

"Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no man maketh it void, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed." He saith not unto *seeds* as of many, but as of one, "And to thy Seed, which is Christ. Now this I say, a covenant confirmed afore of God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, does not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect" (Gal. iii. 15-18).

The portion of this argument which is founded on the use of the singular noun instead of the plural has

presented insuperable difficulties to almost every reader. The promise made to Abraham is as follows:—"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The utmost which he can do is to accept the argument on the authority of the Apostle that because the singular "seed" and not the plural is used, therefore the promise must refer to Christ. But the fact is that the Apostle has himself in the Epistle to the Romans used the singular noun instead of the plural to denote the natural descendants of Abraham. But, as in the previous instance, to rest the argument on his Apostolical authority would have rendered it valueless to those to whom it was addressed. Various have been the refinements adopted, for the purpose of explaining the difficulty. A Hebrew word, answering to the Greek σπέρμα, but incapable of being translated σπέρματα, has been appealed to as helping to remove it; but the explanation is most unsatisfactory, for the Apostle is reasoning on the Greek word, and gives no hint that he considered the Hebrew inaccurately translated. Moreover, the argument is addressed to persons who used the Septuagint Version, and who were in all probability ignorant of Hebrew. Whether the words with which the argument is introduced, "*I speak after the manner of men,*" are intended to apply to the entire reasoning, or only to the first sentence of it, is not clear; but even if the former is the case, we can hardly accept Jerome's solution of the difficulty, viz., that the Apostle meant to intimate that his argument was an accommodation to the low mental calibre of the Galatians. The true solution is one to which numerous reasonings in the Epistles point, viz., that he adopted without question such modes of reasoning as were current in the different schools of thought to which both himself and those whom he was addressing had been accustomed, without thinking it necessary to inquire whether they would endure the test of scientific logic. The object of the Apostle's reasonings is in fact, not proof, but persuasion.

The Epistle to the Romans contains several striking examples of a similar mode of reasoning. 'Thus, he writes :—  
“ Are ye ignorant, brethren (for I speak to men that know the law), how that the law hath dominion over a man as long time as he liveth ? For the woman that hath an husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth ; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So then if, while the husband liveth, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress ; but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man. Wherefore also, my brethren, ye are made dead to the law, through the body of Christ, that ye should be joined to another, even to him that was raised from the dead, that ye might bring forth fruit unto God ” (Romans vii. 1-7).

This passage presents the appearance of a reasoned argument, but it is impossible to exhibit it in any form which can be recognized as scientifically accurate. It may be that the Apostle intended only to point out that there was a remote analogy between the two cases ; but even then, the analogy between a woman's right to marry another after her husband's death, and the believer's death to the law, by the death of Christ, and his consequent right to be united to the same Christ when risen from the dead, is imperfect.

Again, in the ninth chapter we meet with another piece of reasoning which is evidently founded on an imperfect analogy ; “ Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God ? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why didst thou make me thus ? Or hath not the potter a right over the clay to make one part a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour ? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory upon the vessels of mercy, which he afore prepared to glory, even us whom he hath called, not from the Jews only, but also from the Gentiles ” (Rom. ix. 20-24).

Our business here is with the Apostle's argument, not with his theology. His reasoning is founded on an analogy which is borrowed from the Old Testament, viz., from the potter's right out of the same lump of clay to make vessels for any purpose which he pleases. But there is no real analogy between a mass of senseless clay, and beings capable of religion and morality, not to say of feeling and sensation —between a man, or even an animal, and a mass of inanimate matter. The potter has an undoubted right, as far as the clay is concerned, to make out of the same lump a vessel fitted to be placed on a royal table, and one which is destined to be applied to the meanest purposes. In doing this, no moral question is involved. But the Creator's right in dealing with moral and sentient beings is limited by the holiness of his own moral nature. Consequently the analogy will not hold ; and an argument founded on it must be invalid. The harshness of the reasoning, however, is greatly modified, when it is understood that throughout the entire passage the Apostle is not speaking of individuals, but of nations ; nor about the foreordaining of individuals to eternal life, or to eternal death, but the conferring special privileges on special classes of mankind, and the withholding them from others. But even here, inasmuch as God's moral character and holiness require him to deal with moral agents on moral principles, the analogy is only an imperfect one.

Again : in the Epistle to the Hebrews we have another example of this mode of reasoning. The writer is seeking to prove the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood to one according to the order of Melchisedek, from which he infers the inferiority of the Old Testament dispensation.

“Now consider how great this man was, to whom Abraham the Patriarch gave a tenth out of the spoils. And they indeed of the sons of Levi have commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they have come out of the loins of Abraham ; but he whose genealogy is not counted from them,

hath taken tithes of Abraham, and hath blessed him that hath the promises. But without any dispute, the less is blessed by the better: and here men die that receive tithes, but there one of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And so to say, through Abraham, even Levi, who receiveth tithes, payeth tithes; for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedek met him. If, therefore, perfection came by the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchisedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron. For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity also a change of the law. . . . For there is a disannulling of the foregoing commandment, because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God" (Hebrews vii. 4-19).

Not to enter on the discussion of the different parts of this reasoning, it will be sufficient to draw attention to the following passage, as a proof that it is impossible to recognize it as valid, in accordance with any principle of scientific logic—"And here men that die, receive tithes; but there one of whom it is witnessed that he liveth, and so to say, through Abraham, even Levi, who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes; for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedek met him." From this the inference is deduced, that a priesthood according to the order of Melchisedek is superior to one according to that of Aaron, Aaron being a descendant from Levi. The use of the words "And so to say," with which the argument is introduced, seem to imply that the author was conscious that he was pressing this mode of reasoning to its extreme limits, even in the opinion of those who accepted his general principles as valid.

Viewing the passage merely as an argument, it stands on the same grounds, as far as its logical value is concerned, as if it were attempted to prove the inferiority of the Sovereigns of England to the legitimist kings of France, on the ground

that the Queen was in the loins of her ancestors, when the kings of England did homage to those of France; or still more to the purpose, to prove her inferiority to the Pope, because she was in the loins of King John, when he did homage, and paid tribute to Innocent III. The fact is, that the author of this Epistle, in common with the other sacred writers, does not attempt to give a logical proof of his positions. Their truth rested on the authority of a direct revelation.\* All that can be said is that, in the passage here quoted, he is endeavouring to induce those whom he is addressing, by reasonings accommodated to their own principles, to accept the great truth which had been revealed to the Apostles and prophets of the Christian dispensation, viz., that the Mosaic ordinances, having been realized in Jesus Christ, were henceforth superseded, and become nugatory. The whole line of reasoning in this Epistle, as well as its principles of exegesis, bears the unquestionable marks of belonging to that adopted by the Jewish Alexandrian school of thought.

Both the author and those whom he was addressing accepted it as valid; but those who are acquainted with the general character of the reasonings and the exegesis which were adopted by Philo, with whom this school is closely identified, or with those of the Christian Catechetical School of Alexandria, of which Clement and Origen may be regarded as the prototypes, will hesitate before they assume that it was the intention of the Divine Spirit to guarantee the validity of either the logic or the exegesis of this school; or of that of the Jewish Rabbinical Schools, which was not unfrequently adopted by St. Paul.

It would be easy to multiply examples of similar modes of reasoning, but those already given will be sufficient for our present purpose. It has been necessary to quote them at length because of the importance of the issue involved. We have seen that our Lord's promise of supernatural enlightenment made to the Apostles, while it contained the assurance

that they should be guided into the truth of those things which He had to say unto them, but which hitherto they had been unable to bear, contained no hint that the Divine Spirit would be imparted to them for the purpose of constituting them correct logical reasoners. Our examination of these passages confirms this view of our Lord's promise, by proving as a matter of fact that no such supernatural enlightenment was afforded them; but that they freely adopted such modes of reasoning as they considered best adapted to the comprehension of those whom they were addressing.

One more limitation of the supernatural enlightenment imparted to the Apostolic writers demands our notice. While our Lord promised that the Divine Spirit would bring to their remembrance "whatever he had said unto them"—a promise which was intended to enable them to record his teaching accurately, and free from any foreign admixture—he made them no promise of such supernatural aid to their memories as would ensure the accuracy of their quotations from the Scriptures of the Old Testament. In conformity with this, their writings make it clear beyond all question, that no such supernatural aid was afforded them.

These quotations vary from perfect accuracy to that degree of looseness of citation which arises from imperfect memory. Some of them are direct from the Hebrew; others are from the Septuagint, even where it disagrees with the Hebrew; others give the general sense, while they vary the words; others differ both from the Septuagint and the Hebrew; others give a meaning which can be found in neither; and others, while they make it evident that a particular passage is referred to, assign to it a meaning which it obviously does not bear in the context, but which rests on the sole authority of the writer who cites it. Such wide differences of citation (which are no theory, but a matter of plain fact) prove beyond all question, that the Apostolic writers had



no supernatural guidance to enable them to cite accurately the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

It will doubtless here be urged, as in the case of the reasonings in the Epistles, that the citations of the Old Testament in the New, being made by men who possessed the gift of inspiration, must be in all cases the actual utterances of the writers of the Old; or at least must convey their general sense; and that wherever the Hebrew or the Greek varies from their citations, it must be owing to an error in the existing text; and that the writers of the New Testament, being supernaturally enlightened as to such erroneous readings, present us with the genuine text, and that we are consequently bound to accept them as genuine on their authority. To this, however, there are the two following obvious answers:—

1. Many of these citations are addressed either to unbelieving Jews, or to Judaizing Christians who denied St. Paul's Apostolical authority. To suppose that such persons would accept his citations as the genuine readings of the Old Testament, is absurd.

2. The theory in question makes the Old Testament Scriptures, as we now read them, untrustworthy. The quotations from them in the New are but few when compared with the bulk of the entire volume. Yet, as has been observed above, the variations from the Hebrew in these quotations are very numerous; but if with some, it is urged that the Septuagint presents a more correct text than the Hebrew, still the variations from it are as great as in the former case. According to this theory, therefore, it is clear that our present Hebrew and Greek texts must be alike untrustworthy. Nor can their untrustworthiness be limited to the cited passages; but it must extend in equal proportions over the entire volume. The result is therefore to vindicate the accuracy of the citations in the New Testament by destroying the credit of the Old; *i.e.*, by maintaining that the text has been so corrupted by transcribers that we have

no longer a reasonable certainty that it represents the true meaning of its authors.\*

From the foregoing considerations we may draw the following general conclusions :—

1. That the revelations imparted to the Apostolic Church revolved around two centres, viz., the Divine Person of our Lord and the institution in Him of the Catholic Church.

2. That only those portions of the Epistles are the records of the Apostolic revelations in which their writers make affirmation of truths which they had not arrived at by the ordinary processes of their understandings.

3. That this supernatural illumination did not guarantee the validity of their argumentative processes.

4. That while St. Paul in many of his utterances claimed to speak with the authority of Christ, in others he affirms that he did not speak from the fulness of Divine illumination.

5. That while the delineations of the individual personality and of the religious experience of the writers with which the Epistles abound are in the highest degree edifying, and, as such, are closely interwoven with the records of their revelations, yet they are not propounded as being the only genuine form of Christian experience, but simply as the mode in which the great truths of revelation acted on themselves, and would act on others under similar circumstances. In other words, they are not revealed truths, but records of the experiences of holy men of various endowments and of different individual peculiarities; and of the mode in which such truths influenced and sustained them under a great diversity of circumstances. They are, in fact, portraiture of their religious life.

\* The reader who is desirous of seeing the exact nature of these quotations, will find the entire question very clearly and succinctly stated in Dr. Sanday's work, entitled "The Gospels in the Second Century."

## CHAPTER VII.

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### OUR DATA AND MATERIALS—THE GOSPELS.

THE facts of the history and the entire structure of the Epistles render it certain that a Christianity not only existed, but spread rapidly prior to the composition of a single book of the canon of the New Testament. This Gospel must have been propagated orally, or with the aid of imperfect memoranda, for a period of from thirty to forty years after the resurrection; for it is impossible to assign to our written Gospels a date earlier than from A.D. 60 to A.D. 70. It will hardly be disputed that this oral Gospel must have contained the essence of Christianity in all its distinctive features. The all-important question therefore is, Has any record of its contents been handed down to the modern Church?

My position is, that the first three Evangelists contain the record of this primitive Gospel, and that the fourth furnishes us with those portions of it which were less distinctively embodied in the current oral teaching of the various primitive Christian communities; and that in it we have a record of the entire truth respecting the person of our Lord, into which the Divine Spirit, in conformity with His promise, ultimately guided the Apostles and prophets of the Apostolic Church. I do not mean to affirm that any one particular Church was in possession of a Gospel as complete as either of the Synoptics—St. Luke's preface implies the contrary—

but only that it resembled them in its general character. That the third Gospel was composed with the design of handing down to posterity the contents of this primitive Gospel is thus expressly declared by its author in his preface:—"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters that have been fulfilled (*i.e.*, fully established) among us, even as they delivered them unto us which from the beginning were eye witnesses and ministers of the Word, it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things which thou hast been taught by word of mouth" (Luke i. 1-4).

The purpose which its author had in view in the composition of this Gospel, could hardly be more distinctly stated. It was written in order that Theophilus, the person to whom it is dedicated, "might know the certainty concerning the things which he had been taught by word of mouth." The things thus taught consisted of a narrative of those matters which had been fulfilled among Christians, as they had been delivered to the Churches by those who were eye witnesses and ministers of the Word; or in other words, an account of our Lord's actions and teaching. This therefore constituted the oral Gospel which was accepted by the different primitive Christian communities, as constituting the essence of the Christian faith; and in which, as St. Luke informs us, their members were regularly instructed by that form of teaching which is designated "Catechetical." It is therefore clear that its author believed that his work contained a record of the essence of Apostolical Christianity, which must therefore have consisted of a narrative of our Lord's actions and teaching, as set forth by those to whom the Divine Spirit was promised, "to teach them all things, and to bring to their remembrance all that our Lord had said unto them."

The contents of the other two Synoptics so closely

resemble the Gospel of St. Luke in their general character, that it would be superfluous to attempt to prove that their authors had a similar design in their composition.

Only one other point requires notice here concerning the Synoptics. The student cannot fail to observe that one portion of them consists of a narrative, which is common to all three, and is expressed very nearly in identical words and phrases. This, therefore, must beyond all question represent that portion of the oral narrative which was most widely circulated among the different Christian communities. The parts not thus common must consist of accounts derived from special sources of information, which were open to their authors, or handed down in particular Churches.

The fourth Gospel stands on different ground, and its author explains his object in its composition in the following words:—

“Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, *that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, and that believing, ye may have life through his name” (John xx. 30-31).

This passage proves:—

1. That the author of this Gospel made a selection out of a larger mass of subject-matter, of such facts as in his opinion were sufficient to prove that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.

2. That these facts, if believed and accepted, were sufficient to impart spiritual and eternal life to those who embraced them. Consequently he must have considered his Gospel to contain a record of all the essential features of Apostolical Christianity.

In the prologue he makes the following additional statements as to his design in writing it:—

“There was the true light, even the light, which lighteth every man, coming into the world” (John i. 9).

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and

we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth" (John i. 14).

"No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John i. 10).

These passages, placed as they are in the prologue of the Gospel, imply that the Evangelist had a purpose in its composition additional to the one above stated, viz., to exhibit our Lord as the objective revelation of the moral perfections of God, and thereby to embody in its most perfect form that revelation made to the Apostles and prophets of the Apostolic Church which had conducted them into the entire truth respecting His person and work.

These affirmations of the Evangelists prove the extreme simplicity of this primitive Gospel of which we are in search, and which must have constituted the essence of the faith of the Apostolic Churches. Instead of extending over a vast range of matter, embracing many complicated questions of philosophy, science, history and criticism, all that is essential in it is contained within four short treatises. Nay, the fourth Evangelist affirms that the contents of his Gospel alone are not only sufficient to prove that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, but to confer eternal life on all who cordially accept the truths therein recorded; and the third tells us that he composed his Gospel, that its reader might know the certainty concerning the things in which he had been instructed, as constituting Christianity.

The numerous incidental references in the other books of the New Testament to this primitive Gospel all point to the same conclusion. They all concur in affirming its extreme simplicity; and also that its essence consisted of a narrative of our Lord's actions and teaching. Moreover, this Gospel must have been of such a character that it was capable of being accepted alike by St. Paul and his opponents as the foundation of their common Christianity.

But we need not rest these facts on inference. The brief records of the Apostolical discourses, which are con-

tained in the Acts of the Apostles, establish the same position. They are almost exclusively directed to the proof of the Messiahship of Jesus; and abound in references to His personal ministry. They do not contain a single abstract dogma, unless the announcement of forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the duty of repentance, and a few explanations of the nature of His Messianic office be deemed to be such. The following passages, in which St. Luke gives a few brief summaries of Apostolic preaching, suffice to indicate its extreme simplicity.

“And every day, in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ” (Acts v. 42).

“And Philip went down to a city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ” (Acts viii. 5).

After a discourse devoted to proving that Jesus was the Christ, and the guilt of the Jews in crucifying Him, in answer to the question of his hearers, What it now behoved them to do, Peter, as the mouthpiece of the Apostolic body, replies:—“Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts ii. 38).

Again, speaking of St. Paul, “And straightway in the synagogue he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God” (Acts ix. 20).

“Opening and alleging that it behoved the Christ to suffer, and be raised again from the dead, and that this Jesus, whom I proclaim unto you is the Christ” (Acts xvii. 3).

“But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus” (Acts xi. 20).

“And when Silas and Timothy were come down from Macedonia, Paul was constrained by the Word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ” (Acts xviii. 5).

St. Paul thus summarizes the teaching of the three years of his Ephesian ministry :

“Testifying both to Jews and Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts xx. 21). In thus describing his teaching the Apostle declares that he had kept back nothing that was profitable to his hearers.

The following is the historian’s summary of his teaching during his two years’ ministry at Rome.

“And he abode two years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness, no one forbidding him” (Acts xxviii. 30, 31).

All these passages concur in affirming that the most essential part of the Apostolic teaching consisted in proclaiming Jesus to be the Christ. This proclamation must have comprised, first,—when it was made to Gentiles, a description of the nature of the office of the Christ; and when made to Jews an explanation of the sense in which it was claimed by our Lord; and secondly, a setting forth of such facts of His ministry as proved that He was the Christ. Unless it had involved these two points, it would have been impossible to have made converts, for the Gentiles were ignorant both of the nature of the office and of the grounds on which it was claimed by our Lord; and the Jews required not only to have set before them the evidence that He was the Christ, but to have their unspiritual ideas as to the character of the office corrected. The Apostolic Gospel therefore must have consisted of the following chief factors:—

1. A proclamation of the setting up of a kingdom of God, and of Jesus as its King.
2. An explanation of the nature of this kingdom, and of His kingly office.



3. A statement of such facts of our Lord's ministry as vindicated His Messianic claims.

4. A proclamation of the laws of this kingdom and of the conditions necessary for admission into it.

To these were added a few simple deductions from the facts, such as the duties of repentance and faith, a declaration of the forgiveness of sins, an invitation to those addressed to enrol themselves as members of this kingdom, and to qualify themselves for its enjoyment by assuming a character becoming its subjects, and an exhortation to wait in patient expectation for the appearance of its King.

It need hardly be observed that to these general characteristics of Apostolic preaching, the contents of the Synoptic Gospels exactly correspond. We are justified, therefore, in drawing the conclusion that they constitute the record of that primitive form of Christianity which existed prior to their composition.

The allusions in the Epistles to this primitive form of Christianity are very numerous. They make it evident that it was a Gospel of extreme simplicity, and that it was centred, not in the acceptance of a body of abstract dogmas, but of a Divine person. As this subject will have to be considered hereafter, it will be sufficient to cite a single passage as an illustration of their general testimony. Thus the Apostle writes to the Philippians:—

“Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is by the law; but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (Phil. iii. 7-12).

This passage makes it certain that the centre of the Apostle's Christianity was not a number of abstract dogmas, but a personal Christ; one whom he could know, one to whom he could live through His resurrection, and in whom, through His having suffered, he could find sympathy. Compared with this knowledge, he felt everything else to be pure dross. It constituted a moral and spiritual power. But what did such a knowledge involve? Evidently an acquaintance with our Lord's actions and teaching in considerable detail. Without this it would have been impossible to know Him, love Him, or devote one's self to Him. Yet the Apostle did all this. This passage therefore, united with other similar assertions and incidental references in the Epistles, proves that the primitive Gospel, which was accepted by the different Churches as the foundation of their common Christianity, must have consisted of an account of our Lord's ministry and teaching, bearing a close resemblance to that in our existing Gospels. Consequently these must contain all that is essential in Christianity.

What then are the data with which the Gospels furnish us in relation to our present inquiry?

1. By their combined effect they present us with a great portraiture of Jesus Christ, which constitutes an objective revelation of the moral <sup>attributes</sup> ~~attitudes~~ of God.

2. They announce the immediate erection of an institution which they designate the kingdom of heaven, of which our Lord claimed, as the Christ, to be the King.

3. They furnish us with His own explanations of the nature of this kingdom, part of which are descriptive of its essential character, and the remainder are corrections of the false popular conceptions of it. At the same time they set before us the grounds on which He claimed to be its King.

4. They contain the record of a number of discourses, in which, as legislator of the kingdom of God, our Lord laid down the great principles which were to regulate

the duty of its members towards God and towards each other.

5. They set before us, in His own practice, an example of the ideal perfection of morality, by the study of which a Christian may determine the line of duty which is incumbent on him in all the varying circumstances of life.

Finally, the Gospels are the record of that message of good news which our Lord at Nazareth declared that it was the end and purpose of His mission to proclaim to the poor. They announce release from the captivity of sin, and recovery of sight to the spiritually blind. They contain the proclamation of liberty and enlightenment to those who are bound in the fetters of moral and spiritual degradation, and of the coming of the year of spiritual jubilee to all the oppressed races of men. As such they constitute a veritable Gospel, not only to the select few, but to the masses of mankind; one which is level to their apprehensions and suited to their wants. The cordial acceptance of the great truths which they contain,—to adopt the language of the fourth Gospel,—will be sufficient not only to enable those that do so to believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, but to impart to them life in His name. Let it be observed also, that they were written at a period when the full illumination of the Spirit had been conferred on the Apostolic Church. Consequently they are free from those misapprehensions of the meaning of our Lord's person, work and teaching, which would naturally have been introduced into them if they had been composed at an earlier period, when their authors were still under the influence of their Jewish prejudices and prepossessions. We may therefore find in them all that is essential in Christianity as it was presented to the acceptance of the masses of mankind, free from those complications of thought which can only be the privilege (if it be a privilege) of the educated few. The remaining writings of the New Testament constitute explanations of this great revelation, adapted

to the circumstances of the various Churches to which they were addressed, and set before us the various stages of the growth of Catholic Christianity in the hearts of the primitive believers, and the means by which their Jewish prejudices and prepossessions were gradually uprooted.

## CHAPTER VIII.

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### OUR DATA AND MATERIALS—THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES AND THE EPISTLES.

It will now be necessary to take a general view of the data and materials furnished by the remaining writings of the New Testament, and to show that they constitute the record of the revelations imparted to the Apostles and prophets of the Christian Church for the purpose of dissipating the prejudices in which they had been born and educated, and of guiding them into the full truth respecting our Lord's person, work and teaching. Also, that they are intended to set before us the gradual processes by which the primitive believers were led from Jewish legalism to the acceptance of Catholic Christianity, and the means by which this great change was effected.

Let us begin by considering the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle of St. James. My reason for placing these two writings together is that the internal evidence of the Epistle proves that its author was a Jewish Christian; and it is the only portion of the New Testament composed by a person who, after accepting Jesus as the true Messiah, nevertheless continued in the strict observance of the Jewish rites. It therefore sets before us a portraiture of Christianity as it was accepted by the original Jewish believers, before it was fully revealed to them by the Divine Spirit that Judaism, with its

entire range of ritualism and symbolical worship, was superseded by the Christian revelation.

The Acts of the Apostles, according to the statement of its author, was intended to be a supplement to the third Gospel; the object of the one being to set forth what he considered to constitute the essence of Christianity; and of the other to furnish a narrative of the course of action which was adopted by the primitive believers in laying the foundation of the Christian Church, in execution of their Master's command to make disciples of all nations. The book naturally divides itself into two parts, in the first of which we have an account of the foundation and growth of the Church during that period in which membership was confined to circumcised Israelites; and in the second, of its gradual enlargement into a great spiritual community in which there was to be no distinction of race or privilege.

The first sets before us Christianity in its most primitive, but, at the same time, in its most imperfect form. Briefly stated, this consisted of Judaism, *plus* the confession of the Messiahship of Jesus. The history shows us that throughout this period the converts attended the temple services, and observed the Jewish rites; the outward marks which distinguished their religion from that of the ordinary Jew being private meetings for prayer, the institution of common tables, and frequent participation in the Holy Communion. This state of things continued for a period of several years subsequent to the resurrection.

Our materials for the reconstruction of this early form of Christianity are extremely scanty. They consist of the discourses of St. Peter, the Epistle of St. James, incidental allusions in those of St. Paul, and the common narrative as compiled by the authors of the Synoptic Gospels from fragmentary tradition. Thus we learn from the history that the ordinary Jew possessed a general acquaintance with the events of our Lord's ministry, and that the knowledge of these was so widely diffused that St. Peter, in his address to Cornelius, takes it for granted that even religious Gentiles, who inhabited

Cæsarea, were not ignorant of them. The Apostle thus speaks:—

“The word, which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), that saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judæa, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached, even Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree. Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be made manifest, not unto all the people, but unto witnesses who were chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead” (Acts x. 36-41).

This passage proves that our Lord’s person, work and teaching must have constituted the essence of this primitive Gospel; the only points which the Apostle sets forth in addition to these, as necessary for the instruction of his hearers, being our Lord’s office of Judge of quick and dead, and the promise of remission of sins through him. “While Peter yet spake these words,” says the historian, “the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word,” thus ratifying their admission as members of the Christian Church. On witnessing this sign he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Thus simple was their Christianity. Are we in these modern days to deny its sufficiency for Church membership? It may not be the “strong meat” of Christianity, but it must certainly have constituted “its milk.”

With respect to the Epistle of St. James we have no means of determining the precise date of its composition; the nature of its contents renders it certain that it is an embodiment of Christianity, as it presented itself to the minds of converted Israelites who still continued to regard

the observance of the Mosaic institutions as binding on the Christian Church. The author, as we learn from history, was a Jewish Christian, the strictness of whose observance of the legal ordinances commended him even to the unconverted Jews. In the Epistle we breathe the very atmosphere of legal holiness as it is exemplified and enlarged in the teaching of our Lord. While it fully recognizes His Messianic character, it does not contain a single reference to the Catholic aspects of Christianity; and its Christology is meagre. The contents of the Epistle, in fact, bear a close analogy to those of the discourses of St. Peter, and depict a Christianity equally simple.

The second division of the Acts is occupied in detailing the processes by which the Apostles and prophets of the Church were enlightened as to the full meaning of our Lord's person, work, and teaching, and in describing the gradual evolution of Catholic out of Jewish Christianity. During the entire period of the history, the Jewish form of it retained the strongest hold on those members of the Church who had been educated in the strict principles of Judaism, or who, as proselytes, had been persuaded to embrace them. The process of amalgamation between Jew and Gentile was extremely slow; and during the whole time which is covered by the Epistles of St. Paul there continued to be a sharp contest between these two parties in the Church, the extreme Judaizers denying the truth of his revelations on this subject. The triumph of Catholic Christianity was in fact so gradual a process, that it was only finally secured by that great event which brought the Old Testament dispensation to a violent termination; and which made the observance of its ritual worship no longer possible. This event constitutes so important an era in the development of Christianity, that it is habitually referred to by the writers of the New Testament, as a *παρουσία*, or *coming of Christ*, and as the "last days," or "times," or "the end of the Age." It should be observed that these



expressions are alike applicable, as far as their literal meaning is concerned, to the close of either the Jewish or the Christian dispensation.

The latter portion of the Acts, being almost exclusively occupied with an account of those labours of St. Paul by which, under God, he laid the foundation of Catholic Christianity, furnishes us with few materials to aid us in our inquiry, except in its testimony to the simplicity of the primitive Apostolic Gospel. This deficiency, however, is amply supplied by the Pauline Epistles, which, having been for the most part composed during this period of the history, afford ample materials for tracing the internal history of the Church, and its gradual guidance into the full comprehension of the meaning of the great revelation, made in our Lord's person, work, and teaching. The general character of their testimony we must therefore now consider.

One of the most striking features of these Epistles is, that they contain no formal statement of what constitutes the essence of Christianity; nor do they furnish us with anything resembling a modern "creed," confession of faith, or scheme of salvation; on the contrary, they are continually referring to a Christianity which was already existing, but which they nowhere attempt to define. Such summaries of Christian doctrine as they contain, consist at the utmost of a few lines given in a most unsystematic form. The truths which they propound are addressed to the heart; and through the heart are intended to act as a moral power on the life. Consequently, they are set before us exactly as they lived and energized in the writers, and in those whom they were addressing. The Epistles themselves may be not inaptly described as portraiture of Christianity as it lived and energized in the members of these primitive societies. We shall therefore search in vain in them for a systematic theology. To all such forms of thought as "creeds," confessions of faith, and systems of theology, they present a striking contrast; for whereas the object

sought by these is the satisfaction of the demands of the understanding, the truths set forth in the Epistles are a life, issuing from the heart and addressed to the heart.

The occasions which call forth statements of truth on the part of the writers, are invariably incidental; and the truths themselves are applications of the great principles of Christianity to the special circumstances of the Churches to which the Epistles are addressed. Assuming the existence of a Christianity which was the foundation of the common faith of the writers and of those whom they are addressing, it is their object to unfold its meaning, not in an abstract form, but with a direct reference to the circumstances, the mode of thought and the controversies prevailing in these primitive communities; and above all, so to enforce it on their hearts as to produce a regenerating influence on their lives. The Epistles must therefore be considered as commentaries on this Christianity, composed with a special reference to the requirements of the Churches to which they are addressed. Writings of this character differ widely from statements of abstract truths. The peculiar circumstances which call them forth, the special subjects of controversy in reference to which they are uttered, and the meaning which they must have conveyed to those to whom they were addressed, must be carefully estimated before they can be applied to persons in circumstances and with habits of thought essentially different. Of this mode of treatment the following may be cited as an example :—" Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God : the powers that be, are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God : and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment " (Rom. xiii. 1, 2).

It is well known that this passage has been quoted in times not far remote from the present for the purpose of proving that passive obedience to kings is a Christian duty, and that resistance to a tyrannical government is a violation

of a Divine command. Such was the use which was repeatedly made of it by Divines of the Church of England during the 17th and 18th centuries. If it be regarded as a general precept, uttered without any qualification arising from the particular circumstances of those to whom it was addressed, it is difficult to see how it can have any other meaning. But when we consider that among the members of this Church were a considerable number of Jews, and that so great had been the turbulence of the Jews resident at Rome, that only a short time previously to the writing of the Epistle it had been found necessary to expel them by a decree of the government, it is obvious that a precept uttered in reference to such a condition of things would convey a very different meaning from what it would bear when laid down as an abstract principle binding for all time. It involves, it is true, the universal principle, that it is a duty incumbent on all men, under ordinary circumstances, to yield obedience to the civil governors. But to apply it in its letter to persons in circumstances wholly different from those to whom it was originally addressed, and, by so doing, to convert it into an engine for the suppression of liberty, or the support of tyranny, is to pervert its meaning. The instances in the Epistles in which this principle is involved are very numerous, and the ordinary reader is not unfrequently in the habit of applying them without qualification to modern times. But before they are capable of being so applied they must be translated into their equivalents in modern thought; and due allowance made for the altered circumstances of the Church. Consequently their bearing on modern controversies is not direct but indirect.

One of the controversies which agitated these primitive societies has exercised such an influence on the forms of thought, and even on the language of the argumentative portions of the Epistles, that it must be kept steadily in view if we would grasp the real meaning of their writers; I allude to the question, which was all-important to these

primitive believers, whether the legal ordinances were binding on the members of the Christian Church. The interest of this question, after it has been settled in the negative for eighteen centuries, it is now difficult to conceive; but we must remember that the legal ordinances, consisting of a constant round of minute observances, by the omission of any one of which he was in danger of pollution or of sin, encompassed the daily life of a Jew as with a net from whose meshes there was no escape. What rendered them in some degree tolerable to him was that he had been trained from his childhood to their strict observance; but to the Gentile Christian they constituted an intolerable burden. To the Jew, however, their burdensomeness was not without its compensation; for he considered that their observance conferred on him a right to the exclusive privileges of the kingdom of God, from which those who did not observe them were aliens and outcasts. Now, as these primitive societies consisted of Jews and Gentiles, the former of whom must for many years have greatly predominated in number, we need not wonder that this question became one of the deepest interest, for practices in which the Gentile Christian would indulge without scruple would be pollution to the Jew, whose religious feelings would therefore be daily wounded by witnessing the disregard on the part of the Gentile of practices which to him were matters of sacred obligation. Differences of this kind would of themselves have been sufficient to excite a violent controversy among the members of these Churches; but to these were added, on the part of the Jew, the pride of race and the desire for exclusive privilege, which is so dear to the human heart.

The Jewish Christian had, in fact, stronger reasons to urge in support of his own views than we commonly suppose. He could urge that, not only did the Scriptures of the Old Testament contain no declaration that the legal ordinances were to be repealed, but, on the contrary, they affirmed their continuance under the dispensation of the Messiah; and although they spoke of the Gentile nations as to be admitted

to some share of its privileges, yet they uniformly described them as observers of the Mosaic ordinances. Were they not all of Divine authority; and could they be repealed by anything short of an authority equally Divine? Moses had instituted them, and nothing but the express decree of the prophet like unto Moses could annul them. But not only had the Lord Jesus not formally decreed their abrogation, but He had Himself uniformly observed them, and had directed others to do the same. All that He had said was that many should come from the east, the west, the north and the south, and should sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God. Moreover, was it credible that the announcements of the prophets, that a son of David was coming to establish the theocracy in its purity and to reign over it as king, really meant the annulling of all the special privileges of its legitimate sons? These considerations will help us to estimate the difficulty which the Jewish Christian must have felt in accepting the great announcement of the Pauline Gospel. It was therefore natural that he should assume that the revelations which St. Paul professed to have received were either delusions or fictions of his own invention.

Such being the prepossessions and prejudices of the Jewish Christians, it is obvious that this controversy must have deeply agitated the Apostolic Church. It was one which did not involve a mere abstract dogma, but which affected the daily life of the believer. To us its importance arises from the fact that nearly all the argumentative portions and doctrinal statements of the Epistles are written with a direct reference to it. A correct estimate of the subjects discussed in them, and of the meaning of the truths which their writers intended to convey, will depend on our reading or not reading them in the light thrown on them by this controversy. Volumes, for example, of metaphysical theology have been elaborated on the basis of some of the Apostle's supposed affirmations on the subject of predestination and election. But his entire meaning is affected by the

consideration whether he intended to treat these subjects as abstract questions, or only as far as they bore on the controversy then agitating the Church. If the latter was his object (and the evidence furnished by the Epistles renders it certain that it was so), then his affirmations have nothing to do with the great controversy of modern times, respecting the election of individuals to eternal life ; but they are limited to vindicating against the Jew the right of God in the course of His providential dispensations to bestow special privileges on races or nations, and afterwards to extend them without distinction of race or nation to all who are willing to become members of His Church. It is evident, therefore, that as one or the other is assumed to be the purpose of the writer, it gives a wholly different meaning to his arguments. In the one case he would plunge us into some of the profoundest and most difficult questions of human thought, involving the compatibility of the Divine Sovereignty with the existence of personal freedom ; in the other, his reasonings are confined to some of the most obvious facts in the providential government of God,\* and are applicable to them alone. If it be urged that the one question involves the other, my answer is, that whether it does or does not, in point of abstract thought, is foreign to our present inquiry, which is limited to the consideration of what are and what are not the truths propounded in the Epistles.

Again : in two of them, the doctrine of justification by faith, in opposition to justification by works, forms an important subject of discussion. Here again the meaning of every term in the argument is qualified by the consideration whether the Apostle is dealing with the subject as an abstract question, applicable to every condition of

\* I say "obvious facts in the providential government of God," because nothing is more certain than that the condition of things into which each individual is born is quite independent of his choice, and that one is born under circumstances far more favourable than another, as for example one is born into a set of virtuous, and another into a set of vicious surroundings.

man's moral and spiritual development, or only in reference to the Jewish controversy. Many persons are in the habit of reading these Epistles as though their bearing on the questions which agitate the modern Church was immediate and direct ; whereas the Apostle's arguments are obviously constructed with reference to the great questions of his own day, viz., whether Christianity was only an enlarged and elevated form of Judaism, or was intended to be (what Judaism could never become) the universal religion of mankind.

It will be sufficient, by way of illustration, to refer to one single factor in this argument, the term "Law," which so frequently occurs in these Epistles. If this term is used in its general or abstract sense, it has one meaning ; but if it is limited to the signification which a Jew or a Judaizing Christian attached to it in the Apostolic age, it bears a wholly different one. In the one case the thing intended would be the moral law in its all-embracing character ; in the other, the Jewish system of legalism, which included not only the moral law of the ten commandments, but the whole of its carnal ordinances and its ritual worship ; for the latter formed as distinctive a portion of the law in the eyes of a Jew, as its moral precepts. In fact, in the Pentateuch, moral precepts and ceremonial ordinances are mingled together without any line of distinction between them ; and are represented as resting on the same Divine authority. Still more was this the case with the theology of the Jewish schools, which the Apostle and his Jewish converts had been taught to hold in the highest reverence. Moreover, the Jew contemplated moral duties in a strictly legal aspect, *i.e.*, in the form of a bond or debt, which being discharged to the letter, all was done that he was bound to do. Viewed in this light, even the ten commandments resolved themselves into nothing more than ten legal precepts, each requiring him either to do or to abstain from doing some particular act, and which, if obeyed, realized all his obligations. His idea of justification therefore was that, having fulfilled a definite contract

he had done all that could be required of him ; and having done that he was entitled to the reward promised to obedience. The idea underlying this Jewish aspect of legalism is well expressed by St. Paul in the following words :—“ To him that worketh the reward is not reckoned of grace but of debt.” Judaism, as it then existed, consisted of a mass of simple legalism, the service of the letter instead of the service of the spirit, of the labourer by contract and for hire, instead of the loving obedience of a child.

It is evident that the whole course of reasoning in these two Epistles is affected by the consideration, whether the subject under discussion is the legalism of Judaism, or the moral law as enunciated in the teaching of our Lord. Their contents render it certain, as I shall presently show, that it is constructed with a direct reference to the existing controversies, and that the point to which all these reasonings are directed is to persuade legalists of all descriptions to renounce all hopes of justification on the principles of legalism, and to accept justification by the free grace of the Gospel. The student who fails to keep this steadily in view is certain to misunderstand the meaning of these Epistles.

From these considerations, therefore, we draw the general conclusion that the argumentative portions of the Epistles have only an indirect bearing on subjects of modern controversy, *i.e.*, before they admit of such an application, all the special circumstances in reference to which they were written must be considered and allowed for, and due account taken of the altered conditions of thought and feeling in the times in which we live. Thus, the Apostle writes to Timothy :—“ But thou didst follow my teaching, conduct, and purpose, faith, long suffering, love, patience, persecutions, afflictions, what things befel me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, what persecutions I endured ; and out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived ” (2 Tim. iii. 10-13).



The concluding words of this passage bear a wholly different meaning, according as they are viewed as affirming a fact which would be valid for all time, or one which was only true under the circumstances in which the Apostle lived. In the latter case, they were literally true; but in the present day, so far is a consistent walk in conformity with the principles of Christianity from being attended with the danger of incurring persecution, that it evokes the respect even of unbelievers. Nor is it true that from the time of the Apostle to the present day, evil men and impostors have been steadily waxing worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. This dictum of the Apostle, therefore, though true of the time when it was written, is only capable of application to the present day, as far as the circumstances of the one correspond with those of the other. In fact, the Church has not existed in the world for eighteen centuries without having greatly modified the evils which the Apostle had immediately in view.

The principle here involved is true of all his positions generally. This consideration is so important, as throwing light on the meaning of the sacred writers, that it will be desirable to adduce another striking illustration. Every reader of the New Testament is aware that it abounds with the strongest denunciations of the "*world*." The writers regard it as the seat of all evil and corruption; and it forms the direct contrast to the kingdom of God and holiness. Nothing is more common than for religious people to apply these denunciations to the modern world and all that it contains, as being essentially anti-Christian. It becomes, therefore, a question of the deepest practical importance, what was the "*world*" which the sacred writers thus denounced? Did it include the modern world, with its Christian civilization? Was it intended to include every condition of the world until the consummation of all things? or was it limited to the corrupt world of the Apostolic age? There cannot be a doubt that the world which the sacred writers intended to denounce was that world in which they lived and moved; *i.e.*, the

pagan world, with its entire civilization gradually sinking deeper and deeper into a state of moral and spiritual corruption, and the Jewish world as it is depicted in the Gospels. This, therefore, constituted the *world* which filled the vision of the sacred writers, and stood out, in contrast to the kingdom of God, as the region of unmitigated evil. "We know," says St. John, "that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in the evil one" (1 John v. 19). But the modern world, which contains the Christian Church and its entire civilization, including its arts, its social life, its politics, and its morals, has been leavened with the principles of Christianity during eighteen centuries. It is true that as yet it has only imperfectly leavened the entire mass of humanity ; yet everywhere we can discern traces of its influence. The modern world, therefore, with the regenerating influences of the Church of God in the midst of it, notwithstanding all its imperfections, constitutes a very different world from that which came under the view of the sacred writers. Consequently the denunciations which were directly applicable to the one can be only indirectly applicable to the other, *i.e.*, only as far as the modern world is animated by the same principles as the ancient. Thus art, which ministered to idolatry and immorality, is a very different thing from art which ministers to Christianity. Christianity, in fact, has purified numerous things in the modern world which in the ancient only ministered to evil. Consequently the denunciations of the world with which the New Testament abounds can be only applied to the modern world subject to these limitations.

4. The attentive reader cannot fail to observe that no inconsiderable portion of the Epistles is occupied in setting before us the religious experience of the writer, and in not unfrequent references to that of those whom he is addressing. As I have already referred to this subject it will be unnecessary to enter on it here. I only draw attention to it for the purpose of remarking that, although the record of this experience is in the highest degree edifying, yet it must constitute one of the human elements in the Epistles.

The preceding remarks are intended to apply to these writings generally. We must now direct our attention to certain special points in particular Epistles.

### THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

This Epistle affords a striking illustration of the importance of the principle laid down under our third head. Every word in it is written with a direct reference to the great controversy then agitating the Church. Consequently the meaning of its different arguments, when viewed as bearing directly on it, is wholly different from that which they would bear when viewed as directly applicable to the controversies of the modern Church. Yet nothing is more common than for the ordinary reader to ignore this direct reference, and to apply them as though the Apostle had our present lines of thought in his immediate contemplation.

Still more serious are the consequences when theologians have proceeded to create complicated systems of theology on positions thus limited. This limitation will be rendered more apparent by a brief analysis.

The Epistle naturally divides itself into two parts. In the first the Apostle affirms, as against his Judaizing opponents, the reality of the revelations which had been imparted to him, and the complete independence of his Apostolical authority, by an appeal to facts. In the second he concentrates all his powers on the proof that his revelations respecting the union of Jew and Gentile without distinction of race or privileges in the kingdom of the Messiah are not only in strict conformity with the affirmations of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, but even with the principles of exegesis which his Judaizing opponents applied to their interpretation. From this he draws as a necessary inference the abolition of the entire system of Jewish legalism.

In further support of his argument he draws attention to the fact that the Jewish law formed no portion of the

patriarchal dispensation, during which the Messianic promises were originally made ; but that it was a subsequent addition, on account of transgressions ; and that the legal dispensation was intended to be a state of tutelage for the Jew, to prepare him for the reception of a higher and better state of things. He then proceeds to urge, by various considerations adapted to the comprehension of those whom he was addressing, that the Christian, and not the legal, dispensation is the realization of the true idea of the Abrahamic covenant, of which his opponents falsely claimed to be the only true and genuine inheritors. These reasonings are interspersed with fervent appeals to the members of these Churches not to allow themselves to be drawn away from that Gospel of liberty which he had originally preached among them, by giving heed to the seductive arguments of false brethren.

The law, therefore, which is so frequently referred to in this Epistle, is not the moral law as we now understand it, but the entire system of Jewish legalism. To justification by the rigid observance of such a system, the Apostle opposes justification by faith in Jesus Christ ; to the slavery of the letter, the service of the Spirit ; to a rigid observance of a mass of ritual and carnal ordinances—and even of moral duties viewed in their legal aspect—the law of the Spirit of life written in the heart.

It is evident therefore, that the discussion of the relation of Judaism to Christianity in the kingdom of God—a question all important to these primitive believers—covers the entire contents of this Epistle. We may say with truth, that with the exception of a few practical exhortations, every line is written with immediate reference to it. We have ceased at the present day to be troubled with doubts as to whether the Christian Church was intended to be an expanded Judaism, or a great Catholic community in which in point of privilege there is to be no distinction of condition or race.

It follows therefore, that before the reasonings of this

Epistle can be applied to the controversies of the modern Church, they must be translated into their equivalents in modern thought; and are only so far applicable to our present controversies as these involve the same principles as those which are discussed by the Apostle.

### THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

We find in the opening chapter of this Epistle the two following passages:—

“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an Apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God, which he promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of the Seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, even Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. i. 1-4).

And—

“So much as in me lies, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you also that are at Rome. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. i. 15, 16).

The first of these passages is not a little complicated. But when we take into consideration the irregularity of the Apostle's style, and his habit of allowing himself to be diverted from his immediate subject by the occurrence of a particular thought, or even by the mention of a single word, and then, after a digression, returning to it again, we may assume that both were intended to set before the reader his general purpose in writing the Epistle. This may be set forth in the two following theses:—

1. That our Lord's Divine person and work constituted the essence of Christianity.

2. That the Gospel is the power of God to salvation to all believers alike, whether Jew or Gentile; and that the

only special privilege which the former had over the latter was precedence in the offer of it.

The reference in the first passage to the writings of the prophets, and to Christ as being of the seed of David according to the flesh; and to Jew and Gentile in the second, is an intimation that it was not his intention to discuss the topics embraced in the Epistle in their abstract form. It should also be carefully noted that these two theses, as has been shown above, form the special subject-matter on which he claimed to have received supernatural enlightenment; and that as a matter of fact they cover the entire contents of the Epistle, as will be apparent from the following brief summary of his argument, which extends from the 16th verse of the first to the end of the 11th chapter.

The Epistle being intended to meet the requirements of a Church consisting of Jewish and Gentile converts, he begins by declaring that the Gentile world had fallen into the lowest depths of moral and spiritual corruption; that it was consequently worthy of condemnation, and stood in urgent need of redemption. In establishing this position, he gives a terrible catalogue of the crimes to which the heathen world was addicted, the truth of which is fully established by the remains of ancient literature. Yet while his charges are true of the Gentile world, taken as a whole, it is plain that he could not have intended to affirm that every individual among them was a prey to the vices which he enumerates; for it is well known that at this very time, there was no small number of men among them who, according to the light which they possessed, were nobly struggling against those corruptions into which society, taken as a whole, was rapidly sinking. The Apostle's description then is intended to be a picture of the general state of the heathen world as it then existed, without being intended to be true of every individual member of it. Further: it is evidently drawn from that particular state of pagan society which had come under his own immediate

notice; but there is not the least reason to believe that when he wrote this passage, he had in his contemplation the condition of the entire heathen world, including, for example, the great Oriental nations, respecting which he had had no personal experience. Of the general truth of his description, the Roman Christians had ample proof before their eyes; but it is absurd to suppose that the Apostle intended to include in his condemnation every subject of the Roman empire, however lofty might be his moral character. This is rendered certain by a passage in the 2nd chapter, in which he affirms, "For when the Gentiles who have no law, do by nature the things of the law, these having no law, are a law unto themselves."

It is necessary to draw particular attention to these facts, because they prove that throughout the Epistle, the Apostle is not reasoning respecting men as individuals, but of mankind in general: unless this were so, his entire argument would be invalid.

Having proved the corruption of the Gentile world in general, he applies a similar course of reasoning to the Jews; and shows from the testimony of their own Scriptures that they had failed to observe the law in which they gloried; and were therefore incapable of attaining justification by it. Here again, it is evident that his argument is intended to apply only to the Jews in their corporate capacity through the different stages of their history, and not to every Jew as an individual; for in that case the crimes charged against the Jews in the following citation from the Old Testament would be inaccurate, as is abundantly proved by the case of the Apostle himself, who openly averred that he "had lived in all good conscience towards God up to that very day:"

"There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They have all turned aside; they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their

tongues they have used deceit ; the poison of asps is under their lips ; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness ; their feet are swift to shed blood ; destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known : there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God" (Rom. iii. 10-20).

It is evident that however true these citations may have been of the Jewish nation, taken as a whole, or of portions of it, at different periods of their history, they could never have been intended by the Apostle to be an accurate description of the moral and spiritual condition of every individual Jew ; for as we learn from the Old Testament, even at the worst periods of national apostasy there were no small number of God-fearing men among them. This was even so, when the Epistle was written, though as a nation they were rapidly advancing on the path of ruin and destruction. Nothing would have been more absurd than to have affirmed of every Jew during the past, or who was then living, that "his feet were swift to shed blood ; and that he had no fear of God before his eyes," for, on the contrary, the Apostle himself affirms in a subsequent chapter, "that they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge ;" and in his address to the Jews from the castle stairs, he says :—"being zealous for God, *even as ye all are this day.*" Hence it follows, that throughout this argument, he is dealing both with Jews and Gentiles collectively, and not individually.

Our Lord's denunciations of the Pharisees form a striking illustration of this mode of speaking. They are evidently intended to be applicable to them in their corporate capacity as a sect animated by certain principles, and not to every individual among them. As a body, they were hypocrites ; but among them were men of unquestionable piety, "who were not far from the kingdom of heaven."



St. Paul was himself a bigoted Pharisee; but was certainly no hypocrite. It follows therefore that Phariseism and its spirit is the thing denounced; and the individual only as far as he was leavened with its evil principles. In a similar manner the Apostle's argument deals with the Jew and Gentile; and proves not only that their respective systems were incapable of justifying those who lived in conformity with them, but that Jew and Gentile alike stood in need of redemption.

But not only is it the practice of popular theology to apply certain statements of the Apostle, which were uttered respecting Jews and Gentiles exclusively in their corporate capacity, to every member of the human race, and to deduce inferences from this on certain points of abstract theology, but also to apply principles and illustrations which he only uses in reference to Jew and Gentile as such, as though they were capable of application to all mankind as individuals. In a word, the Apostle is not dealing with abstract questions, capable of an *immediate and direct application* for all time to the ever varying conditions of Christian thought, but with certain positions which were of the deepest interest to the members of these primitive societies. We may therefore not inaptly describe this Epistle as a treatise on the relation of Christianity to Judaism, written, not like the Epistle to the Galatians, in reference to the special circumstances of the particular Churches to which it is addressed, but treating the subject generally with a view to the controversies which agitated the whole Christian community; and interspersed with various digressions exhibiting Christianity as a mighty moral and spiritual power, energizing on the individual Christian.

With this view of the purpose of the writer, as enunciated in the two opening chapters, agree the entire contents of the argumentative portion of the Epistle. The 3rd, 4th and 5th chapters are exclusively occupied in discussing different aspects of the Jewish controversy. In them the Apostle propounds his doctrine of justification by faith, in

opposition to justification by the works of Jewish legalism, and points out that this was the original mode of justification prior to the introduction of the legal dispensation. Throughout the entire argument, Jew and Gentile are alternately referred to ; and the concluding portion of it is addressed to both alike ; and it terminates by running a parallel of antithesis between Adam, as the head of the human race by natural, and Christ, as its head by spiritual generation.

So far, then, it is clear that the Apostle's arguments are addressed to the solution of the great question of the relation in which Judaism stood to Christianity in the kingdom of God. But at this point he introduces three important episodes which, while they form digressions from the direct line of his argument, yet have an intimate bearing on it, when regarded as a whole. In the first of these (the 6th chapter) he sets forth the death and resurrection of Christ as a moral and spiritual power, which is mighty to effect the sanctification of man ; and defends his positions from the charge of antinomianism. Next (in the 7th chapter) he gives a narrative of his own experience as a legalist, with the design of showing the total inadequacy of the principle of legalism as a moral and spiritual power, to render the fulfilment of the law a possibility. For this purpose he gives us a lively picture of his own struggles to fulfil its obligations by the motives which legalism could supply ; and of his total failure to realize even his own ideal of legal obedience ; to say nothing of the requirements of the perfect moral law of God. On this despairing picture of the spiritual impotency of legalism follows his glorious 8th chapter, in which he shows that the moral and spiritual power, of which legalism is destitute, is to be found in the reception by faith of the person and work of Jesus Christ our Lord. This leads him into a digression, in which he unfolds the privileges, hopes, and prospects which the Gospel of Christ sets before the individual believer.

Having completed this episode, the Apostle returns to

the direct course of his argument, which is continued without interruption throughout the three following chapters. In these the chief points which the Judaizing Christian urged in favour of his own peculiar views are argued step by step, his objections answered, his difficulties met, and proof is given that the admission of the Gentiles to equal privileges with the Jews in the kingdom of the Messiah, and even the rejection of the latter, was not only in conformity with the right of God to confer special privileges on particular races and nations, but also with the declarations of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which not only affirmed that the Messiah would be a light to lighten the Gentiles, but warned the Jews of the danger of rejection on account of their unbelief.

So strongly was the controversy above alluded to present in the writer's mind, that we find distinct traces of it even in the four concluding chapters, which contain the practical application of his argument. This being so, it follows that the various truths which enter into it are considered, not in their abstract character, but only in their bearing on this particular subject. Its reasonings also are constructed from the standpoint of those to whom they are addressed, and are intended, not to prove truths which the Apostle affirmed that he had received by express revelation from Christ, but to persuade Jews and Judaizing Christians to accept these revelations, although they ran counter to their dearest prejudices and hopes.

Lastly: the unfolding of the truth respecting our Lord's person, the all-sufficiency of his work to meet every requirement of man, and the union of Jew and Gentile in one great spiritual community, of which, and of its individual members, he constitutes the life, cover the entire contents of the Epistle. These points, I need scarcely remind the reader, not only correspond with the original thesis, but form the great subjects of the revelations which had been imparted to the Apostles and prophets of the Church, in redemption of our Lord's promise

to guide them into the full meaning of the Christian revelation.

The conclusions which follow from the foregoing considerations may be thus briefly summarized :—

1. The Apostle, throughout the direct course of his argument, treats of mankind only in their national or corporate capacity; and his statements are not intended to be applied to individuals, the references to whom are confined to the episodes, and digressions from his main argument.

2. The direct line of the argument is constructed with a view to the great controversy then agitating the Church; and its various positions are considered, not as abstract truths, but only in so far as they bear on the special subject under consideration; and can be only rightly understood when viewed under this limitation.

3. The “law” so frequently referred to in the Epistle, is not the moral law of Christianity, but the Jewish law; and in one instance the moral law, as enunciated by man’s natural conscience.

4. The subject of justification, as it is here discussed, is limited to justification by works done from the standpoint of a Jewish legalist, in contrast to the Christian principle of justification by faith in Jesus Christ.

5. A contrast is run throughout the Epistle, between faith and grace on the one hand, and works on the other. This contrast, however, is limited by the fact that the works referred to are exclusively works as contemplated from the legal standpoint, and not the works of Christian holiness.

6. The great struggle depicted in the 7th chapter is not set forth as one which it is necessary for every Christian to experience, but is intended as a delineation of the vain efforts of a zealous legalist to realize the righteousness demanded by the law, as long as he had no more powerful motives to impel him than those which the spirit of legalism could furnish.

7. The predestination and election of the 9th and 11th

chapters have nothing to do with the great modern controversies concerning these subjects, but are limited to the affirmation of God's right to confer special privileges on portions of mankind, viewed in their national or corporate capacity, or to withhold them according to his own good pleasure. He simply considers these subjects as far as they bear on the right of the Gentile to enter the Church on terms of perfect equality with the Jews, but no further. The consideration of the abstract question of the divine Sovereignty or the divine decrees was a point absolutely foreign to the Apostle's argument. The subject is exclusively contemplated from the standpoint of a Jewish objector.

Such are the chief restrictions and qualifications under which this Epistle must be read, before it can be directly applied to the controversies prevailing in the modern Church.

#### THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

Although the Pauline authorship of this Epistle is by no means established, it nevertheless bears an equally strong resemblance to a theological treatise, with the one we have been considering. One of its most characteristic distinctions from St. Paul's undoubtedly genuine Epistles is, that the individuality of the writer, which forms so prominent a feature in them, here only occasionally presents itself. It may be best described as a treatise mainly directed to the elucidation of one special aspect of the great question of the day. Its thesis may be stated thus:—

The person and work of Jesus Christ is the complete realization of the symbolism of the Old Testament dispensation, which, having been thus fully realized in him, is henceforth antiquated and valueless.

Here again, as in the Epistle to the Romans, the various topics which form a portion of the arguments are not discussed as abstract questions, but only as far as they bear

on this particular thesis. As Jewish legalism is the idea around which the reasonings of the one Epistle centre, so Jewish ceremonialism is that of the other ; and the person and work of Jesus Christ is set forth as the complete antithesis of both.

The contents of the Epistle make it evident that the whole subject is discussed from an exclusively Jewish standpoint ; and that an intimate acquaintance with the Septuagint version of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, as well as a deep reverence for the Levitical institutions, is presupposed in those to whom it is addressed. This renders it certain that it was intended for the use of Jews and Judaizing Christians ; and that the object of the writer was to meet the difficulties and objections which they felt against the Apostolical announcement, that the legal institutions were annulled in the kingdom of the Messiah. Its object therefore is not abstract proof, but persuasion ; and with this end in view the author takes his stand on the lines of thought and the modes of reasoning which were current among those whom he is addressing ; and the principles of exegesis which he applies to the Old Testament are evidently those which were accepted by the Jewish Alexandrine school.\* In a word, the writer is not seeking to prove by abstract logical argument that the Levitical ordinances were annulled in the kingdom of the Messiah—for their repeal rested not on reasonings, but on the higher authority of revelation—but, by arguments which were adapted to persuade those who clung to their observance as a duty of sacred obligation, that all the elements of truth which they contained were summed up and fully realized in the person and work of Jesus Christ ; and consequently that the shadow

\* The reader who is desirous of estimating the strength of the evidence that this epistle is saturated throughout by the form of thought and the principles of exegesis which were adopted by the Alexandrine school will find it fully set forth in Canon Farrar's "Early Days of Christianity." Our limits forbid even an analysis of it here.

was become valueless in the presence of the substantial reality.

It will doubtless be urged that reasonings such as those above alluded to, and applications of Scripture in a sense widely different from its natural meaning, must be accepted as valid on the authority of the Apostolic writers. To this I reply :—

1. That an argument is either logically valid or it is not ; and the idea that the gift of inspiration can convert an argument which is logically unsound into one which is logically sound involves a contradiction.

2. With respect to exegesis, I am quite ready to allow that a revelation may be a sufficient guarantee that the meaning of a passage in the Old Testament which was intended to be conveyed to future ages was different from its natural one; or even that it possesses, in addition to it, an esoteric or secret meaning. But while the abstract possibility of this must be admitted, the mere use of an allegorical method of interpretation by a sacred writer is no proof that his exegesis in this respect was guaranteed by his supernatural enlightenment; the real question at issue being, Was an infallible exegesis of the Scriptures of the Old Testament a portion of the promise of supernatural enlightenment made by our Lord to the Apostles? Still less can the allegorizing of a few isolated passages guarantee the soundness of such a method of interpretation as that which was adopted by the Alexandrine school, by which the Scriptures were made to yield a number of allegorical meanings in addition to their natural and obvious ones, according to the caprice of the reader. But in the case which we are now considering, no small portion of the reasonings and of the exegesis is addressed to persons who denied the truth of the revelations as to the supercession of the Mosaic ordinances in the kingdom of the Messiah. Consequently, to have pleaded the writer's inspiration as a guarantee of the validity of his reasonings or of his exegesis of the Old Testament would have been a direct assumption

of the point at issue, viz., the reality of the revelations which he professed to have received.

It is evident therefore that both the reasonings and the principles of exegesis of this Epistle must be those of the school of thought to which the author and those whom he was addressing belonged, and must have been accepted as valid by both.

### THE EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS, CORINTHIANS, AND PHILIPPIANS.

I take a survey of these Epistles together, because they present us with a more vivid delineation of the personality of the Apostle than any of his other writings, with the exception of the Epistle to the Galatians. In them we have before us the entire man in all the varied fluctuations of his religious life—in his hopes and in his fears, in his exaltations and his depressions, in his earnest affection for his converts, in his self-sacrificing zeal, in his anxieties, his struggles, his labours, in the fullness of his faith, and even in his weaknesses. Here, then, we are evidently in the presence of a human element, which may not inaptly be designated the religious experience of the writer. They have also this further point in common, that they do not treat of definite subjects such as those which we have been considering; but their statements of truths are invariably called forth by special circumstances connected with the condition of the particular Churches to which they are addressed; and the points discussed in them are treated with a direct reference to those circumstances. Consequently, they are only directly applicable to the circumstances and lines of thought of other times as far as they involve the same principles as those which the Apostle had immediately in view.

The Epistles to the Thessalonians are the earliest and the most simple of the Apostle's writings. With the exception of the passage explanatory of the condition of



the departed saints, and the prediction about the man of sin, they contain nothing but the most simple truths enunciated in the most simple form. Their Christology, though in advance of that of St. James, is the least distinctly marked of that of any of the Pauline Epistles. By far the larger portion of their contents consists of expressions of the Apostle's anxiety for his converts; of his affection for them, and of exhortations to live in a manner worthy of their Christian calling. They in fact portray the writer in his calmer aspects, as he was when he was undisturbed by Judaizers, or by those who questioned his Apostolical authority.

It will be desirable in this place to notice a trait which, while it runs through all the Epistles, is more prominent in these than in any other writing of the New Testament, viz., the general expectation of the speedy coming of Christ. What was understood by that coming; whether it was the events which brought about the final winding up of the Old Testament dispensation, or the personal reappearance of our Lord Himself—for the *παρουσία*, as we shall presently see, bears more than one signification—or both, it will be unnecessary to inquire here. One thing, however, these Epistles render certain, viz., that these primitive believers regarded His personal coming as more imminent than it has proved to be in fact. So much was this the case, that St. Paul thought it necessary to caution the members of this Church against the belief that the day of Christ was actually present, because many of them had been tempted to neglect their ordinary business in expectation of its speedy manifestation. This impression had been encouraged by the fervent language of his first Epistle. He therefore informs them in his second, that it was a mistake to think it so close at hand. Yet the language of all his Epistles proves that he did not consider our Lord's personal coming to be an event far remote. On one point, and on one only, does he put in a claim of supernatural enlightenment on this subject, viz., that whenever it took place the living

and the departed saints would alike participate in its blessings.

As the natural meaning of his language on this subject is utterly at variance with certain popular theories of inspiration, various attempts have been made to explain it away. Among these it has been urged that while he himself knew that our Lord's coming was an event in the remote future, yet for the purpose of exciting the vigilance of his converts, he exhorted them to consider it as possibly imminent; or that by the coming of Christ he really meant death, which in our uncertainty as to the duration of life may be looked for at any moment. But such explanations are nothing better than a nullification of the Apostle's own words. The only adequate one is that to which I have already referred, viz., that the time of our Lord's *παρουσία* was one of those points on which no supernatural enlightenment was afforded to the members of the Apostolic Church. The Apostolic utterances on this subject therefore form no portion of the illumination imparted to them in conformity with their Master's promise.

A few remarks on the Epistles to the Corinthians will suffice, as I have already referred to several of their most important phenomena. Their references to Christian truth are more incidental than in any other of the Apostle's writings. A considerable portion of the first Epistle is occupied in answering questions on points connected with the special matters which had been referred to him for decision. Nearly the whole of the remainder, and a large portion of the second Epistle, is written with direct reference to various disorders which had crept into this society, the violent party spirit which prevailed in it, the aspersions which had been cast on his own conduct while among them, and above all, the denial of his Apostolical authority. Consequently the various truths enunciated in them are set forth with a direct reference to these subjects; and in order to appreciate their true meaning it is necessary to study them, not as mere abstract propositions, but in

the closest connection with the points under discussion between the Apostle and the members of this Church.

A single example will show the importance of this consideration. In this Church, and in that of Colosse, the Apostle was brought into collision with various forms of Gentile philosophy. In dealing with the relation in which it stood to Christianity, if his utterances are viewed as applicable to philosophy for all time, instead of being confined to those special forms of thought which came under his immediate notice, nothing can be more absolute than his denunciation of every form of human wisdom. To the Corinthians he writes as follows :—

“For the word of the cross is to them that are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent will I reject. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God’s good pleasure, through the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. Seeing that Jews seek for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling block, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God; because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor. i. 18-25).

Again :—“If any man thinketh that he is wise among you in this world, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, he that taketh the wise in their own craftiness; and again, the Lord knoweth the reasonings of the wise that they are vain” (1 Cor. iii. 18-20).

Again, to the Colossians :—

“Take heed lest there be any one among you that maketh a spoil of you, through his philosophy and vain

deceit, after the rudiments of the world, after the tradition of men, and not after Christ" (Col. ii. 8).

These and similar passages, if they are viewed as written without special reference to the forms of philosophic thought with which the Apostle came into immediate contact, but as precepts valid for all time, can only be regarded as denunciations of all human wisdom, science, and philosophy, whether of the past, the present, or the future. No exception is made in favour of those philosophers of the ancient world who laboured hard, though with imperfect success, in their struggles after truth; nor of those students of science who in the modern world have unfolded the secrets of the universe; nor of the moral and political philosopher, whose labours have so largely tended to ameliorate the condition of mankind; nor even of the student of history whose researches have thrown so much light on the records of revelation. As far as the mere letter is concerned, all these are included in the same condemnation with the hair-splitting of the Jewish Rabbi.

But if it is incredible that this was the intention of the Apostle, what then are the things here denounced? The only rational answer must surely be that his denunciations are exclusively limited to those systems of philosophy and science with which he came into immediate contact, the corrupt systems of the then existing Jewish and Gentile Schools. This being so, common sense suggests that the application of his denunciation to all systems of philosophy and science, whether ancient or modern, in short to all human wisdom indiscriminately, which we so often meet with in popular theology, is a grave perversion of the Apostle's meaning.

The principle involved in this particular instance applies to no small number of the questions discussed in these Epistles. Utterances made in reference to special subjects must be accepted under the qualifications which those subjects suggest. In other words, they are not to be taken as propositions valid for all time; nor as capable of direct

and immediate application to other circumstances and lines of thought, except so far as a common principle underlies them.

The Epistle to the Philippians presents us with phenomena analogous to those addressed to the Thessalonians, with this difference only, that it sets forth a more advanced Christology. It need not therefore detain us.

### THE REMAINING EPISTLES.

These require few special remarks. That to the Ephesians, as has been already observed, is chiefly occupied in unfolding the revelations made to the Apostles and prophets of the Church respecting the Divine purpose to unite all things in Christ in one great spiritual community. The leading idea of that to the Colossians is, our Lord's Divine person, viewed as the antithesis of the philosophic systems of the day; and—so far as they had any substratum of truth—as their realization. The Epistle to Philemon presents us with a portraiture of the Apostle in his Christian intercourse with a private friend. The pastoral Epistles, apart from their directions about the ministerial office, present us with no special feature beyond those which we have already considered. Of the Epistle of James, I have already observed, that it is a delineation of Christianity as it presented itself to the mind of a Jewish Christian. The two Epistles of St. Peter occupy an intermediate place between the Christianity delineated in St. James and that of the Pauline Epistles. The second and third Epistles of St. John contain nothing special; while that of St. Jude bears so close a resemblance to the two last chapters of the second Epistle of St. Peter as almost to force on us the belief that the writer of the one has borrowed from the other.

But the first Epistle of St. John requires a more definite notice. The author at its commencement thus defines the subject-matter respecting which he proposes to write:—

“That which was from the beginning, that which we have

heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested unto us). That which we have seen, and heard, declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us; yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John<sup>i</sup>. 1-4).

These words make the writer's purpose plain. His thesis is "The Word of life;" in other words, he designed to write concerning the end and purpose of the incarnation, as set forth in our Lord's actions and teaching as they had been witnessed by himself, and to exhibit it, not in a theoretical, but in its practical aspect, that those to whom he wrote might have fullness of joy through this manifestation of God's character and love. The subject-matter of this Epistle therefore may be briefly described as a commentary on the person, work, and teaching of Jesus Christ, as the objective revelation of God viewed in its practical bearing on the human heart.

The remaining book of the New Testament, the Apocalypse, as far as it is not prophetical, presents us with a similar view of our Lord's Divine person.

From these considerations we may draw the following general conclusion:—

The Epistles furnish us with the results of the supernatural enlightenment which our Lord promised to the Apostles when He told them that after His departure the Spirit of truth would guide them into the knowledge of the many things which He had to say unto them, but which up to that time they had been unable to bear. They also prove that this illumination centred around two subjects, viz., His own Divine person and work, and the union of all holy beings in one great spiritual community; or to adopt the language of the apostle, "in the manifestation of the Divine

purpose kept in silence in times eternal, finally summing up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, so that unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." In studying them however, the caution must ever be borne in mind, that their teaching is for the most part not direct, but incidental; not consisting of a number of abstract propositions, but directed to the special circumstances of the Churches to which they are addressed, and therefore—as far as this is the case—only indirectly applicable to other circumstances and times as far as a common principle underlies the one and the other. The remaining portions constitute a treasure-house of the religious experience of the writers, and of those to whom they are addressed; and as such they are an invaluable record of the mode in which Christianity acted on the minds of these primitive believers. Such is a general view of the data and materials which the Epistles furnish in aid of our inquiry.

## CHAPTER IX.

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THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD; THE  
PAROUSIA OF OUR LORD; THE END OF THE  
WORLD; THE LAST TIMES; THE MEANING  
OF THESE AND SIMILAR EXPRESSIONS IN  
THE NEW TESTAMENT.

WE proceed now to the constructive portion of the argument. It will be impossible, however, to treat this with perspicuity without first assigning a definite meaning to the expressions which are placed at the head of this chapter, and which occur so frequently in the New Testament; but regarding which the popular conceptions are at the best but vague and indefinite, while to a large proportion of readers they may be almost said to convey no real meaning at all. Even in the Gospels themselves their meaning is not always the same, and can only be determined by a careful consideration of the context. Thus we find many passages which, if taken in their most obvious sense, declare that the erection of a kingdom of God is an event immediately impending. Two of these, and numerous others in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, identify this kingdom with the Christian Church, of which the foundation was laid on the day of Pentecost. Others speak of its manifestation as more remote; while not a few imply that it will not take place until the end of the age, or



dispensation. A similar variation of meaning attaches to "the Parousia or 'coming' of our Lord," "the end of the world," "the last times," and other similar expressions.

It should be observed that the word "World" in the New Testament, is in the majority of cases a translation of the Greek *αἰών*, and not *κόσμος*. The former expression never means the material planet, but an age or dispensation, and even the latter more frequently means the moral than the material world.

The plural *αἰῶνες* is sometimes translated "Worlds," leaving the reader to suppose that the material planet is thereby intended, while the expression *εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων* is invariably rendered in the authorized version "for ever and ever," whereas its true meaning is "to the ages of ages." This laxity of translation has greatly contributed to the confusion of thought above alluded to.

The truth is that the Jewish mind troubled itself but little about the past or the future history of the material globe; but that with which it deeply concerned itself was a number of periods in the Divine government, which it designated "ages" or "dispensations." The idea of "Worlds" in our modern sense of the term, meaning a system of suns with their attendant planets, never entered into their thoughts. When therefore the "Worlds," "ages," or "dispensations" are referred to by a writer of the Apostolic age, the idea which such expressions suggested to him was either the Mosaic age, or dispensation, under which he was actually living, or the age to come, *i.e.*, the age or dispensation of the Messiah. Thus, for example, when the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes: "For unto the angels hath he not put into subjection the world to come, whereof we speak" (Heb. ii. 5), he is evidently not speaking of what is popularly designated the kingdom of heaven, but of the Christian dispensation in contrast with the Mosaic. So again, speaking of the perfection of our Lord's sacrifice, he writes: "But now once in the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the

sacrifice of himself" (Heb. ix. 26). It is evident that the "Ages" here spoken of are not the Christian dispensation, but the Mosaic and those which preceded it; for it was at the conclusion of the latter only that our Lord appeared. Numerous other passages of similar import might be cited; but the above are conclusive as to the meaning which an Apostolic writer attached to these expressions.

But on not a few occasions when the sacred writers make use of these and similar expressions, a difficulty arises in determining to what age they are referring. This can only be ascertained from the context and the scope of the entire passage. Thus, when St. Peter writes, "The end of all things is at hand," or St. James, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh," it can only be determined by a careful consideration of the writer's standpoint, what was the end of all things, or the coming of the Lord, to which he refers. It is certain that, in the sense which popular theology attaches to these expressions, neither the one nor the other was at hand; for an interval of nearly two thousand years has elapsed since these warnings were given, and neither the end of all things, nor the personal coming of our Lord, has yet taken place. St. Peter must therefore have intended those to whom he wrote to understand by "the end of all things is at hand" that the Mosaic dispensation was about to be brought to its termination; and St. James, by "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh," not the personal appearance of Christ, but that great manifestation of his presence in Providence which brought the Jewish dispensation to a close, and effected a final separation between it and the Christian Church. Otherwise we have no alternative but to assume that they were under a misapprehension as to the actual fact. Our Lord's words, however, in the Parable of the Tares, "So shall it be at the end of the world"\* (*ἐπὶ τοῦ*

\* In their rendering of this passage the authors of the revised version have been guilty of a singular violation of their own rule of

συντελεία τοῦ αἰῶνος) are spoken, not of the Mosaic dispensation, but of that of the Messiah; for the Divine speaker expressly affirms that the parable in question is intended to illustrate certain aspects of the kingdom of heaven.

But while the kingdom of heaven is unquestionably identified by the writers of the New Testament with the Church of God which was erected at the Pentecost, yet its manifestation and the advent of its king are repeatedly spoken of as destined to receive their accomplishment at the termination of the present age or dispensation. How then can a kingdom already established be correctly spoken of as destined to be manifested at some future time? The following remarks will help to clear up this apparent contradiction:—

The Christian dispensation may be contemplated under two aspects, each of which it was natural for one who had been in the habit of viewing things from a Jewish standpoint to conceive of as an age or dispensation, viz., the period of its erection and growth, and that of the realization of the purposes of its institution. While therefore it is a perfectly legitimate use of language to speak of the kingdom of God as having come when the Christian Church was first set up as a visible community, and during the period of its growth and expansion, it is equally so to speak of it as not fully and effectually manifested until it has realized the purposes of its institution. This however has taken ages

rendering different Greek words by different English ones. It is the more remarkable that they should have done so in this particular case, because the Divine speaker has so clearly marked the distinction between them. “The field,” he says, “is the world” (κόσμος); “the harvest is the end of the age” (τοῦ αἰῶνος). Their usual practice has been to render αἰὼν by “world” and to put “age” in the margin, but they have omitted to do so here, although the two words are contrasted in the same sentence; and it is clear that the Divine speaker intended them to convey a different meaning. This confusion of translation is in danger of misleading the English reader.

to accomplish, and will in all probability take numerous ages yet to come. Consequently the prayer, "Thy kingdom come," may be used with strict propriety until, to use the words of the prophet, "the stone which was cut out without hands" has demolished every other earthly and opposing power, and grown into a mountain and filled the whole earth. Thus, when contemplated from this point of view, each successive stage of conquest may be justly designated as a "coming of the kingdom," and the complete subjugation to its king of the dominions which he claims, as its complete and final manifestation.

But the kingdom of God differs from other kingdoms in that it has been expressly instituted for the realization of a definite purpose, which may be designated its ideal. There is therefore a very true sense in which it may be regarded as not having come until it has accomplished this; and, until it has done so, its complete manifestation may justly be spoken of as an event yet future. Consequently a Jew, who was in the habit of viewing God's providential dealings with mankind as consisting of ages or dispensations, would naturally divide the Christian dispensation into two ages, viz., the age of conquest and of growth, and the age when it shall have realized the purposes of its institution, "by summing up in one all things in Christ; the things on the earth and the things in the heavens."

These observations will throw light on the language of the New Testament when it speaks of the kingdom of God in a threefold aspect, viz., as an institution about to be erected; as one realized in the institution and subsequent developments of the Christian Church, and yet as destined to be manifested at some indefinite period of the future. For this its final manifestation the Apostolic writers earnestly sighed; and they viewed it as indissolubly connected with the personal presence of its glorified King. Hence the frequency with which in the Epistles the realization of its ideal is spoken of as the period of its manifestation.

Secondly : The “coming” of Christ\* is spoken of both as an event yet future and also as one which was immediately impending. In the former sense it is generally spoken of by the Apostolic writers; and it then usually denotes a second manifestation of our Lord in His human personality. But in the latter sense it is frequently employed by our Lord Himself, and is intended to denote not His personal presence, but a presence in efficacy and power. Thus, in promising His assistance to the Apostles in the execution of the commission with which He had entrusted them, He says:—

“Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. xxviii. 20).

So again, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. xviii. 20).

In both these passages a presence of Christ is undoubtedly promised; but it is obviously one in power and efficacy, and not a bodily presence.

Again, “Judas saith unto him (not Iscariot), Lord, what is come to pass, that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him: and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John xiv. 22, 23). It is impossible to understand the coming or presence of Christ in this passage as any other than a spiritual presence; not local or bodily, but in power and efficacy.

So again, when Caiaphas adjured our Lord to say whether he was the Christ, He answered:—

“Thou hast said. Nevertheless, I say unto thee, henceforth” (or as St. Luke has it, “from the present time” ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν), “shall ye see the Son of man sitting on

\* The word *παρουσία* really denotes *actual presence*, and is altogether devoid of the sense of futurity contained in the English word “coming.”

the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. xxvi. 64. Mark xiv. 61, 62. Luke xxii. 29).

Here the ἀπ' ἀρι of St. Matthew, and the ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν of St. Luke, evidently denote the same thing, viz., a presence or coming of Christ, which some of those who were sitting in judgment on Him were to live to behold.

How then did Caiaphas and the Sanhedrists see our Lord sitting at the right hand of power from that time and forwards? Clearly in the erection of His Church immediately after His resurrection, despite of all their opposition, thereby vindicating His claim to be the Christ; and in the supernatural endowments which were bestowed on its members. When did some of those present see Him "coming in the clouds of heaven?" Obviously, not in His human personality, but when, in a very awful sense of these words—some forty years after, by the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple—He utterly subverted the old theocracy with its rites and institutions.

Again, the same idea is set forth in the parable of the rebellious husbandmen, in which a coming of the lord of the vineyard is spoken of, to avenge his murdered son.

"When, therefore," says our Lord, "the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do to those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy these miserable men, and let out his vineyard to other husbandmen, who shall render him their fruits in their seasons" (Matt. xxi. 40, 41).

That the destruction of Jerusalem is here referred to as the coming of the Lord of the vineyard is rendered certain by our Lord's concluding threat:—"Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Then, speaking of Himself as the stone which was rejected by the Jewish builders, but which yet became the headstone of the corner, He adds, "And he that falleth on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall it shall scatter him as dust" (Matt. xxi. 43, 44).

Of a similar import is another declaration of our Lord already referred to :—"Verily I say unto you, There be some of them that stand here who shall in no wise taste of death until they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom," or as St. Luke has it, "The kingdom of God come with power."

When did some of those who heard this declaration witness an event which could with any propriety be described in such words as these? Clearly in that series of terrible occurrences by which the old theocracy was subverted and the Mosaic dispensation brought to a close. By means of these the Christian Church was finally separated from Judaism, and became a society so manifestly distinct that it was impossible any longer to regard it as a Jewish sect. Thus the kingdom of God "came with power," and the Son of man "came in his kingdom" by the destruction of that power which had rejected Him, and which, as long as it continued to exist, denounced Him as an impostor.

These passages—and many others might be adduced—prove beyond all question that our Lord frequently spoke of His "coming," or Parousia, as a presence not in His human personality, but in power and efficacious operation. It is equally certain that there are many others in the New Testament which speak of a future personal Parousia; and there are also not a few in which it is difficult, without a careful study of the context, to determine which of these senses was the one intended. Further, while the Parousia of the Epistles is invariably spoken of as an event yet future at the time when they were written, it was evidently regarded, both by their writers and by those whom they addressed, as an occurrence which would take place at no distant period.

The reason of this is not difficult to discern. The Old Testament delineations of the Messianic kingdom, with which these primitive believers were familiar, give no hint that a protracted interval was destined to elapse between its

first manifestation and its final realization. On the contrary, with one or two exceptions, the perspective of time is entirely wanting in them. Its complete realization was an event for which the members of the Apostolic Church intensely longed, as involving the return of our Lord in the full glories of His Messianic reign ; and therefore, unless He had definitely explained to them that a long interval was to elapse between the first erection of His kingdom and its final manifestation, they were certain to expect His speedy return in glory. Now although there was much in His teaching which implied that the growth of His kingdom would be gradual, and that His Parousia in His human personality was consequently an event which would be delayed to some distant period, yet there was nothing in it which affirmed in express terms that this would be the case. But their prepossessions were far too strong to be corrected by mere hints, as is proved by their utter failure to understand His plainest assertions respecting His sufferings and death, until stern facts rendered it impossible any longer to close their eyes to the unpalatable truth. Yet, as we have seen, not only did our Lord not see fit to afford them definite information on this subject, but, even when asked, He positively refused to grant it. Hence it has come to pass that the Apostolic writers have habitually used language which, unless it is interpreted in a non-natural sense, speaks of His Parousia in glory as an event which would take place during the lifetime of the existing generation.

The declaration of our Lord, that it was not given to the Apostles to know the times and the seasons of the glorious manifestation of His kingdom, and consequently those of His own return ; and His own express assertion that He was ignorant of the day and the hour of the Parousia of His great eschatological discourse, must be steadily kept in view in all discussions on this subject ; otherwise we can hardly avoid drawing inaccurate conclusions from the language in which His Parousia is spoken of in the Epistles. The all-important fact must be recognized, that the knowledge



of these subjects formed no portion of that supernatural enlightenment which was bestowed on the members of the Apostolic Church, and consequently their anticipations, like those of the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament, were devoid of the perspective of time. Hence they have for the most part spoken of the personal "coming" of our Lord as an event immediately impending; and the idea that the struggling condition of the Church would be extended over a period of nearly 2000 years, and, as we now see, over one in all probability indefinitely longer, was foreign to their thoughts.

It has been necessary to enter on this investigation of the forms of expression made use of in the New Testament in connection with this subject, because without doing so it would be impossible to convey an accurate idea of what is meant by the kingdom of heaven, as it is set before us in the Gospels; for nothing can be more vague than the current conception of its meaning. That which is attached to it by a large majority of readers is the kingdom of Christ in its final glorious manifestation. By some it is supposed that this lower world in a purified condition will be the scene of this manifestation; but by a far larger number it is placed in some extra-mundane sphere which is designated heaven. Some, again, view it as denoting a millennial reign of Christ on earth; others, as the Church of the elect, as distinct from the visible Church, in which the evil is mingled with the good; and not a few understand it to be a condition of the heart—thereby ignoring nineteen-twentieths of the passages in the Gospels to which such a meaning is utterly inapplicable. The result of all this confusion of thought is, that a large number of readers fail to attach any definite meaning to the expression, although, as we shall presently show, it forms the central idea of our Lord's teaching.

The points here established are as follows, viz.:—

1. The expression "kingdom of heaven" is used in two senses in the New Testament. First, as denoting the

Christian Church during the period of its erection and growth; and, secondly, as denoting it at its final glorious manifestation, when it shall have accomplished the purposes of its institution.

2. The manifestation of this kingdom is spoken of in three senses. First, when it was first established as a visible community on earth. Secondly, when some great event of Providence has taken place, which has exerted a powerful influence on its development; such as the destruction of Jerusalem and the winding up of the old theocracy. Thirdly, when it will have effected the purposes of its institution by all things having been put in subjection to its king.

3. The Parousia, or “coming” of our Lord, is spoken of in two senses. First, as a presence not in person, but in power and efficacy in some great act of His providential government of His Church. Secondly, in the second personal appearance of His glorified humanity.

4. The expression, “the last times,” and other similar ones, may denote either the close of the Jewish or of the Christian dispensation, according as the meaning is determined by the context.

5. The end of the world or ages has a similar twofold meaning, according to the requirements of the context.

6. The expression “for ever” means until the termination of an age or dispensation, and “for ever and ever” to the ages of ages; the word “world” (*αἰὼν*) in the New Testament meaning an age or dispensation; while *κόσμος* almost invariably denotes the moral and not the material world.

## CHAPTER X.

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### THE KINGDOM OF GOD THE CENTRAL IDEA OF OUR LORD'S TEACHING.

It has been shown in a previous chapter that our Gospels contain all that is essential to Christianity. There is however a very prevalent idea that compared with Christianity as it is exhibited in the Epistles, that of the Gospels is imperfect, on the ground that our Lord, during the period of His ministry, withheld a number of important truths which were subsequently revealed by the Divine Spirit. But to assign to the Gospels this inferior position contradicts our Lord's own express declaration, that all things which He had heard from His Father He had revealed in the course of His teaching. Moreover, the objection is urged in forgetfulness of the fact that the Synoptic Gospels were composed not less than thirty years, and the fourth Gospel not less than fifty-five years after the illuminating influences of the Divine Spirit had been imparted to the Church. They were therefore written in the fullness of that illumination long after the great Mystery, which had been "kept in silence through times eternal," had been made known through the Apostles and prophets of the Church unto all nations unto obedience of faith.

It will doubtless be urged by those who assign to the Epistles a higher place than that of the Gospels as exponents of Christianity, that our Lord expressly affirmed that He had many things to say to His disciples which up to that

time they had been unable to bear; and that these constitute the dogmatic basis of Christianity which was subsequently revealed by the Divine Spirit. Against this however we may place His declaration above referred to, that all things which He had heard of the Father, He had made known unto them. What then were the "many things" which up to the time of His departure they had been unable to bear, if all things which He had heard of His Father He had made known unto them? Doubtless not a new basis of Christianity, but a correct appreciation of that which they had heard; not the substitution of a number of abstract dogmas for His own work and teaching, but a guidance into the comprehension of their true meaning, free from the darkening influence of their own prejudices and prepossessions. Above all, as has been shown in a previous chapter, they chiefly consisted in the disclosure which was made by the Spirit to the Apostolic Church, that the kingdom of God was to constitute a society whose common bond of union was to be the person of the Messiah, and in which there was to be no distinction of race or privilege. But further: we learn from the Acts of the Apostles that subsequently to this promise, and before His ascension, our Lord appeared to them during the space of forty days, and spake to them "concerning the kingdom of God." In doing this He must have unfolded to them all the great points connected with their mission; especially with regard to His own sufferings and death, which was the special subject which, according to the Gospels, they had been hitherto unable to bear.

In confirmation of the position here assigned to the Gospels, I would cite the testimony of the two great Creeds—the Apostles' and the Nicene—which for fifteen centuries have been accepted by the entire Church as a summary of all that is essential for membership. Every article in the Apostles' Creed, with two unimportant exceptions, may be found in the Gospels; and nothing which is not clearly and definitely stated in them can, with these exceptions, be found in it. It contains no trace of that abstract and metaphysical

matter, which forms so large a portion of scientific and popular theology ; yet this creed has for ages formed the baptismal creed of the Western Church ; and as such constitutes its confession of faith, which entitles a man to the designation of a Christian.

The Nicene Creed treats of precisely the same subject-matter as that of the Apostles, the difference between them being that in the former we find the fact of the Incarnation more definitely affirmed than in the latter. The points set forth as constituting the essence of Christian belief are the same in both. So fully, indeed, were those who finally accepted the Nicene Creed persuaded of its absolute completeness, that they pronounced an anathema on all who should venture to make any addition to it. Yet notwithstanding this anathema, which no longer appears in any of the forms in present use, the Western Churches have super-added the doctrine of the double procession. Even the metaphysical creed, commonly called the Athanasian, has, with the above exception, not added a single article to their contents ; and it has even omitted the five concluding ones of that of the Apostles. Yet it concludes with the declaration—"This is the Catholic faith."

This being so, our inquiry must now be directed to ascertaining from the Gospels themselves what constituted the central point of our Lord's teaching. To this question only one answer is possible, viz., the proclamation of a kingdom, of which He claimed to be the King.

Let us begin by examining the testimony of the Synoptic Gospels. These are unanimous in affirming that John the Baptist was the promised Elijah, the divinely-appointed herald of the new dispensation. What, then, was his announcement ? It consisted of three points :—

1st. A proclamation that the long-expected kingdom of God was about to be immediately set up.

2nd. An exhortation to repentance as necessary for membership.

3rd. A definite designation of Jesus as its King.

The position thus taken by the Baptist was adopted by our Lord. It is thus set forth in St. Mark's Gospel:—

“Now after that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled; and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the Gospel” (Mark i. 14, 15).

So plain a statement renders it superfluous to adduce further proof that during this period of His ministry the conception of the kingdom of God formed the central idea of our Lord's teaching. This announcement therefore constituted “the Gospel” which He proclaimed. The reader should be careful to observe that throughout the Evangelists,—I may say throughout the entire New Testament,—the word “Gospel” never loses its original meaning of a *Message of Good News*—the good news referred to being that of the manifestation of the kingdom of God—and that it is never used in the technical sense which has become attached to it in modern phraseology. When therefore our Lord affirmed that the time was fulfilled, and the kingdom of God was at hand, and exhorted His hearers to repentance as a suitable preparation for its manifestation, it is impossible that they could have understood Him as calling on them to believe in a body of abstract dogmas, or as speaking of a kingdom, the appearance of which was to be delayed until long centuries after their decease.

Further: in close connection with the great discourse, commonly called the Sermon on the Mount, the author of St. Matthew's Gospel makes the following important statement:—

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people. And this report of him went forth into all Syria; and they brought unto him all that were sick, holden with divers diseases, possessed with devils, epileptic, and palsied, and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes from Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and from Judæa, and from beyond Jordan. And seeing

the multitudes he went up into a mountain; and when he had sat down, his disciples came to him; and he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, etc." (Matt. iv. 23-25; v. 1, 2).

Such is the Evangelist's summary of our Lord's teaching during this great missionary tour in Galilee. It directly affirms that its central idea consisted in a proclamation of *the Gospel of the kingdom*.

But further: the Evangelist has placed the Sermon on the Mount in the closest connection with this proclamation of the kingdom of God; in fact, it formed a portion of it. In his view therefore it was not a body of mere moral aphorisms, but an explanation of its nature and an enunciation of its laws.

If any doubt can exist on this point, it is proved by the contents of this remarkable discourse. Throughout it the speaker assumes the character of legislator of the kingdom of God; and that kingdom is again and again referred to in it, as the great subject of His teaching. Thus the discourse opens with a direct reference to it:—

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 3, 10).

Again: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever shall do, and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 17-20).

This passage distinctly lays down the relation in which

our Lord's moral teaching stood to that of the Old Testament dispensation. "He came not to destroy (*καταλῦσαι*) either the law or the prophets, but to realize (*πληρῶσαι*) their true ideal." The words of the quotation, "Shall be called least in the kingdom," and "shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven," and "shall enter into the kingdom of heaven," prove that the entire discourse is related to it as its central conception.

Again: "But seek ye first *his kingdom* and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi. 33).

As the discourse began, so it concludes, with a distinct reference to the kingdom—

"Not every one who saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven. Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name; and by thy name cast out devils; and by thy name do many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Every one therefore that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock" (Matt. vii. 20-27).

The "sayings" of the Divine Speaker here referred to are evidently the contents of the entire discourse. This proves that they were intended to be a summary of the legislation of the kingdom of God, and of the qualifications necessary for membership in it. Our Divine Master claimed to be the Lord of this kingdom; but not the mere addressing Him by that title, but the practising of His sayings would constitute the right to be acknowledged as a genuine member of it at the period of its final manifestation. The words, "Then will I say unto them, I never knew you" affirm a claim not only to be the Legislator of this kingdom, but its supreme Governor and Judge.

Thus He proceeds on His own authority to enlarge, explain, qualify, and even to annul portions of the Mosaic legislation,



which in the Pentateuch are directly ascribed to God Himself, before they could be incorporated as portions of the legislation of the kingdom of God which was then about to be erected. The language in which this is expressed is most remarkable. The Divine Speaker thus proceeds to comment even on the Decalogue: "Ye have heard that it was said unto them of old time, Thou shalt not kill (the words of the sixth commandment); and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgement; but I say unto you, whosoever shall be angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgement." Again: "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. v. 21, 22, 27, 28).

In a similar manner he proceeds to deal with other precepts of the Mosaic legislation, which his hearers looked on as Divine utterances. Of this we have a remarkable instance in which one of the Mosaic precepts is directly annulled:—

"Ye have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, resist not him that is evil; but whosoever smiteth thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any man will go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever will compel thee to go with him a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee; and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not away" (Matt. v. 38-42). Or, as the whole is summed up in the seventh chapter, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them, for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. vii. 12).

The language of these utterances proves that our Lord spake this discourse, not as a mere moralist, but in His capacity as Legislator and King of the kingdom of God. In fact, the conception of the kingdom dominates the entire discourse, and never passes out of the Speaker's view.

The same Evangelist informs us also that prior to the

mission of the twelve Apostles, our Lord "went about all the cities and villages teaching in their synagogues, and preaching *the Gospel of the kingdom*" (Matt. ix. 25). At this period of His ministry, therefore, "the Gospel of the kingdom" still formed the central position of His teaching. Our Lord then sent forth the twelve on their first mission. What were His instructions to them? "As ye go, preach, saying, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Such was to be their simple proclamation. They were not commissioned to announce a single abstract dogma as an essential feature of the new dispensation. Again, when at a later period of His ministry He sent out the seventy disciples, His instructions to them were precisely similar. Equally prominent is the place assigned to the kingdom of heaven in our Lord's testimony to John the Baptist:—

"Verily I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater prophet than John the Baptist; yet he that is but little *in the kingdom of heaven* is greater than he: and from the days of John the Baptist until now, *the kingdom of heaven* suffereth violence, and men of violence take it by force. . . . And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah, which is to come" (Matt. xi. 11-14).

The kingdom of heaven here spoken of is evidently not that kingdom in its perfect form, but the kingdom of which our Lord was then actually laying the foundations. Again:—

"But if I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is *the kingdom of God* come upon you" (Matt. xii. 28).

The hearers of the discourse recorded in immediate connection with these words evidently understood our Lord as claiming to be its king; for the Evangelist informs us that immediately after their utterance, the scribes and Pharisees demanded of him a sign from heaven.

Following the order of St. Matthew's Gospel, we now come to our Lord's Parables. These unquestionably form a most important portion of His teaching. Its nature will be considered in a subsequent chapter. But in reference to

our present subject, I must direct the reader's attention to the fact that, omitting a few minor utterances of a parabolic character, these parables are no less than twenty-eight in number; and were uttered at various times during the remainder of our Lord's ministry; some of them on the last day of it. Of these parables eighteen are expressly affirmed by Him to be explanatory of different aspects of the kingdom of God. Besides these the Evangelist informs us that He uttered many others, illustrating the same subject. Of the remaining ten, seven, as is proved by their contents, were spoken in reference to it; and the remaining three admit of a similar application. The whole of our Lord's parabolic utterances therefore afford the strongest evidence of the truth of the point which I am seeking to establish, that the conception of a kingdom forms the central position of His teaching; as indeed He has Himself expressly declared in the following passage:—

“And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? And he answered and said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Matt. xiii. 10, 11). The parables therefore are affirmed by their Author to set forth the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven in a form suited to the capacities and moral condition of the multitude. “Therefore,” says He, “speak I to them in parables, because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand” (Matt. xiii. 13).

Again following the order of St. Matthew's narrative, we come to the great confession of Simon Peter:—

“Now when Jesus came into the parts of Cæsarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say, John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered, and said unto him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath

not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xvi. 13-20).

The event here referred to constitutes a kind of epoch in our Lord's ministry. Hitherto, except on the occasion of His visit to Samaria, He had abstained from directly declaring Himself to be the Messiah; He had been engaged in proclaiming the near advent of the kingdom of God; in explaining its nature and in doing the works which proved that He was its promised King. He had even allowed Himself to be addressed by different Messianic titles; and had even designated Himself by one of them, "the Son of man." Still up to this time, except on the occasion above alluded to, He had never designated Himself as the Christ; and from the answer which the Apostles gave to His question, "Who do men say that the Son of man is," it is evident that the public did not yet fully understand that He claimed to be the Messiah. Our Lord however felt that the time had now arrived that He should be recognized as such by His immediate followers, and that they should confess Him in that capacity. Hence the blessing pronounced on the confession which Simon Peter made on his own behalf and that of the other Apostles. The confessing Him to be the Christ was equivalent to acknowledging Him to be the king of the kingdom of God.

It will be unnecessary for our present purpose to discuss the meaning of the different parts of this much disputed passage. It will be only requisite to draw attention to the following point, which is free from all ambiguity,—that the kingdom of heaven, the keys of which, together with the power of binding and loosing therein (whatever these expressions may mean) were committed to Peter, is here

directly identified with the Church which was to be erected on his confession—"I say unto thee, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church . . . and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Consequently the kingdom of heaven spoken of in this passage can be none other than the Church of the present dispensation; for no one will venture to maintain that it can be the perfected Church of the future, of the right of admission into which the New Testament affirms in the most definite terms that our Lord Himself is the exclusive arbiter and judge.

In only one other utterance of our Lord does the word "Church" occur. The same Evangelist thus writes: "And if thy brother sin against thee, go and show him his fault between him and thee alone; and if he hear thee thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses, or three, every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, *tell it unto the Church*; and if he refuse to hear the Church also, let him be unto thee as a Gentile and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever things ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 15-20). The concluding words of this quotation distinctly identify the Church here spoken of with the Church and the kingdom of heaven of St. Peter's confession; for the same power of binding and loosing is conferred in each, and the context identifies the kingdom of heaven here spoken of with that kingdom which throughout the Gospels forms the centre of our Lord's teaching.

The eighteenth chapter of this Gospel, of which the above quotation forms a part, is a continuous whole, beginning with the question of the disciples, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? and ending with our Lord's definite reply to that question, in the parable in which He likens it to a king who would make a reckoning with his servants. Throughout the whole of this chapter therefore, which

contains several important utterances of our Lord, the kingdom of heaven is the dominant idea.

Similar testimony is borne by another utterance, recorded in the nineteenth and twentieth chapters, in connection with the interview between our Lord and the young nobleman. The disciples are astonished at His words. He assures them that it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Then in answer to Peter's inquiry, What the Apostles would gain by leaving all and following Him, He promises them that "in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, they shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," and that every one who had made sacrifices for Him should in return receive one hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. Upon this, in further explanation of His meaning, and in order to discourage all ideas of self-righteousness on the part of those who heard these promises, He uttered the parable of the householder hiring labourers into his vineyard, which is expressly affirmed by Him to be a parable explanatory of the kingdom of God. Our Lord then proceeds on His journey towards Jerusalem, during which two of the Apostles, James and John, make the request to have assigned to them the two chief places in His coming kingdom. In reply He informs them that the highest places in it are due to the humblest. On His entry into the holy city He openly allows Himself to be proclaimed the King of the kingdom of God. The simple perusal of the Evangelist's account of the four last days of our Lord's ministry will be sufficient to convince the reader that His teaching is dominated throughout by the idea of this kingdom and His own claims to be its King.

I have followed the order of St. Matthew's Gospel throughout, as he reports our Lord's discourses more fully than either St. Mark or St. Luke. It will therefore be unnecessary to examine the other two Synoptics in detail, since their testimony, so far as it goes, is precisely similar.

I shall only add that the concluding section of St. Luke's Gospel, which gives an account of a number of events and discourses not mentioned by St. Matthew or St. Mark, furnishes a large body of evidence in support of the same conclusion.

It will now be desirable to adduce a few illustrations of the degree in which several very important points of our Lord's teaching centre around this conception. Thus His most solemn warnings stand in the closest connection with it. We read, for example, that immediately after Peter's confession of Him, He called the multitude with His disciples and said unto them :—

“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, shall save it. For what doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what should a man give in exchange for his life? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man shall be ashamed of him when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. Verily I say unto you, There be some here of them that stand by, which shall in no wise taste of death till they see the kingdom of God come with power” (Mark viii. 34 to ix. 1. Matt. xvi. 24. Luke ix. 23; etc.).

Nothing can be clearer both from the passage itself and from its immediate context, than that the kingdom of God, and the Son of man, as its King and judge, forms the central idea of this solemn warning. Again: after admonishing His hearers of the dangerous consequences of being the instrument of leading others into sin, and enforcing the duty of uprooting every evil passion, He adds :—

“And if thine eye cause thee to stumble, cast it out; it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell (*i.e.*, Gehenna) where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. For every one shall be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if the salt hath lost its saltiness, wherewith shall

ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another" (Mark ix. 47-50).

It would be foreign to our purpose to discuss here the meaning of this quotation and of the various terms employed in it. I adduce it simply as proof that the kingdom of God forms its central idea. Also, that the kingdom spoken of is the Church, from the period of its first erection until that time when it shall be finally purged from the presence of evil. Such a purgation is referred to in the words, "Every one shall be salted with fire." It also alludes to conditions of the Church in which the salt, which ought to be inherent in its members, has lost its saltiness. It is obvious that this must be an allusion to its present, and not to its final and purified condition.

Again, in His denunciations of the Jewish teachers, the same prominence is given to the idea:—

"Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because ye shut *the kingdom of heaven* against men; for ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to enter" (Matt. xxiii. 13).

It would have been easy to have put this denunciation into an abstract form; but the Divine speaker places it in direct connection with His kingdom. What then was the kingdom which it was possible for the scribes and Pharisees to shut against men, and into which they would neither enter themselves nor suffer those that were entering to enter? Obviously, not the perfected kingdom of God, but the Church of the present dispensation.

Again, after addressing the most solemn warnings to the Jews in one of His concluding parables, our Lord affirms:—

"The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. xxi. 43).

Here again, the kingdom alluded to can only be that of which the Jews had hitherto been in exclusive possession under the old theocracy, the privileges of which were to be withdrawn from them and conferred on the Gentiles.



In referring to the Sermon on the Mount, I have already drawn attention to the fact that what is commonly called our Lord's moral teaching stands in the closest connection with the same idea. Similarly St. Matthew tells us that when the Apostles disputed about their respective claims to the chief places in His kingdom, He took a little child and set him in the midst of them and said :—

“Verily I say unto you, except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into *the kingdom of heaven*. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest *in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. xviii. 1-5).

So again with respect to forgiveness of injuries. In reply to Peter's question, whether this duty was to be limited to seven acts of forgiveness, our Lord answers, that no limits were to be assigned to it, as long as it was accompanied with the repentance of the offender. For the purpose of enforcing and illustrating this duty, He uttered the parable in which He compared the kingdom of heaven to a king who entered into a reckoning with his servants.

In his narrative of our Lord's interview with the young ruler, to which I have already drawn attention, St. Mark gives us the following addition to this promise of reward to His faithful followers :—

“Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, *with persecutions*; and in the world (*i.e.*, age) to come eternal life” (Mark x. 29-30).

I have already shown that the conception of the kingdom of God forms the central idea of the entire discourse. But what aspect of this kingdom is the Divine speaker contemplating? The words above cited, “With persecutions now in this time, and in the age to come eternal life,” show clearly that he had in view both the present imperfect

and the future perfect condition of the Church: the one being unquestionably referred to in the words, "Now in this time *with persecutions*," and the other "in the age to come." For it is certain that in the perfect condition of the kingdom of God, the era of persecutions will have passed away.

But perhaps it will enable the reader to form a clearer idea of the important place which the conception of the kingdom of God occupies in our Lord's teaching, if we examine with that view a continuous section of the Gospels. None will be better fitted for this purpose than St. Luke's narrative of our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem, which begins with the fifty-first verse of his ninth chapter.

The Evangelist commences his account by informing us that as our Lord was journeying through Samaria, He called two persons to become His followers, who showed reluctance to do so immediately. The first He thus addresses:—

"Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad *the kingdom of God*" (Luke ix. 60). The second, "No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for *the kingdom of God*" (Luke ix. 62).

The tenth chapter contains a record of His instructions to the seventy. His direction to them is to proclaim "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke x. 9).

In the eleventh chapter our Lord answers the assertion of the Pharisees, that He cast out devils through Beelzebub. In His reply occurs the utterance which has been already referred to. "But if I by the finger of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come nigh unto you" (Luke xi. 20). In the context which follows our Lord declares Himself to be greater than Solomon, the greatest king of the theocracy.

The twelfth chapter contains some very important utterances. In one of these our Lord affirms, "Every one who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me in the presence of men, shall be denied in the presence

of the angels of God" (Luke xii. 8-9). Having thus affirmed His own kingly character He proceeds to decline to exercise the office of a temporal judge, which one of those whom He was addressing invited Him to undertake. In the closest connection with these utterances follow several others precisely similar to some of those in the Sermon on the Mount. The concluding exhortation is as follows:—

"Howbeit, seek ye *his kingdom* and these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you *the kingdom*. . . . Be ye also ready; for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Luke xii. 31, 32, 40).

In the thirteenth chapter occur three parables, two of which are directly affirmed to be illustrative of different aspects of the kingdom of God. On these follows an exhortation to watchfulness, concluding as follows:—

"There shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets *in the kingdom of God*, and yourselves cast forth without. And they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down *in the kingdom of God*" (Luke xiii. 28-29).

The fourteenth chapter contains an account of our Lord's teaching in the house of one of the chief Pharisees. In the midst of it one of the guests interrupts Him with the exclamation, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Our Lord in reply uttered the parable of the great supper, in explanation of certain aspects of that kingdom which bore a direct reference to the exclamation in question. In the closest connection with this parable, and as part of the same discourse, follow several additional utterances, together with the parables of the lost sheep, the piece of money, the prodigal son, the unjust steward, and Dives and Lazarus. Immediately after the parable of the unjust steward occurs the following passage, identifying the whole discourse as explanatory of different aspects of the kingdom of God:—

“And the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things; and they scoffed at him. And he said unto them, Ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is exalted in the sight of men is abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John; from that time *the Gospel of the kingdom of God* is preached, and every man entereth violently into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail” (Luke xvi. 14-17).

It follows therefore that not only do these parables and discourses stand in the closest connection with the idea of the kingdom of God, but that our Lord's entire teaching, from the ministry of John the Baptist, constituted a proclamation of it. Further, that the kingdom into which men were entering violently was the Church of the present dispensation, and not its future glorious manifestation.

The seventeenth chapter contains a discourse of solemn warning addressed to the disciples, but called forth by a captious question put to our Lord by the Pharisees, as to when the kingdom of God, the speedy advent of which He had been proclaiming, was to come. The discourse is His answer. “The kingdom of God comes not with observation; neither shall they say, lo here, or there, for lo, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke xvii. 20, 21). He then proceeds to enforce the duty of watchfulness for the coming of the Son of man, whatever that presence may be, whether one in person or in providence. One of our Lord's remarks proves that He intended it to bear this indefinite meaning; for in answer to the question of the disciples, Where Lord? He answers, “Where the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together” (Luke xvii. 37). Then in the closest connection with these warnings, and forming a part of the same discourse, the Evangelist places the parables of the unjust judge, the publican and the Pharisee, the account of the bringing infants to Christ, and the history of the young ruler, on which we have

already commented. Our Lord rebuked His disciples for forbidding the infants to come to him, in the following words :—

“Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is *the kingdom of God*. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive *the kingdom of God* as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein” (Luke xviii. 16-17).

In the next chapter (the nineteenth) the Evangelist informs us that at this period of our Lord's ministry the expectation had become general that the kingdom of God would appear immediately—the kingdom thus expected to appear being its final glorious manifestation. For the purpose of correcting this error He uttered the parable of the pounds, in which He intimates that this manifestation of it was not to be expected then, but would be an event in the distant future. The time however had now arrived for Him publicly to assert His claim to be its King, and thereby to effect the consummation of His work on earth, before He was proclaimed to be “the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.” Of this claim His triumphal entry into Jerusalem was the direct assertion ; and so important is it as the turning point of our Lord's ministry, that it is narrated in considerable detail by all the Evangelists. But in reference to the subject we are now considering, it will be only necessary to draw attention to the Messianic titles ascribed to our Lord by the multitude, and to His acceptance of them. They are as follows :—

“Hosanna to the Son of David,” “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of our Lord ; Hosanna in the highest,” “Blessed be the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord,” “Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord.” All these Messianic titles were as many proclamations of Him as the king of the kingdom of God. The importance of the occasion may be best estimated by the very remarkable words in which He replied to His adversaries, when they remonstrated with Him for allowing Himself to be thus addressed :—

“ I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out ” (Luke xix. 40).

I have already observed that our Lord's teaching during the remaining three days of His ministry on earth is concentrated around this fuller assumption of the Messianic office ; it will therefore be needless to discuss it here in detail. It will be necessary however to draw attention to His concluding eschatological discourse. In St. Matthew's record of it we have the following important reference to the kingdom of God :—

“ This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all the nations : and then shall the end come ” (Matt. xxiv. 14).

Here our Lord designates the entire preaching of Christianity, prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, as a proclamation of the *Gospel of the kingdom*.

In St. Luke's record of the same discourse we read :—

“ Even so, ye also, when ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh ” (Luke xxi. 31).

The kingdom of God here spoken of as nigh, can be none other than the final erection of the Christian Church into a separate community by the overthrow of the Jewish theocracy ; for this event is the great subject of this discourse, and is designated in it again and again as a coming of the Son of man ; being the realization of His declaration to the Jewish council : “ Ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”

Even at the last supper the idea of the kingdom of God still occupies a prominent place in our Lord's thoughts. Thus immediately before the institution of the Holy Communion, He thus addresses the Apostles :—

“ With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer ; for I say unto you I will not eat it until it be fulfilled *in the kingdom of God*. And he received a cup, and when he had given thanks, he said, Take this and divide it among yourselves ; for I say unto you, I will not

drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until *the kingdom of God* shall come" (Luke xxii. 15-18).

Here the kingdom of God is evidently the Church of the present dispensation. The Apostles would naturally understand our Lord's words as an assurance of its immediate erection.

So again, in reference to the unseemly contention among the Apostles as to which of them should be the greatest in their Master's kingdom, even at the Paschal table. Having declared that the humblest would be the greatest, He adds :—

"And I appoint unto you *a kingdom*, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table *in my kingdom*; and ye shall sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke xxii. 29, 30).

The language here used is evidently metaphorical, borrowed from earthly scenes and similar to that in the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, in which our Lord speaks of eating His flesh and drinking His blood as the source of eternal life to those who do so. The truth intended to be conveyed is, that the Apostles would hold the places of dignity in His kingdom, next in subordination to Himself; the twelve tribes of Israel, the representatives of the old theocracy, denoting the kingdom of God which He had just assured them was on the eve of being established.

The formal charge which the Jewish priests preferred against our Lord before Pilate proves that His teaching throughout His entire ministry was supposed to centre around the idea of a kingdom, of which at last He had openly proclaimed himself the King. St. Luke reports it as follows :—

"We found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he himself is Christ *a King*." They then further urge : "He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judæa, and beginning from Galilee even unto this place" (Luke xxiii. 2-6).

False accusations are most effective when they are founded on a certain substratum of truth. That truth in

this particular case was, that our Lord's entire ministry had been a proclamation of a kingdom which they intended Pilate to confound with an ordinary worldly one.

Finally: the same Evangelist thus sums up the results of our Lord's intercourse with the Apostles during the forty days which intervened between His resurrection and His ascension.

"To whom he showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things *concerning the kingdom of God*" (Acts i. 3).

The "things concerning the kingdom of God" must therefore have contained our Lord's final instructions to the Apostles. Consequently, whatever these instructions were, they must have borne the closest connection with the idea of the kingdom; being either explanations of its nature, or directions how they were to proceed in erecting it.

Such is the evidence which is borne by this section of the Evangelical narrative to the prominence of the idea of the kingdom of God in our Lord's teaching.

I have abstained from referring to St. John's Gospel for the following reason. While the Synoptic Gospels abound with descriptions of the kingdom, its nature and its laws, a description of the person of its king occupies a subordinate place in them. But in the fourth Gospel this is exactly reversed; the person of its king being the prominent subject, and the description of the kingdom being subordinated to it. Whether its author had perused the Synoptics or not it is impossible to determine with certainty; but it is unquestionable that he was fully acquainted with the class of Apostolical traditions on which they were founded. As these had fully detailed our Lord's teaching respecting the kingdom, and spoken with reserve of His kingly character, the last Evangelist has almost exclusively dwelt on the person of the King, and thrown the kingdom comparatively into the shade. Still this Gospel furnishes unquestionable evidence that the idea underlies it throughout; for not only



is the "kingdom" several times referred to, but "the king," and the "kingdom" mutually imply each other. The testimony of this Gospel respecting the person of its King is so important that it must be reserved for consideration in a separate chapter.

The foregoing is a general statement of the evidence furnished by the Gospels that the conception of the kingdom of God formed the central position of our Lord's teaching. Let it be observed that it is only an epitome; for in order to place it before the reader in its fulness, it would have been necessary to transcribe and to comment on a large portion of their contexts. As it is however, it speaks with no dubious voice.

I will now briefly sum up the points which are proved by the foregoing investigation:—

1. That one of the purposes of our Lord's mission was to erect an institution designated the kingdom of God.

2. That his Parabolic teaching, which was addressed to the multitude, was intended to be explanatory of the mysteries of this kingdom; and that He made use of this form of teaching in consequence of their inability to receive His plainer utterances.

3. That the remainder of His teaching—especially that which was addressed to His disciples—was intended to unfold these mysteries in plain language.

The position therefore which I have been seeking to establish is proved by the most express testimony of the Gospels. This being so, the following point demands our serious attention. While the kingdom of heaven and the person of its King form the central idea of Christianity as it was taught by our Lord, they have ceased to hold this place in modern systems of Christian teaching; and certain abstract dogmas have taken their place. The change is so great that it may be not unfitly described as a complete shifting of the centre of gravity of the Christian system. The all-important question is, Is there any Divine authority for making this substitution?

## CHAPTER XI.

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### THE CENTRAL POSITION OF CHRISTIANITY AS SET FORTH BY THE APOSTLES.

WE have seen in the preceding chapter that Christianity, as taught by our Lord, constituted a system of extreme simplicity, centering around the conception of a kingdom. It contained no dogmatical affirmations involving questions of abstract thought; nor can a single definition be found in the whole compass of His teaching—involving an explanation of its nature and its laws—and the person of its king. To these may perhaps be added that of the Fatherhood of God, although it is really included in the other two. I by no means wish to imply that the subject-matter of our Lord's teaching does not involve questions of abstract thought; but this it shares in common with every branch of human knowledge which ultimately runs up into questions transcending the powers of the human intellect to solve. All that I wish to affirm is that Christianity, as taught by our Lord, keeps clear of questions of this description. Their solution belongs to its philosophy, the study of which is the privilege of the select few; while Christianity as set forth in the Gospels is intended to be comprehensible to the masses of mankind, who, from the limited nature of their capacities, and from the character of their avocations, are incapable of grasping the subtleties which enter so largely into systematic and popular theology.

As then the Christianity enunciated by our Lord rests on the simple basis described in the last Chapter, it becomes a matter of supreme importance to determine whether this basis has been changed from its original simplicity into one of complicated dogma under the guidance of that illumination of the Spirit which was promised to the Apostolic Church. It is obvious that nothing short of a direct Divine warrantry could have justified the change. The supposition that such a warrantry was given is open to the following insuperable objections:—

1. It involves nothing less than the assumption that our Lord's original teaching was an accommodation to the imperfect conceptions of His followers, and of the multitudes who resorted to Him for guidance; and this not in secondary points where misapprehension of His meaning was possible, but in primary principles. This, however, is in direct contradiction to his own declarations, as thus recorded in the fourth Gospel:—

“No longer do I call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from my Father I have made known unto you” (John xv. 15). Again, “The words which thou gavest me I have given unto them, and they received them. . . . I have given them thy word, and the world hated them” (John xvi. 7-14).

Again: the Evangelist informs us, “The high priest therefore asked Jesus of His disciples and of His teaching. Jesus answered him—I have spoken openly to the world: I ever taught in the synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and in secret spake I nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them that have heard me what I spake unto them: behold these know the things that I said” (John xviii. 19-21).

These affirmations are inconsistent with the idea that His mode of teaching was an accommodation. In fact it is inconceivable that the revelations imparted by the Spirit could have been intended to substitute a different fun-

damental idea of Christianity from that which had been set forth by our Lord himself.

2. The promises of supernatural enlightenment made to the Apostles contain, as has been already shown, not a single hint that it was intended to authorize any such substitution. But the Gospels were composed at a period when the fulness of this illumination had been imparted to the Apostolic Church. Yet, if a change of this kind had been thus authorized, it is incredible that their authors should not have referred to it in very definite terms, when the object which they had in view in their composition was to enable Christians to know "the certainty of the things in which they had been instructed."

3. The idea is negatived by the terms of the Apostolical commission, which is thus reported by St. Matthew:—

"And Jesus came unto them, and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth; Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world;" or, as in the margin, "the consummation of the age" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

This injunction to teach their converts to observe all things whatsoever our Lord had commanded them can only mean that their teaching was to follow the same lines as His own. Moreover, they were to "make disciples" of all nations, *i.e.*, to make them *His* disciples, not their own; to make them learners, not of themselves, but of *Him*.

St. Mark's account is as follows:—

"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mark xvi. 15).

This Evangelist invariably uses the word "Gospel" as denoting the good tidings of the erection of the kingdom of God.

So also St. Luke, after informing us that during the forty days which intervened between our Lord's resurrection and His ascension he discoursed with his disciples about the things concerning the kingdom of God, adds that He said to them :—" Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in Judea, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts i. 8).

They were to be *His witnesses*; i.e., they were to bear testimony to His person, His actions, and His teaching, not to substitute another central idea of Christianity different from that which He had enunciated.

4. The supposition is negatived by the whole contents of the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. Let us briefly consider their testimony on this point.

The second chapter of the Acts contains an outline of St. Peter's first discourse after the fulfilment of his Master's promise, and the historian's comments on its results. We learn from it that some of the multitude, whom the report of the miracle of the Pentecost had drawn together, attributed the strange phenomena which attended the outpouring of the Spirit to intoxication. In reply to this scoffing remark he declares that it was the fulfilment of the great prophecy of Joel, which has been referred to in a previous chapter. Having quoted this passage at length, he then goes on to affirm the fact of the resurrection of the crucified Jesus, and to proclaim Him to be the Messiah. The multitude, being moved by his discourse, and penetrated by a sense of guilt in having contributed to His crucifixion, earnestly inquire of Peter and the rest of the Apostles what they should do. To which he answers :—" Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For to you is the promise and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him" (Acts ii. 38-40).

We find in this discourse no trace of a basis of abstract dogma on which, under the enlightening influences of the

Spirit, Christianity was to be erected. It is true that the historian informs us that the Apostle added many other words ; but he sums them up in a single sentence, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."

The substance of the Apostle's discourse therefore may be summarized in three sentences.

1. The kingdom of God which was promised in the Scriptures of the prophets, is now actually set up ; and you are invited to participate in its blessings.

2. Of this kingdom the crucified Jesus of Nazareth is proclaimed to be the king, by His resurrection from the dead.

3. The qualification for admission into it is repentance, to be followed by baptism in the name of Jesus ; thus confessing Him to be the King of the kingdom of God.

The historian then narrates the results which attended St. Peter's discourse. Three thousand believers were added to the original body. These proceed to organize themselves into that Society which afterwards received the designation of "the Church." This name however did not come into general use until after the conversion of St. Paul. It is still "the kingdom of God ;" and the designation by which its members were known to one another was "believers" and "brethren." This system of brotherhood was carried so far as to lead to the institution of something closely resembling a community of goods. Thus we read, "and day by day they steadfastly continued with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, in the Apostle's teaching, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in the prayers." Such was the simplicity of the Christianity of these primitive believers.

The first act of the Apostles therefore after they were enlightened by the Divine Spirit was to lay the foundation of this new Society ; and instead of propounding a body of dogmas as its foundation, to proclaim Jesus as its Messianic King ; and to announce that through Him all that believed would obtain remission of sins. In other words, their

teaching followed precisely the same lines as that of our Lord Himself.

The same idea pervades the whole teaching of the Apostles prior to the conversion of St. Paul. It would require too much space to adduce all the evidence afforded on this subject in the pages of the historian; nor is it necessary to do so, for he himself gives us a summary of their teaching in these early days of Christianity in the following words:—"And every day in the temple, and at home, they ceased not to teach, and to preach Jesus as the Christ" (Acts v. 42).

So also of Philip's preaching to the Samaritans, the historian writes:—

"And Philip went down to a city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them *the* Christ. . . . And when they believed Philip preaching good tidings *concerning the kingdom of God*, they were baptized, both men and women. . . . Now when the Apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost; for as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (Acts viii. 12-18).

This passage does not contain even a trace of those dogmas which enter so largely into the conception of popular Christianity.

Further: when the Apostles at Jerusalem heard what Philip had done, they sent two of their number to examine into the nature of his work. These set the seal of their approbation on it by conferring on the converts the supernatural gifts of the Spirit. The embracing of this simple form of Christianity is designated by the historian as "receiving the Word of God."

We now advance a step further in the history of the Apostolic Church, viz., the account of the first breaking-

down of the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile through the instrumentality of St. Peter—acting under the immediate guidance of the Divine Spirit—by the baptism of Cornelius and his friends. How then did he explain to them the Christianity which he invited them to embrace?

The Apostle describes it as follows :—

“The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all); that saying ye yourselves know, which was published throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached; even Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed him with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him,” etc. (Acts x. 36-38).

The Gospel then which St. Peter, under the immediate direction of the Divine Spirit, preached to the Gentiles, was a personal Christ, become the king of the kingdom of God in virtue of His death and resurrection. To this he adds two great practical truths, viz., that the Apostles had received a charge from Him, to testify that He was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead; and that through His name every one who believed on Him should receive remission of sins. The reception of this simple Christianity was ratified by the great Head of the Church as entitling those present to admission into its fold, by the descent on them of the Divine Spirit, without the intervention of any human instrumentality. Full well might St. Peter ask, “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?”

We now come to the ministry of St. Paul, who, as we have seen above, affirms that the gospel which he preached was “not after men;” and that he neither received it nor was taught it by man; but that it came to him “through revelation of Jesus Christ;” and further tells us that he had the fulness of Divine enlightenment as to the ends and purposes of Christianity. What then is the central



idea of that Gospel which the historian represents him as proclaiming?

His first recorded discourse was addressed to a Jewish congregation in the synagogue at Antioch. The summary of it, as given by St. Luke, is the longest with which he has furnished us, with the single exception of that of St. Stephen. After referring to the ministry of John the Baptist, it is occupied in proving the Messiahship of Jesus. Its contents, like those of the great discourse of Stephen, are throughout historical, and, in addition, give proof that the facts of our Lord's life were in accordance with the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Such a reference would be indispensable in a discourse intended to persuade Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah. The only thing in it which bears even the semblance of abstract dogma is its concluding reference to the Apostle's doctrine of justification by faith:—"And by him every one that believeth is justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts xiii. 39). This doctrine, as we have proved in our survey of the Pauline Epistles, means justification by Christ, in opposition to justification by the works of Jewish legalism.

It follows therefore that the proclamation of the good tidings of the kingdom of God, and of Jesus as its king, forms the central position of this discourse, to which everything else in it is subordinate. Such then was the essence of St. Paul's Gospel during his first missionary journey. His teaching during his return journey is thus summarized by the historian as consisting in confirming the faith of the disciples, testifying that "through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God;" and in providing for the continuance of the Churches by appointing elders in each one which he had founded.

We now come to St. Paul's second missionary journey. Before he entered on it he had certainly received the fulness of his revelations. Still he makes no change in the substance of his teaching. His visit to Thessalonica is thus described:—

“And Paul, as his custom was, went in unto them ; and for three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, arguing and alleging that it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead ; and that this Jesus, whom, said he, I proclaim unto you, is the Christ. . . . But the Jews, being moved with envy, took unto them certain vile fellows of the rabble, and gathering a crowd, set the city in an uproar, and assaulting the house of Jason, they sought to bring them forth to the people. And when they found them not, they dragged Jason and certain brethren before the rulers, crying, These men that have turned the world upside down are come hither also ; whom Jason hath received : and these all act contrary to the decree of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus ; and they troubled the multitude and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things. And when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go ” (Acts xvii. 1-9).

The account here given us by the historian shows clearly that on this occasion also the basis of St. Paul's teaching was a proclamation that Jesus was the Christ. The indictment preferred against him by his opponents before the magistrates charges him with attempting to set up *another king*, one Jesus, in opposition to the reigning emperor, which by the existing laws was treason. It is evident therefore, that the idea of a king and a kingdom must have formed a very prominent factor in the teaching of the missionaries ; for otherwise the charge of treason would have been devoid of all plausibility. But before heathen, who had no idea of a spiritual kingdom or a spiritual king, nothing was easier than to represent the Apostolic proclamation as an act of treason against the state. The accusation, as the historian informs us, had such an appearance of plausibility in the eyes of the magistrates that, knowing the extreme jealousy of the government on such a subject, they were greatly disturbed by it, and deemed it necessary not to liberate Jason and his companions before they had taken security of them for their

good behaviour, although the only charge against Jason was that he had allowed the missionaries to lodge at his house. The brethren also thought the danger so pressing that they urged Paul and Silas to quit the city immediately.

This inference is fully borne out by the contents of the two Epistles to the Thessalonians, to which I have already referred, the first of which was composed within a year of their departure. From these it is evident that the most prominent subject of the Apostle's preaching at Thessalonica had been the manifestation of the kingdom of God, and the person of its king. This manifestation is referred to in every chapter of these Epistles; and we learn from them that it was a subject on which he had been in the habit of dwelling during his personal visit among them. They also contain frequent allusions to the sufferings which the brethren had undergone in consequence.

The Apostle's visits to Athens and Corinth belong to this same missionary journey. What then in the eyes of the Athenians formed the prominent subject of his preaching? This we learn from the following sentence:—

“And certain also of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, what would this babbler say? Other some, he seemeth to be a setter forth of strange Gods, *because he preached Jesus and the resurrection.*”

In conformity with this view of the subject-matter of his preaching, the Apostle's address concludes as follows:—

“The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent; inasmuch as He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised him from the dead” (Acts xvii. 30, 31).

This provoked the greater part of the auditory to mock. Nothing however would have given them greater pleasure than to have joined with the Apostle in the discussion

of a number of abstract dogmas if such had formed the substance of the "certain strange things which he brought to their ears."

Respecting his visit to Corinth we need no other information than his own words:—

"I determined," he says, "not to know anything among you, *save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified*" (1 Cor. ii. 2).

"We preach *Christ crucified*, unto Jews a stumbling block, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto those that are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 23, 24). So also writes the historian:—

"And when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia Paul was constrained by the word, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts xviii. 5).

Let us now advance a period of four years, and observe the aspect in which the Apostle's teaching during his third missionary journey presented itself to his own mind. During this journey, let it be observed, he had spent not less than three years at Ephesus, and that it includes his second visit to Greece, and the time of the composition of his four great Epistles. On his return journey he sends for the elders of the Ephesian Church to meet him at Miletus, and takes a review of the manner in which he had discharged his ministry during his three years' abode among them. In it we find the following important declarations:—

"I shrank not from declaring unto you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and Greeks *repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*. . . . I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify *the Gospel of the grace of God*. And now I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more" (Acts xx. 20, 21-24, 25).

It follows therefore that according to the Apostle's own

view of his teaching throughout this his third journey, he had gone about "preaching the kingdom." This he identifies with what he designates "The Gospel of the grace of God." This proclamation of the kingdom included the two points of his preaching, when he testified the duty of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ as the conditions necessary for entering into it. Simple however as was this Christianity which he taught, he affirms that *he had kept back nothing that was profitable*. The concluding words of the discourse refer to an utterance of our Lord which is not recorded in our present Gospels, from which we may also justly infer that he was in the habit of narrating utterances of our Lord as part of his teaching.

With this the Apostle's view of the nature of his teaching the statement of the historian is in strict accordance :—

"And he entered into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts xx. 17).

Another passage enables us to identify the kingdom which he had gone about proclaiming with the Church which was erected at the Pentecost.

"Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock in which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, to feed the Church of God (margin, *the Lord*), which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx. 18).

In his discourse before King Agrippa we have the following allusion to the subject-matter of his preaching from the period of his conversion :

"Having therefore obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day, testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come ; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that He first by the resurrection from the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles" (Acts xxvi 22, 23).

One more brief notice, to which the reader's attention has been already drawn, renders it certain that St. Paul continued in the same line of teaching during his imprisonment at Rome. The writer thus sums up its leading characteristics:—

“And he abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling, and received all that went in unto him, *preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ* with all boldness, none forbidding him” (Acts xxviii. 30, 31).

It follows therefore that in the opinion of the historian—who was also his companion and assistant—the Apostle's two years' teaching at Rome could be correctly described as consisting of two great principles, to which everything else in it was subordinated, viz., the preaching of the kingdom of God; and a teaching of those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, *i.e.*, unfolding His claims to be accepted as its king. St. Luke adds, that he did this “with all boldness.” Had he restricted himself to the enunciation of abstract dogmas, the authorities would have cared little or nothing. But it required no little boldness for a prisoner, charged with a political offence, to be habitually proclaiming a new kingdom in the barracks of the Imperial guard. We may therefore feel assured that he must have regarded it as the central position of the Christianity which he was commissioned to teach. It should be observed that the composition of the Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and to Philemon, belongs to the period which is covered by this brief summary.

This survey of the evidence furnished by St. Luke therefore proves that the Apostles did not under the guidance of the Divine Spirit substitute a basis of abstract dogma for the simple Christianity which had been set forth by our Lord. It is true that during this period the term “Church” was gradually taking the place of “the kingdom of God.” In the Acts the two are used indiscriminately in nearly equal

proportions. In the Pauline Epistles the former is the predominant expression; but in the other writings of the New Testament its use is only occasional. Thus it never occurs in the Epistle of St. James, or in that of St. Peter; once only in that to the Hebrews; once in the three of St. John; and nowhere in that of St. Jude. In the Apocalypse the term is applied to each of the seven Churches, but it disappears from the remainder of the work; its central idea being the kingdom of God, and the person of its king. In the Epistles of St. Paul it is used, first, as the designation of local communities of Christians; and secondly, as that of that great society which united them all in one body, the Catholic Church of Jesus Christ, which in these Epistles is the equivalent of the kingdom of heaven of the Gospels. The reason of the gradual substitution of the term "Church" for the kingdom of God is not difficult to discern. The word *ἐκκλησία* ("assembly") was familiar to the Greeks, and was a far more convenient designation for these communities in this or that particular place, than the kingdom of God. Still, however, the latter expression is occasionally used in the Pauline Epistles, and that not only as a designation of the glorified Church, but of that of the present dispensation. Of this the Epistle to the Corinthians furnishes us with the following remarkable example:—

"For I will come unto you shortly, says the Apostle," "if the Lord will; I will know, not the word of them that are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in a spirit of meekness?" (1 Cor. iv. 19-21).

Such then is the evidence furnished by the Acts, that the Apostles did not under the illumination of the Spirit make any change in the central position of Christianity as it was enunciated by our Lord. So definite is it that the only way in which it can be evaded is by adopting the

assumption of unbelievers respecting this book, that it is not a true account of facts, but that it was written as an eirenicon between the Petrine and Pauline parties in the Church. But how, it may be asked, about the Epistles? Do they not rest on an essentially dogmatic foundation? This point has been considered in a previous chapter; but the Apostle himself shall answer.

“According to the grace of God, which was given unto me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (*i.e.*, “the Christ” ὁ χριστός (1 Cor. iii. 10, 11).

In the following paragraph the Apostle thus addresses the Church, “Know ye not that ye are a temple of God; and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, *which temple ye are*” (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17).

According then to this statement of the Apostle, Jesus, as the Christ, *i.e.*, as the king of the kingdom of God, forms the one foundation of the Church, and constitutes the centre of his preaching. This must be evident to every reader of the Epistles. He constitutes their inner life, and appears in their every page. They do not set before us a number of dogmas about Christ, *but Christ himself*. As I have already observed, the opening words of the Epistle to the Romans “concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” might be prefixed to every one of them, with the exception of that of St. James, as a summary of their contents. In them the Church is set forth as a Divine society, in which He forms the bond of union between its individual members; of which He is the life, and in which He dwells through His Spirit. A living Christ constitutes the idea which penetrates them throughout.

What then is the relation in which the argumentative



portions of the Epistles stand to these central positions? I have answered that question already. They are expositions of the great principles of Christianity, as they bore on the controversies then prevailing in the Church; and are framed with a direct reference to those controversies. To them only are they directly applicable; and to our modern controversies and conditions of thought only as far as they rest on the same principles. To the modern Church they are doubtless invaluable guides under similar circumstances, and in dealing with similar principles; and also to the Theologian in enabling him to exhibit Christian truth in a form cognizable by the logical understanding; in other words, to elaborate a philosophy of Christianity. It is true that the questions which these controversies suggested, like all other questions of human thought, ultimately ran up into, and consequently involved various points of abstract thought, all of them difficult, and many of them insoluble by the human mind; but these are discussed, not as abstract questions, or as universal truths, but only as far as they bore on the controversies which were in the immediate view of the Apostolic writer. In a word, apart from the existence of these controversies, the discussion of such questions would have found no place in the Epistles.

The foregoing observations therefore prove that the Apostles and prophets of the Christian Church, when under the full enlightenment of the Divine Spirit, authorized no substitution of a body of dogmas as the foundation and central idea of Christianity in place of that simple one which was propounded by our Lord when he affirmed in the Synagogue of Nazareth that "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord;" and added, "To-day hath this Scripture

been fulfilled in your ears." That mass of metaphysical questions and abstract dogmas which have from time to time been propounded as the essence of Christianity, and as necessary to be accepted under peril of damnation, certainly constitutes no realization of this gracious message.

## CHAPTER XII.

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### THE KINGDOM OF GOD—ITS NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS AS SET FORTH IN THE DIRECT TEACHING OF OUR LORD.

HAVING proved that the conception of a kingdom of God forms the central idea of our Lord's teaching as recorded in the Gospels, we now proceed to consider the various explanations given by Himself of its nature and character. These explanations naturally fall into two main divisions, viz., His direct utterances in which He unfolded "the mysteries of the kingdom" in simple language; and His indirect utterances in which He explained those mysteries to the multitude in parables. We cannot do better than follow the example of the Great Teacher, and treat the subject under the same divisions. In the present chapter therefore I propose to examine His direct teaching.

I have already drawn attention to the fact that while our Lord adopted the idea of the kingdom of God, the speedy advent of which was so generally expected by the Jews at the commencement of His ministry, He not only greatly modified the popular conception of it in some material points, but He did the same with large portions of the

imagery in which it had been depicted by the prophets. Whatever in that imagery was local, external and earthly, He rejected ; whatever was moral and spiritual He appropriated as constituting the true idea of that kingdom which it was the object of His mission to erect. The prophets had declared that the kingdom of the Messiah was to be an eternal kingdom, which was to be the embodiment of the idea of holiness and righteousness ; but it could only realize this conception by being purged of all things that were merely earthly and temporal. Our Lord therefore laid its foundation on absolute spiritual and moral truth, *i.e.*, on truth not accommodated to particular times and circumstances as was the case with the Old Testament dispensation, but on that which is true for all times and all places—in other words, on the perfect moral law of God. It will be necessary to contemplate it from various points of view ; and first, as

#### A KINGDOM OF TRUTH.

The first utterance of our Lord which we have here to consider, is that great declaration which He made before Pontius Pilate, when He was interrogated respecting the nature of the kingdom which the Jews charged Him with claiming. To enable us to understand it better, we should bear in mind that the formal indictment preferred against our Lord is expressed by St. Luke as follows :—

“ We have found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.”

It is obvious that nothing was easier than to pervert our Lord's proclamation of a kingdom, and His claim to be its King, into an act of sedition against the Roman Government, before a judge to whom the idea of a spiritual kingdom was absolutely novel. Such a charge was rendered the more dangerous on account of the inflammable state of the Jewish people, and their well-known desire to throw off

the Roman yoke—a desire which had already been a frequent cause of sedition, and was constantly threatening to occasion more. Our Lord's answer to this charge is given in the fourth Gospel. The Evangelist informs us that when Pilate proceeded to take formal cognizance of it, he entered again into the palace, called Jesus, and said to Him :—

“Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee concerning me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation, and the chief Priests delivered thee unto me: What hast thou done? Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight that I should not be delivered unto the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king; to this end have I been born; and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth: Every one who is of the truth, heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?” (John xviii. 23-28).

The points here definitely affirmed are as follows :—

1. That our Lord claimed to be a king, and as such, to possess a kingdom.

2. That the kingdom to which He laid claim differed in its fundamental idea from all others, in being a spiritual and moral kingdom.

3. That as such it disclaimed all right to the exercise of coercive power.

4. That as the possession of this power is the essential characteristic of all earthly kingdoms and states, so the only support of His kingdom was conviction of truth; and consequently, that the only means by which subjects to it could be gained, or its boundaries extended, was persuasion.

5. That the great end and purpose of His mission was to bear witness to the truth; and therefore he claimed to

rule over men by the sole power of conviction, and by their voluntary choice.

6. That every one who was of the truth would be His willing subject.

Another utterance of our Lord, recorded by St. Luke, disclaims in the most express terms any right on His part, as King of the kingdom of God, to discharge the functions or to interfere with the duties of the civil magistrate :—

“And one of the multitude said unto him, Master, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me. And he said, Man, who made me a judge, or divider over you” (Luke xii. 13, 14).

These utterances have been frequently interpreted as affirming that the kingdom of God has nothing to do with the earthly concerns of men; but belongs exclusively to a supermundane sphere. But such an inference is not justified by the premisses. All that they affirm is, that it differs fundamentally in idea from all earthly kingdoms and states. The action of these on human affairs is immediate and direct. That of the kingdom of God is indirect, but nevertheless intensely real. While our Lord declined to exercise the office of an arbitrator or judge in civil matters, as being foreign to the purposes of His mission, His refusal to do so by no means implies that His teaching was not intended to exert a powerful influence on man both socially and politically. It would do so however by the rectification of fundamental principles, and not by direct action. This, as a matter of fact, it has unquestionably effected; and the more it is reduced to practice the more palpable will be its results.

In estimating the meaning of our Lord's declaration before Pilate, we must remember that it is an answer to the definite charge of being a sower of sedition among the Jews, and of setting up a kingdom, of which, in His character of the Christ, He claimed to be the King. The last portion of it He confessed to be true. “I am a King,” He says in effect, “but not in the sense in which you understand kingship. My

kingdom repudiates the use of force. It is purely moral and spiritual in its aims. It rests on truth. The only weapon which it employs is persuasion. I am therefore no conspirator against the existing order of things. I make no attempt to interfere with the functions of the Government, or to subvert it ; all such ideas are foreign to the purposes of My mission. I am the King of Truth." Pilate, in the fullest disbelief that the erection of such a kingdom was possible, and feeling convinced that its projector was a visionary, said to the Jews, in utter contempt of such a king—I find no crime in this man ; and since you have sentenced him to death, I will take advantage of the custom of having a prisoner who has been capitally condemned released as a favour at the Passover ; he therefore proposed the release of Jesus.

But while all the above positions are either affirmed or implied in our Lord's answer, it leaves open the entire question as to what would be the effect on existing political or social institutions if the kingdom which He was attempting to found should prove to be a success. In the possibility of this Pilate utterly disbelieved ; and therefore he did not think it worth while to give the question a moment's consideration. The truth is that there is not one word in our Lord's explanation of the nature of His kingdom which either affirms or implies that the success of His mission would not revolutionize the whole order of things as it then existed. On the contrary, He declares that His object was to erect a kingdom founded on a conviction of truth ; and that, in His capacity of King of this kingdom, all lovers of truth would yield Him a voluntary obedience, from which He excepted neither the judge before whom He stood nor the emperor himself.

In what relation then must such a kingdom stand to one whose foundation is error ? Evidently in that of open and undisguised hostility. Such an aggressive attitude is implied in our Lord's declaration that He came to *bear witness to the truth* ; and this is in the strongest manner affirmed in other

utterances recorded in the Gospels, as, for example, "Think ye that I am come to send peace on earth? I come not to send peace, but rather division," or, as elsewhere, "a sword." The success of His mission involved the destruction of the whole world of falsehood and unreality, of which every existing religious, social, and political institution was then full to overflowing. The kingdom of truth therefore, from its very nature, must enter into deadly combat with the kingdom of error, and, as such, it must exert a revolutionary influence on every department of man's individual, political, and social life, until it has effected its complete regeneration.

Let us now consider the mode in which this kingdom proposes to act on mankind. Its very nature, as a kingdom of truth, renders this clear. It must begin by acting on the individual, and through the individual affect man in his social and political relationships; for conviction presupposes the existence of conscience, and conscience belongs to men, not as aggregates, but as individuals. It is true that conscience is sometimes spoken of as an attribute of societies, but it can only be applied to them metaphorically, for the conscience of a society can only mean the aggregate of the consciences of the individuals who compose it. The aim of our Lord's kingdom therefore is, by bringing men into subjection to Himself as King of truth, to regenerate the individual, and through the individual, society; and thus to overthrow every institution in the world which participates in falsehood and immorality. Thus it has destroyed slavery, not by directly denouncing it as a social institution, or by kindling a war between the different classes of society, but by proclaiming the great truth of the Fatherhood of God and the equality of all men in Christ. Similar also will be the ultimate fate of war and of the other social and political evils which oppress mankind. Our Lord certainly would not have denied, had Pilate put the question to Him, that it was the object of His kingdom in this manner to revolutionize every social and political institution, and to replace the existing order of things by one holier and better; while



He would have declared that in accomplishing this He would make no direct attack on the existing order of society, or interfere in the smallest degree with the imperial jurisdiction.

The kingdom of God therefore, while it is not a kingdom of this world, and differs from every form of human association, exists in the world; and its end is the regeneration of man throughout his entire being by the sole power of truth and persuasion. Such a process is necessarily a gradual one; for truth can only be propagated by means that are spiritual and moral, as the use of any other would convert man from a moral agent into a mere machine, subverting the very end of our Lord's mission, which is to bring moral agents into voluntary subjection to the law of God.

Such, then, are some of the most important features in which the kingdom of God differs from the kingdoms of the world. These contemplate mankind as aggregates, and deal with them as such. This was even the case with the Jewish theocracy. But the kingdom of God contemplates man, and deals with him only in his individual capacity. The kingdoms of the world interfere with him directly in his political and social relationships; in the kingdom of God this order of things is reversed. It exercises no direct action on man in his political or social condition; yet, while it is indirect, it is at the same time most real.

But the contrast is most strikingly exhibited in,

## 2. THE PERSON OF ITS KING.

As this subject will be considered at greater length in a subsequent chapter, I shall only draw attention to it here, as far as it directly bears on the idea of the kingdom.

1. The causes which have united mankind into empires, states, and nationalities, are many and various, among which the accident of birth, the inhabiting a definite locality, the speaking of a common language, the possession of common historical recollections, and above all, conquest, occupy a

conspicuous place. None of these however forms the bond of union in the kingdom of God, which denies them even a place therein. Its sole bond of union is *the person of its King*. Thus our Lord prays:—

“That they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us. . . . I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected in one” (John xvii. 21, 23).

Again, “In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in me and I in you” (John xiv. 20).

Again, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, *will draw all men unto myself*” (John xii. 32).

To the same purpose He propounds the love of Himself as the bond of union among His disciples.

“Love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John xiii. 34).

So also—

“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love” (John xv. 10).

To quote further would be superfluous; for it is the reiterated assertion of the Apostolic writers, that the person of our Lord is the sole ground of the unity of the Church. In this respect His kingdom stands in marked contrast with the kingdoms of the world.

Now, although it is true that He has not yet “drawn all men unto him,” yet it is an unquestionable fact that His supreme attractiveness is at the present moment, and has been in all the ages of the past, the power which beyond all others persuades men to acknowledge Him as their King. It stands in the same relation to the kingdom of God in which conquest does to the kingdoms of the world, as the one great instrument of its enlargement.

2. In earthly states and kingdoms a wide gulf separates the governors from the governed. Various ranks and orders are interposed between the rulers and the body of the people. But in the kingdom of God every member

stands on perfect equality with every other member. The only patent of nobility therein is superior holiness, and dedication to the service of its King. All other claims to precedence are utterly abolished. It constitutes in fact an absolute monarchy, of which all the subjects are equal.

At the same time it differs from all earthly kingdoms in the relation in which its subjects stand to their king. His dominion over them is exercised, not through any intermediate agency, but in His own person. They are the objects of His immediate regard. Of those who yield Him a loyal service, He is not the master, but the friend. Such is His own express declaration.

“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard from my Father, have I made known unto you” (John xv. 14, 15).

Such is the relation in which its members stand to its king. That in which they stand to each other is expressed by one word, “Brothers.” “All ye,” says our Lord, “are brethren.”

3. Kingship, and the right to govern, is claimed in ordinary kingdoms and states on various grounds too numerous to mention. But the King of the kingdom of God founds His right on his own inherent worthiness alone. His claims on the regard of His subjects are great—transcending those of all earthly monarchs, and even superseding the dearest human ties. Thus He affirms:—

“He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: He that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me: He that taketh not up his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.”

Such is the demand which He makes of obedience and self-sacrifice on the part of His subjects; but the claim is made, not in right of power to enforce it, but of worthiness to demand it; and this His supreme worthiness to fill the

royal seat, finds an echo in the heart of every genuine subject of the kingdom of God.

Again : while the monarchy is an absolute one, it differs from all those of earthly origin in not possessing a single attribute of a tyranny. An earthly tyranny places the good of the governor first, and that of the governed last ; but the kingdom of Jesus Christ has not one selfish aim. His sole object is, and ever has been, not His own good, but that of His subjects. This He has evinced by giving His life for them.

4. The legislation of earthly kingdoms makes no appeal to the consciences of the governed. It enforces its commands by penalties ; and rests their efficacy on the power to enforce them. Not so does the King of the kingdom of God. The sacrifices which, when requisite, He claims at His subjects' hands, exceed those of emperors and kings. But He sanctions His commands, not by penalties, but by the love and the regard which His subjects feel for Himself. Thus He declares :—

“If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me” (John xiv. 15-21).

“If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love” (John xv. 10).

“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John xiii. 34, 35).

### 3. THE KINGDOM OF GOD A GREAT MISSIONARY AND EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY, DESIGNED TO EFFECT THE MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT OF ITS MEMBERS.

Our Lord's utterances on these subjects are numerous ; and several of His parables are specially devoted to their

elucidation. These will be considered in the following chapter. It will be sufficient here to quote a few of the most remarkable of His direct utterances on this subject. Of these the first place is due to the Apostolical commission which is thus reported by St. Matthew :—

“Go ye therefore and *make disciples* of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; *teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you*: and lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world,” or as in the margin, “Age” (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

Again, in the Sermon on the Mount :—

“Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt hath lost its saltness, wherewith shall it be salted? it is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand; and it shineth to all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. v. 13-16).

The meaning of this last utterance is illustrated by another, recorded in St. Mark’s Gospel, in which the same idea is enforced in somewhat different imagery :—

“For every one shall be salted with fire, and (as in the margin) every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt is good; but if the salt hath lost its saltness, wherewith shall ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another” (Mark ix. 49, 50).

The following command is recorded by St. Matthew :—

“If thy brother sin against thee, go and show him his fault between him and thee alone; and if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three, every word may be established. But if he refuse to hear them, tell it to the Church; and if he refuse to hear the Church also, let

him be to thee as a Gentile and a publican" (Matt. xviii. 15-17).

The first of these utterances directly affirms that the kingdom of God was to be a great missionary and educational society. The Apostles are directed *to make disciples of all nations*. It would be scarcely possible to pronounce in more definite terms the missionary character of the Church. As such, it was to be the instrument by means of which that universal empire which had been promised to the Messiah in the Scriptures of the Old Testament was to be established, and all the nations were to be brought into subjection to the kingdom of truth.

It further affirms its Catholic character, by which is meant, that it was to constitute a society in which all those outward distinctions which had hitherto constituted walls of separation between man and man were to be abolished.

The same utterance brings before us the fact that the Founder of the Church designed it to be a great educational society. This is implied in the command to make disciples of all nations; teaching them to observe all things whatever He had commanded. This was to constitute one of its most important functions throughout the whole period of the Christian dispensation; for our Lord adds to this command the promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

This function of the Church is too frequently overlooked, owing to the fact that the term "disciple" has ceased to convey to the ordinary reader the meaning which it bore in the mouth of the Divine Speaker. What then is a disciple? A disciple is a *learner*, one who resorts to another for instruction. If therefore the members of the kingdom of heaven are *learners*, it is obvious that one of its chief functions must be that of a teaching society. Its Great Teacher is our Lord Himself, for it is of Him that its members are disciples. He Himself expressly claims this place in the kingdom of God. "One," says He, "is your master, even the Christ." Consequently, the function of

all subordinate teachers in it is to teach, enforce, and explain the teaching of our Lord; not to substitute for it any teaching of their own, but to act as His deputies, and to teach only the things which He has commanded.

The term "disciple" is that by which the followers of our Lord are invariably designated in the Gospels: and the same, in conjunction with "brethren," is the predominant one in the Acts of the Apostles. To those who thus used it, it must have been in the highest degree expressive of the relation in which the members of the kingdom of God stood to their King, and in which, according to the promise with which the Apostolical commission concludes, they will stand until the end of the dispensation. This teaching function of the Church is therefore designed so to educate its members as to fit them for entering on that state of things which will be brought about when it shall have realized the purposes of its institution.

In what then does this teaching consist? Is it intellectual or moral? To this I answer, that while all teaching necessarily includes a cultivation of our rational powers, the utterance which we are here considering distinctly affirms that the teaching is to be essentially moral, *i.e.*, it is to be a *discipline in holiness*. Our Lord does not say, Teaching them to accept a number of abstract dogmas, but *to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*. It is therefore to consist, not in elaborating a scheme of Christianity to suit the requirements of the logical intellect, and to enforce its acceptance under penalty of exclusion from the kingdom of God, but in enforcing on man the duty of yielding obedience to the commandments of Christ as legislator of that kingdom. To teach and to enforce these by every means in its power, therefore constitutes one of the chief functions of the Church during the present dispensation.

These facts are also strongly brought out in those passages which I have above cited, in which our Lord's followers are pronounced to be the salt, and the light of the world. The essential idea of salt is its power of preserving sub-

stances from putrefaction by diffusing itself throughout their entire mass. When therefore He says, that Christians are to be the salt of the earth, He evidently means that it is their duty to leaven human society with the principles of its teaching ; and thus to preserve it from spiritual and moral corruption. But by a bold metaphor in St. Mark's Gospel, the salt with which Christians are to be salted is converted into fire. Now fire, which in its essential nature is both destructive and purifying, is used throughout the Bible as an emblem of the Divine holiness. Salt therefore of this kind, destructive of evil and purifying to good, is to be inherent in the Church and in the individual Christian ; and by purifying the individual, is gradually to purify the world.

In the closest connection with this metaphor our Lord introduces another, in which He compares His disciples to light. Now, the word "light" is uniformly used in the New Testament to denote not mere intellectual illumination, but that which is spiritual and moral. "Ye are the light of the world," says our Lord, "A city which is set on an hill cannot be hid." The Christian Church therefore, being this city set on an hill, is intended to be the moral and spiritual illuminator of mankind. Further, the light is intended to be so openly displayed by its members that men may see their good works, and thereby be led to glorify their Father who is in heaven. Thus the light which it diffuses is clearly defined to be not merely an intellectual, but a spiritual and moral illumination.

The Church is also in a special sense an educational society for its own members. This is affirmed in the concluding words of the preface of St. Luke's Gospel to which we have already referred :—

"It seemed good unto me, having traced the order of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of the things in which thou hast been instructed" (Luke i. 3, 4).

The instruction here referred to is evidently intended



for the benefit of the members of the Church. As therefore it was the object of the Evangelist in composing his Gospel, to impart to Theophilus an accurate knowledge of the things in which he had been instructed by word of mouth, it follows that this form of instruction must have consisted of a narrative of the chief events of our Lord's ministry, and of the most important points of His teaching; for the Gospel which its author intended to furnish Theophilus with an accurate knowledge of what he had already been instructed in, consists wholly of such a narrative.

Further: in one of the passages quoted above, our Lord directs that if a Christian brother has ground of complaint against another, his first duty is to remonstrate with the offender in private. If however his remonstrance is unavailing, he is then to take with him two or three others, who are to hear both sides, and give judgment between them. But if this fails, then the whole case is to be laid before the Church or congregation, of which the offender is a member; and if he refuses to bow to their decision, he is to be excluded from the brotherhood. These directions evidently imply that the object in view was not the punishment, but the reformation of the offender.

The case before us is a special one; but it involves the general principle of the mutual responsibility of Christians for each other's conduct, and the duty of the congregation in the last resort to interfere. The members of the kingdom of heaven were not calmly to stand by and witness a brother fall under the dominion of evil without making an effort to rescue him; but, on the contrary, they were to take a lively interest in each other's moral and spiritual welfare. This was to be alike the duty of the individual and of the congregation.

The Epistles bear abundant testimony to the fact that the Apostolic Church recognized this as one of its special duties. Thus St. Paul writes to the Church at Rome, which he had never visited :—

“ And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, *also able to admonish one another*” (Romans xv. 14).

Similarly he writes to the Thessalonians :—

“ And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak, be long-suffering towards all. See that none render evil for evil, but always follow that which is good one towards another, and towards all ” (1 Thess. v. 14, 15).

“ Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which they received of us. . . . And if any man obeyeth not our word by this Epistle, note that man that ye may have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed. And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother ” (2 Thess. iii. 5, 14, 15).

To the Ephesians he writes :—

“ Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them ; ” and for the purposes of mutual edification he directs them to “ speak to one another in Psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs ” (Eph. v. 11, 19).

The Philippians he describes as, “ Lights in the world, holding forth the Word of life ” (Phil. ii. 15).

Lastly, to the Corinthian Church he gives very special directions as to their duties in excluding from their communion a member who had been guilty of disgraceful conduct ; and expresses his wonder at their long toleration of him. His exclusion was to be not merely for the purpose of punishment, but with a view to his reformation ; and in his second Epistle he urges on them the duty of again admitting the offender to fellowship when thus reclaimed.

These passages (and many others might be cited) prove beyond all question that the Apostolic Church regarded the mutual improvement of its members as one of the special purposes of its institution.

This function of the Church as a society for mutual

instruction and improvement renders it necessary for us to consider our Lord's teaching respecting

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS CONTRASTED WITH THE WORLD.

The contrast is set before us in the most striking light in the Gospel and the first Epistle of St. John. In them "the world" (*ὁ κόσμος*) almost invariably means the moral world, and corresponds with "this age," or "generation," and "the present evil age" of the Synoptic Gospels and the Epistles. Both alike denote the region of sin, ignorance, and moral and spiritual darkness; and constitute the great opposing principle to the kingdom of God, which is the region of light and holiness. Thus our Lord speaks of the world in its opposition to Himself. "The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its works are evil" (John vii. 9).

So in its opposition to His Spirit.

"The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him" (John xiv. 17).

So also in its opposition to the members of His kingdom.

"If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, and I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John xv. 28, 29).

In these passages the word "world" is evidently used to designate the moral and spiritual condition of the then existing order of society. This is viewed as the region of sin and the kingdom of the evil one. Still it is not regarded as irretrievably bad, for "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).

And "When the Comforter is come, he will convict the

world in respect of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment " (John xv. 8).

Also : " I came not to judge the world, but to save the world " (John xiv. 47).

To the same purpose writes the author of the Apocalypse:—

"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ " (Rev. xi. 15).

The language of the Epistle of St. John is yet stronger in its denunciations:—

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vain glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world " (1 John ii. 15-17).

And

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one " (1 John v. 19).

Yet the same author testifies that "The Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world " (1 John iv. 14); and that "he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world " (1 John ii. 2).

The "world," then, of the Gospel and of the Epistle of St. John is not the material, but the moral world as it existed prior to the foundation of the Church, and subsequently, so far as it continued uninfluenced by its principles. Yet the object of our Lord's mission was "Not to judge the world, but to save the world " (John xii. 47). The same truth is set forth in the Synoptics and in the Pauline Epistles in a somewhat modified form. In them the principle which stands in opposition to the kingdom of God is "the present evil age" and "the present evil generation." In the parable of the tares "the world" (ὁ κόσμος) even constitutes the field in which the Son of man sows the good seed of His kingdom.

The "world," then, of St. John's Gospel, the wicked and sinful generation of the Synoptics, and "the present evil

age" of St. Paul, for all practical purposes denote the same thing, embracing the then existing forms of civilization and the social and political life of man. These had fallen into a state of corruption and moral and spiritual darkness, both in the Jewish Church and the Gentile world, as far as they came under the view of the sacred writers, and were gradually sinking deeper, without possessing in themselves any principle of renovation. Against these the kingdom of God is a society instituted to wage an incessant warfare, to be terminated only by the kingdoms of this world becoming "the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ."

It becomes therefore an important question to what extent these denunciations are applicable to the modern world. The answer must be that they are true of it only so far as its moral and spiritual atmosphere has remained unimpregnated by the sanctifying influence of Christianity. So far it is still the function of the kingdom of God to wage against it a warfare which knows neither truce nor compromise—but no further.

##### 5. MEMBERSHIP IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD DESIGNED TO CONSTITUTE A BROTHERHOOD.

The testimony of the Acts of the Apostles proves that the idea of a common brotherhood was a fundamental principle of the Apostolic Church. As I have already observed, "the brethren" was the designation by which they were known to one another. Thus the author of the Acts habitually tells us that "the brethren" did this or that, meaning by this term the members of a particular Church. For example, when Peter goes to visit Cornelius, certain *brethren* accompany him. Paul proposes to Barnabas to visit *the brethren* in every city where they had planted a Church. When Paul is liberated from prison at Philippi he visits and comforts *the brethren* before his departure. When he is compelled to leave Berea *the brethren* send him to the sea. On the occasion of his last visit to Jerusalem *the brethren*

received him gladly. On his arrival at Puteoli he finds certain *brethren*. On reaching the Market of Appius and the three taverns a deputation of *brethren* from the Church at Rome came to welcome him. And so throughout the Epistles the term applied to those whom they are addressing is invariably *brethren* or "beloved."

I have only further to observe that the whole legislation of our Lord, as recorded in the Gospels, involves the idea of a brotherhood. In proof of this I need only cite the following declaration as recorded by St. Matthew :—

"Be ye not called Rabbi; for one is your teacher; and *all ye are brethren*. And call no man your father on the earth; for one is your father, who is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your master, even Christ" (Matt. xxviii. 8-10).

This brotherhood then is founded on the Fatherhood of God and the relation in which each individual Christian stands to the Messiah as King and Teacher of the Church.

The above references, the whole tone of the Apostolic Epistles, and the voice of history concur in witnessing that the idea of brotherhood, as it existed in the Apostolic Church, was no cold formality or conventional expression as it has now become when applied by Christians to one another; but that it formed a living bond of union, equalling in force, and sometimes transcending, those of nature itself. It is therefore impossible to doubt that it formed one of the most important aspects of Christianity as it was taught by our Lord and as His teaching was interpreted by the Apostles. It is no less certain that in proportion as the limits of the Church have been extended the intensity of the feeling has diminished; and in consequence of this, and to supply the lack of it, various sectional bonds of union have taken the place of the common Christian brotherhood. Still the idea is fundamental to Christianity; and although ages may elapse before it succeeds in leavening the members of the professing Church with this idea, yet it is one great function of the Church to be continually enforcing it, until

it has made it a practical reality. Wherever it fails to do so, "the salt has lost its savor."

The principle of brotherhood, as taught by our Lord, presents itself under two aspects—one negative, and the other positive. The negative proclaims the entire abolition of every kind of special privilege among Christians, as members of the kingdom of God. The positive proclaims it to be the duty of each individual member to do everything in his power to promote the happiness and well-being of his Christian brother. This last involves what is called in these modern times the principle of altruism, which is therefore no modern discovery, but as old as Christianity itself. St. Paul enunciates it thus:—"Let not each one seek his own, but every one his brother's good" (1. Cor. x. 24).

There can be no doubt that the realization of the idea of Christian brotherhood will be attended with serious consequences to the present order of society, and—as far as this is founded on selfishness—will exercise a highly revolutionary influence on it. But with the consequences we are not concerned here. They belong solely to the great teacher; and, whatever they may be, it is the duty of the Church to teach "whatever he has commanded," and to leave the results to him. It has already effected mighty changes in the condition of man individually, socially, and politically, which the conservatism of former ages would have denounced as revolutionary; and it is doubtless designed to effect still greater. Opponents may call this "Turning the world upside down," if they please. Its progress however is intended to be gradual, and therefore, except after protracted intervals of time, scarcely perceptible. Whatever amount of change in the present order of things the principle of Christian brotherhood, as taught by our Lord, may effect, its final realization will be a glorious period of happiness to mankind.

6. THE QUALIFICATIONS WHICH ENTITLE THEIR POSSESSORS  
TO THE HIGHEST PLACE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

In this respect also, the kingdom of God stands in marked contrast to every earthly institution. In it a complete reversal is made of those qualifications which entitle their possessors to pre-eminence. On this point our Lord's teaching is emphatic. St. Matthew and St. Mark inform us that Salome preferred to our Lord the following bold request :—

“Command, that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right, and the other on thy left hand, in thy kingdom.” This request, as was natural, excited the indignation of the remaining ten Apostles. Our Lord called them unto him, and said, “Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt. xx. 21, 25-28).

These words, as we learn from St. Mark, were uttered with a special reference to the kingdom of heaven in its glorious manifestation. But the same principle is again and again pronounced by our Lord to be the law which ought to regulate precedence in every condition of the Church; and one which, however it may be opposed to the ordinary principles which regulate society, it is its duty to make dominant. Hence His oft repeated declaration :—

“Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted.”

Again: “And they came to Capernaum: and when he was in the house he asked them, What were ye reasoning by the way? But they held their peace: for they had been disputing one with another in the way, who was the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and he said unto



them, If any man would be the first, he shall be the last of all, and minister of all. And he took a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said unto them : Who-soever shall receive one of such little children in my name, receiveth me ; and whosoever receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me " (Mark ix. 33-37).

So in the fourth Gospel. Our Lord, having Himself performed the office of a servant in washing His disciples' feet, says :—

"Ye call me Master and Lord ; and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, the Master and the Lord, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you " (John xiii. 13-16).

But it will be needless to multiply quotations ; for the reader cannot fail to observe that the same principle pervades our Lord's teaching from one end of the Gospels to the other. It was evidently His intention thus to elevate the entire class of the milder virtues, as contrasted with the more ostentatious and the heroic. It is a remarkable fact, that while the existence of these latter is pre-supposed, we do not find a single commendation of them in the Gospels. His intention however is no matter of inference, for thus we read in the Sermon on the Mount :—

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Our Lord's teaching therefore was completely revolutionary as to the order of the virtues. Hitherto, that class which may be designated the heroic virtues held the highest place in public estimation, and secured to their

possessors the highest places of distinction in earthly kingdoms and states. Such was not to be the case in the kingdom of God. It is true that this end is yet but imperfectly realized ; still it has effected much ; and although the milder virtues are not yet dominant, they have been rescued from the degradation in which they stood in the ancient world.

Stated briefly, the only patent of nobility ultimately recognized in the kingdom of God will be self-sacrifice for the good of others. To make this a practical reality is one of the chief purposes of its institution.

#### 7. THE INSTRUMENTALITY BY WHICH ALONE THE END OF ITS INSTITUTION CAN BE REALIZED IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

The end for which the kingdom of God exists under the present dispensation, may be thus briefly stated : to make disciples of all nations ; and to form in them that state of character which will fit them for the enjoyments and the employments of that kingdom in its future glorious manifestation. The instrumentality by which this can be effected is exclusively spiritual and moral. On this point our Lord's teaching is definite and express ; and stands in marked contrast to the whole line of previous thought.

Under this head fall His reiterated declarations that no outward or material act is capable of producing a moral or spiritual result. In all previous systems the importance of the outward and material stands forth conspicuous. Paganism, as far as it professed to deal with the spiritual and moral life of man, consisted of nothing else ; a characteristic which is true of every form of it to the present hour. Whatever desire for inward purification may be felt by the worshipper, outward rites, ceremonies, lustrations, and incantations, are supposed to be potent to effect it. In the first three of these Judaism largely participated. Its innumerable rites, ceremonies, and purifications must have presented much the same aspect to the ordinary worshipper :

it was reserved to the prophets, and to those who came under the influences of their teaching, to grasp the great truth of the utter inability of outward ritual to produce effects which are inward and spiritual. This tendency to rest in the outward had increased between the close of the prophetic period and the advent to such an extent that the daily life of a strict Jew consisted of little else than a round of rites, ceremonies, and purifications. So inveterate was this state of feeling even in our Lord's most intimate followers, that it led them into misapprehensions of portions of His teaching which we can hardly designate by any term short of stupidity.

To this predominance of the outward and the ritual in the religious life of man our Lord placed Himself in the most determined opposition. No small portion of His teaching is occupied in affirming that moral and spiritual results can only be effected by the use of moral and spiritual means. Nearly all His controversies with the Pharisees, as they are recorded by the Synoptics, turn on this very point. Probably no portion of His teaching affected His contemporaries with greater surprise. His affirmations on the subject leave no room for doubt or misapprehension. Thus St. Matthew informs us that after a discussion with the Pharisees as to the value of outward observances, He called to Him the multitude, and addressed them in the following words :—

“Hear and understand. Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man ; but that which proceedeth out of the mouth, this defileth the man ” (Matt. xv. 10, 11).

It will be scarcely necessary to observe that this utterance involves a principle which is not only applicable to the specific case then under consideration, but to the whole range of outward ritual and ceremonial, as being utterly inefficacious to produce any effect on man's moral and spiritual condition. The Divine Speaker does not even make any exception in favour of those ordinances of the Mosaic law which laid down the distinction between certain

kinds of food as clean and unclean. All such ordinances are pronounced to be destitute of spiritual and moral value in the kingdom of God. We read therefore without surprise that this utterance, so completely revolutionary of the popular ideas of religion, was a cause of great offence to the Pharisees ; but in reply to their objection our Lord simply emphasized His former declaration, and said :—

“Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted must be rooted up. Let them alone ; they are blind guides ; and if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit” (Matt. xv. 13, 14).

This utterance was also so surprising to the Apostles that they thought that our Lord did not intend it to be understood in its obvious meaning, but that it had some secret parabolic signification. They therefore ask Him to explain to them *the parable* :—

“Are ye also,” He replies, “without understanding ? Perceive ye not that whatsoever goeth into the mouth, passeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught. But the things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and they defile the man . . . but to eat with unwashen hands, defileth not the man” (Matt. xv. 16, 17).

The great truth which underlies these and numerous kindred utterances may be thus briefly stated : Nothing which is external or material can of itself make a man better or worse. The only thing which can effect this is that which is internal and spiritual ; *i.e.*, the purification of moral agents can only be brought about by the use of moral means. In the kingdom of God therefore the outward has no value at all, except as far as it is helpful to the inward ; little duties are to give place to great ones ; and sabbaths and sacred seasons are to be observed only as far as they are conducive to the good of man ; man having not been made for them, but they for him.

In conformity with these principles our Lord has retained only two ordinances in His Church—Baptism and the Lord’s

Supper—and has abolished the entire ritual of the old dispensation. The first of these, which was already practised by His contemporaries, was adopted by Him as a symbol, setting forth the necessity of the inward purification of the soul by the outward purification of the body. The second, which was a new rite instituted by Himself, is no less expressive, holding up before the eye of the mind the all-important truth that as the life of the body requires to be daily sustained by food, so the spiritual life of man requires to be sustained and invigorated by the closest union with Him who is the life of man. With respect even to these ordinances, it must never be forgotten, as is but too often the case, that the great truth enunciated by our Lord in St. John's Gospel is distinctly applicable to them as well as to every other portion of His teaching.

“It is the Spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing: the words which I have spoken to you are spirit, and are life” (John vi. 63).

In a similar manner the idea of the localization of Deity, so universal in the ancient world, is abolished in the kingdom of God. Its only temple is the pure and holy heart, in which, and not in temples made with hands, the Spirit of God abides. The truth is proclaimed for all time by our Lord in His great utterance recorded in St. John's Gospel:—

“Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem worship the Father . . . for the hour cometh, *and now is*, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for such does the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John iv. 21-25).

So also our Lord affirms elsewhere:—

“Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. xviii. 20).

“The hour cometh,” says our Lord, “*and now is*,” *i.e.*, it is the characteristic of the kingdom of God, not only in its glorious manifestation, but during the present dispen-

sation. Not at some distant period of the future, but even *now*, whenever two or three are gathered together in My name, wherever that place may be. I am present in the midst of them, alike in the private chamber or in the public building, or under the open canopy of heaven.

Such is the relative position in which, in conformity with our Lord's teaching, the outward, the ceremonial, and the ritual stand to the moral and the spiritual in the kingdom of heaven. When we consider the all but universal feeling among His contemporaries that these latter not only constituted the essence of acceptable worship, but also the great means of moral purification, our Lord's utter repudiation of the entire system becomes a fact of the deepest significance. The degree therefore in which this rejected externalism has in subsequent ages been heaped on Christianity, so as to make it scarcely distinguishable from Judaism, is simply surprising. The fact however admits of no dispute, that the outward, the ceremonial, and the ritual find no place in our Lord's teaching.

While therefore the kingdom of God is a society instituted for the purpose of effecting the spiritual and moral regeneration of mankind, the one sole instrumentality which its Founder justifies it in employing, and the only one which can be attended with success, is the use of moral and spiritual means; and it is its duty, after His example, steadily to denounce the natural tendency in man to substitute for them the outward, the ritual, the ceremonial and the material.

Such are the most striking characteristics of the kingdom of God as its nature and character are unfolded in the direct teaching of our Lord.

## CHAPTER XIII.

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### THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN—ITS NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS AS EXPLAINED IN OUR LORD'S PARABOLIC TEACHING.

THE parables now claim our attention. The majority of them are expressly affirmed by the Divine Speaker to have been uttered for the purpose of explaining the nature of the kingdom of God. "Unto you," He says to His disciples, "it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God ; but to the rest in parables" (Luke viii. 10). Let us therefore first consider those which were uttered on that memorable day on which He first made use of the parabolic method of instruction.

The parables recorded by the Evangelists as having been delivered on this occasion, are eight in number. Of these the last seven begin with the words, "The kingdom of heaven is like," and in His explanation of the first, our Lord designates it a parable "of the kingdom." Besides these, St. Matthew informs us that He uttered others of a similar import. We may therefore conclude that the Evangelist considered those which he has recorded as containing the substance of His teaching on this occasion ; and from the following passage we may infer that it was one of the special objects of these parables to unfold His own

views respecting the kingdom of God, in opposition to the popular misconceptions of it :—

“Therefore, speak I to them in parables, because seeing, they see not, and hearing, they hear not ; neither do they understand” (Matt. xiii. 15).

In other words, the popular prejudices were so strong, that our Lord saw good to adopt this indirect mode of counteracting them, rather than a more direct and explicit one.

In considering the meaning of the parables, it is unreasonable to expect to find in every portion of their imagery something corresponding with the truths which they are intended to illustrate. A parable is intended to set forth one fundamental idea. But it is absurd to interpret it on the principle that each separate portion of its imagery must have been intended to set forth some deep religious truth ; or in fact, any truth which does not fall within the obvious scope of the parable itself. Still more so is it to interpret it on the principle that portions of its imagery were intended to convey a number of secret meanings, not obvious to ordinary intelligences ; or to assume that each image is invariably employed with a strict logical consistency of meaning.

It has been necessary to make these observations on account of the tendency which is so prevalent in popular theology to make Scripture as edifying as possible, by imposing on its language any meaning which it will bear ; and then assuming that this was the one intended by its Divine author. This has been especially the case with the parables ; and even when our Lord has expressly assigned to one a definite meaning, it has been thought edifying to see in it a wholly different one. Of this the parable of the good Samaritan may be cited as a crucial example. But the sole question with the interpreter should be, not what in his opinion may be an edifying meaning, or what truths may be found by the aid of ingenious principles of exegesis ; but what was the meaning which, in accordance with the



natural use of language was intended by the Divine Speaker. The all important question is, What has our Lord taught? not what truths, or supposed truths, human ingenuity can extract from the language which He has used. This principle requires to be especially kept in mind in studying the parables.

Of the eight parables spoken on this occasion, the imagery of no less than five is derived from slow and gradual processes of nature; four of these are from the growth of seed, viz., the sower, the tares, the seed, which grows a man knows not how, and the grain of mustard seed; and the fifth is derived from a similar natural process, viz., the gradual diffusion of leaven through a mass of dough. When therefore the kingdom of heaven is said to resemble these processes in no less than five out of these illustrations of it, it seems hardly possible to avoid the conclusion that it was one of the purposes of the Divine Speaker to correct the popular belief that its manifestation would be sudden and overwhelming; and to draw attention to the fact that it would be a slow and gradual development. Of the remaining three, two—viz., “the treasure hid in a field,” and “the pearl of great price”—derive their imagery from the practice of men in active life, when they are bent on the acquisition of a truly valuable possession; and the third, that of the dragnet, from the operation of fishing, which many of his hearers habitually practised.

The first of these is the parable of the sower. It may be briefly described as intended to unfold the manner in which the foundations of the kingdom of heaven were to be laid, and the different results with which its proclamation would be attended on different classes of hearers, in opposition to the prevalent popular misconceptions. These affirmed that hereditary descent from the Patriarchs of the Jewish race, or incorporation into their family by circumcision, constituted the sole right to the possession of its privileges. This materialistic view of the Messianic kingdom had been already rebuked by the Baptist with the sternest severity;

but still it retained its hold, not only on the general public, but on our Lord's disciples.

"Think not," says the Baptist, "to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father ; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Matt. iii. 9).

Its imagery also corrects the further misapprehension that it was to be suddenly manifested in triumphant glory.

"The kingdom of heaven," says the Divine Speaker, resembles a sower who went out to sow seed in a field. The growth of the seed was a gradual process, like God's other operations in nature, but the success of his sowing depended on the character of the soil. In one place it was so hard that the seed never got covered with earth, and was devoured by birds. In another it was so shallow, that although it quickly germinated, it speedily withered away under the rays of the sun of early spring. In another it took root indeed, but so little care had been used to destroy the weeds and thorns that they choked the plant, and it produced no grain. In other parts of the field the soil was rich, and had been carefully prepared for the reception of the seed ; and an abundant crop rewarded the labours of the sower.

Let it be observed, that our Lord offers no explanation of how it came to pass that one part of the field was more fertile than another. He comments on the facts simply as He finds them. So it must be with the truths inculcated by the parable. We must be content to leave unexplained the fact that some classes of men are receptive and others unreceptive of the Divine Word. Yet theologians are never satisfied unless they can explain the causes, and have proclaimed their explanations to be essentials of Christianity.

The following are the points brought out by the parable. The kingdom of God, instead of resembling the outward one of popular expectation, has for its foundation a set of conditions essentially spiritual and moral. These alone

constitute the right to membership in it. It originates not in a sudden display of mighty power, but in a proclamation of "the word of the kingdom." The growth, like that of corn, is gradual, resembling other processes of nature. Its seat is the human heart. To effect a lodgment there "the word of the kingdom" must be both heard and believed. Like as the object of the sower is the production of a crop of corn, so the object sought by the founder of the kingdom of heaven is an abundant harvest of holiness in its members. The word of the kingdom however, can only produce this result in a soil fitted for its reception. Consequently large numbers of the members of the old theocracy, under the influence of their prejudices, do not even attempt to enter it. (These are the wayside hearers.) Others eagerly embrace it at first; but when they fully realize its spiritual character they desert it (the seed sown on stony ground). Others, who seek to combine membership in it with the indulgence of sinful practices (the seed sown among thorns) produce no fruit. Its accepted members are those only who "in a honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

The kingdom of heaven therefore is a kingdom of which the principles are seated and grow in the heart of the individual; and the kingdom itself is one which will grow in the world slowly and gradually.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE TARES.

The following are its salient points. A sower is again represented as going forth to sow seed. This sower is the son of man. The field in which he sows is the world, which he claims as his own. After the sowing is completed men fall asleep, on which an enemy takes the opportunity of sowing tares among the wheat, and departs unseen. To the time of sowing succeeds the period of growth, until at length the ear appears. Then the householder's servants

discover that tares have been sown among the wheat, and they seek his permission to root up the bastard corn. This he refuses to allow, telling them they must wait until the harvest, lest on pulling up the tares they should uproot the wheat also. On the arrival of harvest however, he orders them to make the separation in question.

In His exposition of the parable, the Divine Speaker tells us that by the harvest, He meant not the end of the world, but of the age (*συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος*); the Messianic age, and not the Jewish age, being obviously intended; for the subject of the parable is the kingdom of heaven, that is, of the Messiah. Then, says our Lord, the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Here our Lord uttered the formula which He habitually used in drawing special attention to any point in His teaching:—"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Matt. xiii. 41-43).

This parable differs from that of the sower in the point of view from which it contemplates the kingdom of God. Both affirm, in opposition to Jewish ideas, that although its foundation would be laid by a special act of Divine interposition, yet it would be devoid of outward display. The locality of the kingdom is affirmed to be the world (*ὁ κόσμος*), which is claimed to be the property of the husbandman (his field); and the husbandman is our Lord Himself, who therefore claims the world as His own. The kingdom of heaven of the parable therefore is the visible Church of Jesus Christ through all the stages of its development. Between its foundation and the final realization of the purposes of its institution, a protracted interval is to elapse, analogous to that which intervenes between seed-time and harvest. This interval is intended to be one during which the kingdom is to grow and gradually to expand; and

during it, no visible Divine interposition in its affairs is to be expected. Throughout this entire period it is to be a mixed society, in which the evil are to be so closely united with the good that the separation of the one from the other would be an operation attended with danger to the latter. At the time designated "the end of the age" this separation will be effected; and then, *but not till then*, will take place the glorious manifestation of the kingdom of God, when the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

THE PARABLE OF THE SEED—GROWING, MAN KNOWS NOT  
HOW.

This parable, which is recorded by St. Mark only, is as follows:—

"And he said, so is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mark iv. 26-29).

Here the Divine Speaker directs our attention to that property in seed which forms one of its special characteristics, viz., that after it has been once sown, it springs up, develops itself, and grows to maturity under the influence of those ordinary operations of God in nature which we designate natural forces, without the necessity of special interventions. To the actual growth and development of the plant, human aid contributes nothing. "The earth," says our Lord, "brings forth of herself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear," and the planter of the seed has nothing to do but to remain passive until the corn has ripened in the ordinary course of nature. Then comes the time for fresh action on his part, and he puts forth the sickle, because the harvest is come. It is obvious therefore that the point of

the parable is the gradual growth of the seed without special interferences on the part of the husbandman.

“So,” says our Lord, “is the kingdom of God.” The comparison holds, whether it be viewed objectively as a kingdom, or subjectively in the moral conditions requisite for full membership in it. Neither are sudden manifestations, but a secret and gradual growth. In either case it expands under God’s ordinary action in the spiritual world, just as the growth of seed is the result of his ordinary action in the world of nature; his mode of operation in the one being analogous to that in the other. The growth of the plant passes through successive stages of development. So also will the kingdom of God continue growing and developing itself until it has accomplished the end of its institution, after which the spiritual harvest will take place, *i.e.*, its final manifestation in visible power and glory.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED.

Its point is the extreme minuteness of the seed, and the fact that in Oriental countries it grows into a plant of sufficient size to afford shelter to the birds.

So is the kingdom of God. It is in its beginnings small, and hardly observable; but it will gradually develop into a great society, in which the nations of mankind will find rest and shelter.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN HIDDEN IN THE MEAL.

In this parable the figure is slightly varied. Its leading idea is no longer a natural growth like that of seed, but that process of nature by which a small body, like leaven, transfuses through itself a large mass and gradually transforms the character of the whole.

So is the kingdom of God. As the small mass of the leaven penetrates the larger one of the meal, and transforms

it, so the fundamental principles of the kingdom of God will gradually penetrate, influence, and transform the entire mass of humanity.

### THE PARABLE OF THE DRAGNET.

This parable bears a close analogy to those which we have been considering. The operations referred to were familiar to those to whom it was addressed, as forming what had been their daily employment.

The salient points in it are two—viz., the promiscuous gathering of fish of all kinds into the net, and then when it was full, the careful selection of the good from the worthless.

So, says our Lord, is the kingdom of God. Like as your net has gathered every kind of fish into its meshes, so the kingdom of God gathers every kind of men into its fold. Like also as you make no attempt to separate the valuable from the worthless fish while the net continues in the water, so no attempt will be made to separate the holy from the evil during the present dispensation. But such a separation will take place hereafter; for like as you choose out the valuable fishes from the worthless when you have drawn the net to land, so at the end of the Messianic age the angels will separate the worthy from the unworthy members of the kingdom.

Our Lord therefore definitely affirms in this parable, in opposition to a modern view which has been widely circulated, that the kingdom of God was not intended to be a society consisting exclusively of the holy.

### THE PARABLES OF THE TREASURE HID IN A FIELD AND OF THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

These two parables bear a close resemblance to each other. In considering their meaning it should be remembered that the idea was widely diffused that the claim to the privileges

of the kingdom was so completely a matter of inheritance in right of birth that it required neither effort nor self-sacrifice to attain possession of its blessings. To counteract such conceptions our Lord uttered these parables, the imagery of which is taken from the dealings between man and man in ordinary life.

A man, says our Lord, finds a treasure hid in a field. He at once recognizes its value, and carefully conceals the knowledge of it. He determines to get possession of it ; but this can only be accomplished by the sacrifice of everything which he possesses. Being persuaded however that the bargain will be a good one, he departs, sells all that he has, and buys the field.

So is the kingdom of God. It is a possession of the greatest value ; but no man can attain its blessings by right of birth, nor will they come to him without effort or self-sacrifice. To attain a right to them he must buy them ; and the purchase can only be effected by the sacrifice of all that he has hitherto esteemed of value—his prepossessions, his prejudices, and his hopes ; but the necessary act of self-sacrifice will be attended with a rich reward.

Again : a pearl merchant makes a diligent search for pearls, and at length finds one of great value, which he thinks, at the price demanded for it, will prove an excellent bargain ; but the price is so great that nothing short of the sale of his entire property will raise the purchase money. Nevertheless he forthwith effects the sale, and makes the pearl his own.

So is the kingdom of God. Its privileges are of incalculable value, but they will not come to anyone without effort. They must be diligently sought after ; and to get possession of its blessings you must be prepared to sacrifice everything which you possess. Make the sacrifice, and the kingdom will be yours ; and you will find that the outlay will amply repay you.

Eleven more of our Lord's parables are directly affirmed by Him to have been uttered for the purpose of illustrating



different aspects of the kingdom of God, viz., the parable of the householder hiring labourers into his vineyard; the hard-hearted servant; the ten pounds; the great supper; the marriage feast; the fruitless fig-tree; the two sons; the rebellious husbandman; the ten virgins; the ten talents; and the sheep and the goats. The context in which they stand will enable us to identify the remainder with the same subject.

THE PARABLE OF THE HOUSEHOLDER HIRING LABOURERS  
INTO HIS VINEYARD.

We have already considered the circumstances under which this parable was uttered. I must therefore ask the reader to remember that it forms a portion of a discourse addressed to the Apostles in reply to their question as to what reward they should receive for having left their all to follow our Lord; and in which He had made to them the promise, not only of abundant compensation in this present time, but that, "in the regeneration, when the Son of man should sit on the throne of his glory, they should sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." This promise, if it had stood alone, would have gone far to confirm them in their Jewish prepossessions that meritorious desert and exclusive privileges conferred a right to a high place in the kingdom of God. To obviate this, our Lord uttered the parable we are now to consider.

The kingdom of heaven, He says, of which you have been so ambitiously seeking the rewards and distinctions, resembles a householder who went out from time to time to hire labourers into his vineyard. With those that he hired at an early hour of the day he made an express bargain, and agreed to give them a denarius for their day's work. Going out again at different hours, and once as late as the eleventh hour, and finding labourers yet standing idle in the market-place, he sent them also into the vineyard, promising to pay them what was right, but without stipulating with them for

a definite sum. When evening was come, he directs his steward to pay all the labourers a denarius alike, without regard to the time when they were hired ; and in doing so, to begin with the last hired, and to end with the first. On this, those who had laboured from early morning remonstrated with the householder, and urged the injustice of paying those who had laboured twelve hours at the same rate only as those who had laboured but one. In reply, the householder falls back on his original agreement, and tells them that he had done them no wrong, for he had paid them the precise sum they had demanded. As to those who had entered the vineyard at a late hour, relying on his general promise to deal fairly with them without making a definite bargain, he maintained his right to dispose of his money as he pleased, and therefore to pay all the labourers the same sum, without regard to the time of their hiring. You, says he to the first hired, bargained with me to receive a denarius for your day's work. That is your just due, but nothing more. Take it, and depart. To this our Lord adds the words, "So the last shall be first, and the first last," in the kingdom of God.

A few points in this parable require notice. Some commentators have thought it necessary to attempt to vindicate the conduct of the householder by assuming that those who were called at later periods of the day had compensated by their diligence for the lateness of the hour on which they had entered on their labours. But respecting this supposed diligence the parable is silent ; nor does the householder urge it in his reply to the murmurers, as it would have been natural for him to do, if this had been his reason. The supposed necessity for such a vindication has arisen from reading the parable apart from its context, and assuming that it was spoken for the purpose of vindicating the principles of the Divine government, instead of correcting the idea which was so widely diffused—and which the question of Peter proved still to be so deeply ingrained in the minds even of the Apostles—that the rewards and privileges of the

kingdom of God, like those of earthly kingdoms, could be made matters of bargain and of debt. The householder is therefore represented as justifying himself on the sole ground that he had fully redeemed his promise, and as claiming the right of being liberal to others on a ground which no legalist could dispute, viz., that it was lawful for him to do what he would with his own. The object of the parable is therefore to counteract the idea then working in the minds of the Apostles, that they could claim rewards in the kingdom of God as a matter of *debt or contract*. Hence the care taken by the householder in his directions to his steward to exhibit before the eyes of the first hired labourers the fact that those who had worked but a single hour received the same sum as those who had laboured twelve. If the greater diligence of the former had been the reason of the distinction, this would beyond all doubt have been expressly stated in the parable itself; and it would have made the vindication of the householder complete. But we have no right to invent circumstances which form no part of the utterances of the Divine Speaker for the purpose of explaining the supposed difficulties of the parable. The only true explanation is that its purpose was not to vindicate God's justice generally, but to bring into prominence a special aspect of the kingdom of God in opposition to the popular misconceptions.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE HARD-HEARTED SERVANT.

The kingdom of heaven, says our Lord, is like a king who entered into a reckoning with his servants. One is brought to him who owed him upwards of two millions of money. The servant falls down before him, begs for time, and promises to pay the entire debt; whereupon his Lord forgives him the whole. But the servant had a fellow-servant who owed him only seventy shillings. On going out of his Lord's presence, he lays hold on him, demands payment, and commits him to prison until payment is made. On hearing

of this outrage, the king summons him, and having pointed out the iniquity of his conduct, hands him over to the tormentors until he should pay off his own enormous debt.

What then is the moral of the parable? Our Lord briefly states it thus: "So shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."

#### THE PARABLE OF THE POUNDS.

A nobleman goes into a distant country for the purpose of receiving investiture of a kingdom which he claimed. Before setting out on his journey, he calls his servants, and gives them a mina each to trade with during his absence. His subjects dislike him, and send a petition to the Overlord, begging him not to grant him the investiture. But their attempt to exclude him fails, and he returns in full possession of royal authority.

As soon as he has thus entered on his office, he calls his servants to whom he had entrusted the money, and requires of them an account of the use which they have made of it. One by trading had increased his capital of one mina to ten; and another to five; and these are rewarded with the appointment of governor over ten and five cities respectively. But another servant, under the pretence of being afraid of the exacting character of his master, had kept his mina wrapt up in a napkin. On him sentence is pronounced, that he should be deprived of the mina of which he had made no use, and that it should be given to the servant who had increased his capital of one mina to ten. After having thus reckoned with his servants, he orders his enemies, who had caballed against him, to be brought before him and put to death in his presence.

This parable is almost a history of one of the princes of the Herodian family; but to that aspect of it we need not advert. We need only observe that its groundwork was familiar to those to whom it was addressed.

St. Luke tells us that the special reason for the utterance

of this parable was that inasmuch as our Lord was then approaching Jerusalem, there was a general expectation that the kingdom of God would immediately appear. To enable us rightly to estimate the force of this expression, it should be observed that the appearance of the kingdom of God, in the sense which the multitude attached to the words, meant not the setting up of the kingdom in the form described on the great day of our Lord's exposition of it above considered, but in its final glorious manifestation. ¶ It was therefore to correct the expectation that this manifestation of it was close at hand, that this parable was spoken. ¶ But in uttering it, the Divine Speaker evidently had two further objects in view ; first, to warn His Jewish opponents that His glorious manifestation in His kingdom (whenever it might happen) would be their destruction ; and secondly, to warn His servants that He would expect from them during His absence a diligent discharge of their respective duties ; and that on His return he would reward or punish them according to the zeal which they had displayed in His service, or their neglect of it. This parable therefore may be not inaptly designated a parable setting forth the responsibility which the members of the kingdom of God are under to its king.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS.

A father desires his eldest son to labour in his vineyard, but he receives from him a point-blank refusal. Afterwards however, the son repents, and goes. On receiving his rude answer the father makes the same request to his younger son, who replies with the greatest smoothness, Sir, I am going ; but he never entered it.

Our Lord gives the moral :—The publicans and the harlots will hear his calls to repentance, and become members of the kingdom of God ; while the Pharisaic legalist, with all his outward sanctimoniousness, will refuse to enter it.

THE PARABLES OF THE GREAT SUPPER AND THE MARRIAGE  
FEAST.

Between these two parables there is a close resemblance. The first was spoken in reply to an observation made by one of the guests at a dinner given by one of the rulers of the Pharisees to our Lord, that he would be blessed who should eat bread in the kingdom of God. Our Lord told the company that a certain man made a great supper, and sent out a number of invitations, to which the invited guests sent back a number of frivolous excuses. The master in anger sends his servant into the streets and lanes of the city, and afterwards into the highways and hedges, with directions to press everyone he meets to come and partake of his supper, declaring at the same time that not one of those originally invited should be allowed to do so.

The moral of this parable is obvious. First, the despised publicans and sinners, and then the still more despised Gentiles, should be invited to participate in the blessings of the kingdom of God ; while the Pharisaic legalists should be shut out of it.

In the second parable a king is represented as making a great feast on the occasion of his son's marriage. He also had sent out numerous invitations ; and shortly before the time appointed for the feast his servants are again dispatched to inform the guests that the supper is ready. The greater part treat the message with contempt ; but some, for the purpose of making an ostentatious display of their enmity, go so far as to ill-treat the servants, and then kill them. These murderers all inhabited one city, which the king, in just indignation, burnt. In the meantime he sent out another body of servants with instructions to invite to the feast everyone they met. A large number of persons accepted the invitation, one of whom however offered the king a gratuitous insult by coming unprovided with a marriage garment. When asked how he had presumed to enter without one, he had not a word to say in his defence ;

whereupon the king commanded him to be bound, and thrust out into the darkness outside the lighted room.

This parable offers only a few points of difference from the preceding one. The warning which it gives the legalists that their opposition would be attended with the destruction of their city and Temple, and that the privileges of the theocracy would be taken from them and given to the Gentiles, is more direct. But it adds a further warning, that all who were invited to partake of the blessings of the kingdom of God would not necessarily be accepted members of it.

What then was the meaning intended to be conveyed by the marriage garment? It is clear that it occupies an important place in the parable. Numerous commentators have interpreted it as denoting the imputed righteousness of Christ. In that case, as the kingdom of heaven of the parable unquestionably means the Church on earth, the parable would affirm that this imputed righteousness was a necessary qualification for entering into it. But against this interpretation it may be urged that the figure of clothing, or dress, is never used in the New Testament to denote an imputed, but an actual righteousness. "Putting on Jesus Christ" does not mean putting on His righteousness by imputation; but clothing ourselves with the perfections of His character. Putting on what St. Paul designates the Christian dress, is the actual inworking into the character of kindness, and longsuffering—not putting them on by imputation. When St. Peter directs Christians to be clothed with humility, he means that they should actually possess this virtue. When again the author of the Revelation speaks of the white raiment of the saints, he defines it to mean their actual righteousness, not a righteousness by imputation. But still more to the point: there is not an allusion to be found to the popular doctrine, called the imputed righteousness of Christ, in the teaching of our Lord as recorded in the Gospels, unless it be in this image of the marriage garment. But the dictum is far too

stupendous to rest on so uncertain a foundation. We should surely find it laid down, not in a parable addressed to His opponents, but in one of His direct utterances, explanatory of the kingdom of God. But these, on the contrary, affirm that men will be judged hereafter, not according to their possession of an imputed, but of a positive righteousness. The marriage garment therefore, in conformity with the analogies above referred to, must mean an actual state of mind which is thus affirmed to be an essential qualification for the enjoyment of those blessings of the kingdom of God which are denoted by the marriage feast.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE FRUITLESS FIG-TREE.

This parable, though not affirmed in so many words to be so, is obviously a parable of the kingdom.

A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard. During three years he came seeking fruit on it and found none. At last he becomes impatient, and orders it to be cut down. At the gardener's intercession he grants it a brief respite ; but reiterates his orders in case of its continuing fruitless.

The application of this parable to the condition of the Jewish Church is too obvious to require comment. Its general moral is, that fruitfulness in holiness is an essential condition for the continued enjoyment of the privileges of the kingdom of God.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE REBELLIOUS HUSBANDMEN.

A certain man planted a vineyard, and having furnished it with every convenience, he let it to a number of husbandmen at a fixed rent ; and then took a journey into a distant country. At the proper time he sent a servant, whom he authorized to receive his dues ; but the husbandmen conspired together, seized him, beat him, and sent him away empty. This experiment he repeated several times, sending



a larger number of servants; but on each renewed attempt to get his rent the conduct of the husbandmen became more and more outrageous, wounding, beating, and even killing the messengers. The owner of the vineyard however had an only son, whom he greatly loved, and it occurred to him that if he sent him they would treat him with respect. The husbandmen however, as soon as they saw him, conspired to kill him and to take possession of the vineyard as their own. Accordingly they seized him, cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What then will the lord of the vineyard do? The hearers of the parable, not at once catching its drift, reply: He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and let out his vineyard to others, who will pay him his lawful rent.

Our Lord then draws the moral of the parable. Surveying the Pharisaic legalists, by whom He was surrounded, He says to them :—

“The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matt. xxii. 43).

These words render it certain that the kingdom of God here denotes not the perfected condition of the Church, but the Church of the Old and the New Testament dispensation. What was the kingdom which was to be taken from those whom our Lord was addressing? Clearly the old theocracy with its privileges. This therefore represents the vineyard of the parable. These were to be given to a nation bringing forth its fruits, who, with the believing Jews, were to form the Catholic Church of Jesus Christ. This threat was completely realized at the destruction of Jerusalem, when the kingdom of God was finally taken from the Jews, and its privileges bestowed on the Gentile nations.

Three more parables are directly affirmed by our Lord to be parables of the kingdom; but as they belong to the last day of our Lord's public ministry, we will consider them as the intended conclusion of His teaching.

The remaining parables, according to the arrangement adopted in St. Luke's Gospel, to which we are chiefly indebted for a report of them, are placed in that portion of the narrative which describes our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem. These are not directly affirmed, like those which we have been considering, to be parables of the kingdom ; but the context identifies nearly every one of them with this subject. Thus the parable of the Good Samaritan stands in immediate connection with an utterance of our Lord, in which, turning to His disciples, He said to them privately :—

“Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see ; for I say unto you, that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not ; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not” (Luke x. 23, 24).

The reader will recollect that a similar utterance is placed by St. Matthew in the midst of the parables of the great day of our Lord's parabolic teaching, in which he tells the disciples that to them it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables. In reply to a lawyer, who put a question for the purpose of tempting Him, He uttered

#### THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who stripped him, and left him half dead. A priest and a Levite were travelling on the same road, but they took no heed of him. A Samaritan however, who followed soon after, on seeing his condition, was moved with compassion, conveyed him to an inn, and took care of him. Being obliged to leave on the morrow, he charged the host to take care of him, furnished him with money for his present necessities, and promised if he incurred any additional expense to repay him on his return. Our Lord then asked His questioner which of the three

proved himself to be a neighbour to the wounded Jew ; and on his replying, "he that showed mercy on him," He Himself drew the moral of the parable by charging him to go and do likewise.

What then is the special teaching respecting the kingdom of God which this parable is intended to set forth ? The old theocratic code contained a precept, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But the popular theology of our Lord's day had interpreted the word "neighbour" to mean a descendant from Jacob ; and had absolved the Jew from all obligations towards those who were not. On this principle the priest and the Levite in the parable, though fresh from the temple-worship, acted towards the half-dead traveller. But one, who in the eyes of a strict legalist was an outcast from the kingdom of heaven, rendered the assistance which he so urgently needed. The object of the parable therefore is to lay down the great principle, that in the kingdom of God about to be set up the "neighbour," whom the old law had enjoined the members of the theocratic nation to love as themselves, meant every man in need, without distinction of nation, race, or party.

In St. Luke's account of this portion of our Lord's ministry, five parables are placed in very close connection—forming in fact a part of one great discourse—viz., the lost sheep, the lost piece of silver, the prodigal son, the unjust steward, and Dives and Lazarus. These form a portion of a continuous narrative, beginning with the fourteenth chapter and ending with the tenth verse of the seventeenth. Although none of these are designated parables of the kingdom, yet the context clearly marks them out as such. The historian informs us that our Lord had accepted the invitation of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to dine with him. While He was in the house, His conduct was jealously watched by the party ; and during His stay there He spake a parable, the object of which was to teach the duty of humility. Then on one of the guests exclaiming that he would be blessed who should eat bread

in the kingdom of God, He uttered the parable of the great supper, which is beyond question a parable of the kingdom. On leaving the Pharisee's house, He was followed by a great multitude, to whom He addressed several solemn warnings respecting a number of moral qualifications which are declared in discourses which we have already considered, to be preconditions of admission into the kingdom of God, and of discipleship to Himself. While He was thus engaged, many of the publicans and sinners drew near to hear Him. Among those present were certain Scribes and Pharisees, probably those whom the historian had described as having just dined with Him. These on witnessing their near approach, and seeing how readily our Lord received them, began to murmur, saying, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." The language implies that they drew from this act the inference that He was not the Christ, nor even a prophet. As objections of this kind had been repeatedly urged against Him, our Lord took the opportunity of pronouncing an everlasting divorce between all such ideas of sanctimonious holiness and the conception of the kingdom which He came to found; and proceeded to utter

THE PARABLES OF THE LOST SHEEP AND OF THE LOST PIECE  
OF MONEY.

A man had a hundred sheep; of these, one wanders from the fold. Instead of leaving the wanderer to perish, he leaves the ninety-nine in the wilderness and searches for the lost sheep until he finds it; and having found it, he brings it back on his shoulders rejoicing, and calls his friends and neighbours to rejoice with him.

Again: A woman who had ten pieces of silver lost one of them. Instead of quietly submitting to her loss, she lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and searches diligently till she finds it; and when she has done so, she invites her friends to rejoice with her.

Although our Lord does not conclude by saying, "So is

the kingdom of God," yet He evidently implies it. It is the characteristic of its King not to repel the fallen, but to save them. For them He feels Divine compassion. Nay, more; He says in effect: While you Pharisaic legalists are looking on with scarcely suppressed indignation at my efforts to rescue those degraded men from their degradation, joy breaks forth even in the presence of the angels of God over every sinner among them that repents. But hear another parable which will still more clearly depict the true character of the kingdom of God, into which you would introduce your narrow legalism and hard-hearted selfishness.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

A certain man had two sons. The younger was a headstrong youth, who desired to be independent of his father. He therefore asked for his share of his possessions; which no sooner did his indulgent parent concede to him, than he left his home, went into a distant country, and proceeded to dissipate all he had in riot and debauchery, until he had reduced himself to the extremity of want. In this condition he was obliged to betake himself to the calling so supremely odious to the Jew,—that of feeding swine; but still he could not earn sufficient to satisfy his hunger. In this state of utter destitution he began to reflect on his folly, and to feel repentance for his sin; and on remembering how well his father's hired servants were treated, he determined to return home and sue for a place among them. His father however had long been hoping that he would return to his right mind; and, on hearing that he was coming back, he went to meet him; and on his expressing deep contrition for the past, he fell on his neck and kissed him; and having given directions that he should be received, not as a servant, but with all the privileges of a son, he made a great feast to celebrate his return. But all did not go on thus smoothly. His eldest son was far from pleased at the brother's return, and at the mode of his reception. He

happened at the time to be in the field; but on his return to the house he hears music and dancing. Calling one of the servants, he demands what all this means; and in reply, the unwelcome news is communicated to him of his brother's return. He sullenly refuses to have anything to do with the entertainment. On this, the father comes out and begs him to enter. I have served you, he replies, all these years; I have kept every commandment of yours with the utmost strictness, and have never broken one of them; yet you have never given me so much as a kid, on which I could make merry with my friends; but as soon as this your son comes back, who has wasted your property in abandoned profligacy, you kill for him the fatted calf. No, my son, says the father; whatsoever I have, has been, and is at your disposal. Remember that he that has returned is not only my son, but your brother. Surely it is right for us to rejoice at the return of one who was dead, but is alive again, and who was lost, and is found.

Such is the kingdom of God, and such is the place held in it by repentant publicans and sinners. The conduct of all such as are animated by the spirit of Pharisaic legalism resembles the hard-hearted selfishness of the elder brother. Such characters voluntarily exclude themselves from its privileges and blessings, while all true penitents, however great may have been their former sins, are freely admitted to enjoy them.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE UNJUST STEWARD.

This parable is placed by St. Luke in direct sequence with the three we have just considered, and in fact it forms a portion of the same discourse; but instead of being addressed to the Pharisees, it is addressed to the disciples.

A certain great man had a steward, who was accused of wasting his master's goods. Whereupon he was ordered to make up his accounts, preparatory to his dismissal from the stewardship. But being a crafty man, he took advantage

of the interval afforded him for this purpose, to make such arrangements with his lord's debtors as would induce them to maintain him after he was dismissed. This he effected by making them partisans with himself in perpetrating an additional fraud on his employer, who on discovering it applauded the ingenuity of the scheme, and the wise foresight in which it originated. The moral which the Divine Speaker addresses to the disciples is as follows:—

“I say unto you, make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when it shall fail they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles” (Luke xvi. 9).

The three preceding parables were intended to announce in opposition to Pharisaic exclusiveness the ready welcome which all repentant sinners will receive into the kingdom of God. This parable is designed to set before the disciples one of the opposite aspects of that kingdom, viz., its responsibilities. Its moral as addressed to disciples is: Do not think, because repentant sinners are freely admitted to its blessings, that you have nothing more to do, or to care for. On the contrary, its members are all God's stewards, who will have to give a strict account of everything with which they have been intrusted. Let them therefore learn a lesson from the prudent care with which children of the world provide for the future. The best mode of making this provision will be so to use earthly riches in gaining friends, that when riches fail, the friends thus gained may not fail you also.

This parable therefore stands in the same relation to the other three as that of the householder does to the discourse which preceded it; the one being intended as a kind of counterpoise to the other, exhibiting opposite poles of the same truth; the parable of the householder being intended to dispel the idea of merit, which the promises made by our Lord to the Apostles might otherwise have encouraged; and that of the unjust steward being intended to exhibit the opposite pole of the truth which

is set forth in the parables of the lost sheep, the missing piece of money, and the prodigal son.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

This again is proved by the context to be a parable of the kingdom. It is addressed to the Pharisees as a solemn warning against the sin of covetousness. It is thus introduced by the historian :—

“And the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things; and they scoffed at him. And he said unto them: Ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of man; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God. The law and the prophets were until John; from that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached, and every man entereth violently into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fail. Every one that putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth one that is put away from a husband committeth adultery. Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, faring sumptuously every day” (Luke xvi. 14-19).

This introduction, in which the conception of the kingdom of God stands prominent, shows clearly that it was intended to illustrate truths connected with it in opposition to those Pharisaic errors to which the Divine Speaker had been just referring.

There were two men, He says, one a very rich man, who freely used his wealth in procuring every means of earthly enjoyment; and the other a beggar, who was laid at his gate full of sores, and who was in such extremity of want that he desired to be fed with the broken meat which fell from the rich man's table. In process of time the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man died also, and was interred with all due



solemnity ; but in Hades he opened his eyes in misery, and seeing Abraham and Lazarus at a great distance, he entreats the former to send Lazarus to afford him some alleviation in his suffering. Abraham reminds him of his former life, and tells him that his present sufferings are a retribution for it, and that under the eternal laws of God he can afford him no assistance. The rich man then entreats him to send Lazarus to warn his five surviving brethren, who are living as he had lived, of the terrible consequences of so doing. To this request Abraham replies that even the appearance of a spirit coming from the unseen world would have no effect in producing repentance in those who rejected God's ordinary means of grace.

The details of a parable like this must be viewed as a portion of its imagery ; and it is vain to seek in them disclosures respecting the unseen world when a total silence on this subject forms one of the most striking phenomena of the New Testament. But if we content ourselves with interpreting the parable in strict accordance with the circumstances of its utterances, and not under the influence of curiosity "to dwell on the things which we have not seen," its scope will be sufficiently clear. Viewed therefore in the light thrown upon it by the context, it is intended as a solemn warning to Pharisaic legalists against that union of sanctimoniousness with avarice which was exhibited in their characters, not only as constituting the antithesis of the state of mind which qualified men for entering into the kingdom of God, but even as being in direct contradiction to *the law and the prophets* of which they were the professed disciples, and the great principles of which were so deeply based on eternal truth that it would be easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of them to fail. The Pharisaic legalist, as we learn elsewhere, was in the habit of making a long prayer, and not scrupling to "devour a widow's house." Against such a spirit—a spirit which has too often found a place within the modern Church—our Lord uttered the solemn warning of

the parable, that ill-used wealth would be visited with retribution in the unseen world. This is its moral.

THE PARABLES OF THE UNJUST JUDGE AND OF THE PUBLICAN  
AND THE PHARISEE.

These parables form parts of a discourse which our Lord addressed to the disciples on the duty of being prepared for His coming whenever it might happen, whether it might be a coming in His human personality or in His providential dispensations. The discourse itself was called forth by a question of the Pharisees which we have considered above—when the kingdom of God would come—and by our Lord's answer, "that it would not come with observation ; neither shall men say, Lo, here or there ; for, lo, the kingdom of God is within you." Having uttered the explanatory words, "Where the body is, thither will the eagles also be gathered together," St. Luke informs us that He spake unto them the parable of the unjust judge, to enforce the duty "that men ought always to pray and not to faint," concluding with the question, "Howbeit when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth ?" On this follows the parable of the publican and the Pharisee ; and, immediately after it, the account of bringing young children to Christ, and our Lord's declaration that "of such is the kingdom of God." The conception of the kingdom therefore forms the groundwork of the entire discourse ; and consequently these two parables must be intended to be explanatory of certain aspects of it.

Two persons, says our Lord, resided in the same city, one a widow, and the other a judge who feared neither God nor man. The widow had suffered a wrong, but she in vain applied to the judge for redress. She continued however to petition him, until at last, wearied with her importunities, he granted the petition. If then this unjust judge, influenced by a regard for his own ease and quiet, acted thus, how much more may you trust that God will hear your prayers, and

that the great manifestation of His kingdom, in which He will redress the wrongs of His suffering servants, will take place in its proper time? "I say unto you that he will avenge them *speedily*: howbeit when the Son of man cometh shall he find faith *on the earth*?" or rather, *in the land* (ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς), *i.e.*, among the Jews, the coming here spoken of being the great judgment which He so often threatened to execute on the apostate theocratic nation.

The following therefore is the moral of the parable. If a judge who feared neither God nor man could be so moved by the importunities of a widow that at last he did her justice, how much more may the Holy God be relied on, in answer to the prayers of His Church, to avenge it on its persecutors? That vengeance He will not long delay.

The parable of the publican and the Pharisee is expressly stated to be addressed to legalists who trusted in their own righteousness, and set others at nought. Our Lord, at an earlier stage of His ministry, had repeatedly warned His hearers that the kingdom of God demanded of its subjects a holiness of a higher order than that of Pharisaic legalism. For the purpose of exposing its hollowness He uttered the parable we are now considering. In it He presents us with the picture of a self-righteous Pharisee and a repentant publican engaged in an act of worship in the temple. The Pharisee takes his stand by himself in a place apart. Under the guise of thanking God, because his holiness was superior to that of ordinary mortals, his worship becomes one continuous act of self-laudation. The publican, on the contrary, does not dare so much as to lift up his eyes to heaven, but beats his breast, crying, God be merciful to me the sinner.

Here again the moral is obvious. Not Pharisaic pride and self-righteousness, not its casuistic and hair-splitting morality, its ritualistic worship and ceremonial observances—in a word, its legalism—but childlike humility and deep repentance for sin are the qualifications necessary for enjoying the blessings of the kingdom of God. Whoever does not take his place in that kingdom with the humility of a

little child will never enjoy the blessings of its future glorious manifestation.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL.

This parable is also proved by its context to be a parable of the kingdom. It is called forth, as we have already seen, by one of our Lord's hearers tempting Him to take upon Himself functions which properly belonged to the civil magistrate. In reply, our Lord utterly disclaimed the idea that it was one of His functions, as king of the kingdom of God, to deal with such questions. He then utters the parable before us as a solemn warning against the sins of covetousness and ambition, in which all the numerous attempts which have been made to secularize Christianity have originated. The discourse, of which the parable is a part, concludes with the following exhortation :—" *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness* ; and all these things shall be added unto you." To this follows the warning, "Be ye always ready, for the Son of man cometh at an hour that ye think not." These two sentences therefore form its moral.

St. Luke has recorded one more parable, which was delivered at an earlier period of our Lord's ministry, viz. :—

#### THE PARABLE OF THE CREDITOR WHO HAD TWO DEBTORS.

This, like most of the parables recorded by the same Evangelist, is intended to set forth the kingdom of God in contrast to Pharisaic exclusiveness and self-righteousness. As it teaches precisely the same truths as those which we have already considered, we need not farther enter into it.

#### THE PARABLES OF THE TEN VIRGINS, THE TALENTS, AND THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS.

These parables form a portion of our Lord's great eschatological discourse, as recorded in St. Matthew's

Gospel, and must therefore be considered in close connection with it. The discourse is a reply to the following question put to our Lord by four of His disciples :—

“Tell us, when shall these things be (the things referred to being the destruction of the temple) ; and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the *end of the age* ?”

The question is thus reported by St. Mark and St. Luke :—

“Tell us, when shall these things be, and what shall be the sign when these things are about to be accomplished ?”

Assuming therefore that these Evangelists have correctly reported the substance of the question, and that St. Matthew reports the exact words, it would follow that our Lord's coming and “the end of the age” must have been identified in their minds with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple ; and consequently that the age to which the question refers is the Jewish age or dispensation, with which they must have associated the idea of our Lord's coming or parousia.

To this question therefore the discourse before us is a reply. Into its exposition it will be unnecessary for us to enter. It will be sufficient to observe that the obvious, and therefore natural meaning of the prophetic portions of the discourse is that it is an announcement of the events which would inaugurate the winding up of the Mosaic dispensation, and the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, through the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. That such was the purport of the discourse is in fact affirmed by our Lord Himself in the following words :—

“Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away until all these things be accomplished” (Matt. xxiv. 34). Nothing can be more distinct than the affirmation made in these words that the predicted events would all come to pass during the lifetime of some of the existing generation. Desperate have been the shifts to which commentators have had recourse, in deference to certain theories, to evaporate this their plain and obvious meaning ;

but if such interpretations are admissible, it will be easy to make our Lord's words mean anything we please. It should also be observed that the word here rendered "be accomplished" is not that which is rendered "fulfil" (*πληρῶ*) in the New Testament, (and which, as used by its authors to denote the realization of the prophetic predictions in Jesus Christ, points to a lower realization in the immediate subject to which the prediction referred, and to a more perfect one in him;) but *γίγνομαι*, which implies nothing whatever as to a future and more perfect realization.

Having returned a definite answer to the question of the disciples, our Lord proceeds to utter a solemn warning as to the duty of being prepared for His parousia, whenever it shall happen. We have already seen that this word is used by Him to denote either some special manifestation of His Providence in the government of the Church, or the actual presence of Himself in His human personality; and that whichever of these is the intended meaning, unless it is determined by the context, it can only be ascertained by the event itself. The uncertainty of its manifestation is proved by His own assertion that He did not know the day or the hour of His parousia; and that the knowledge of times and seasons formed no portion of the Christian revelation. It is in reference to the uncertainty of the time of His coming, and to the duty of being always prepared for it, whether it was a parousia in providence or in person, that our Lord uttered the three parables which we are now about to consider, and which He expressly designates as parables of the kingdom.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS.

The kingdom of heaven is like unto ten virgins, who having been invited to a marriage feast, took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. Of these, five were wise, and five were foolish. The five wise virgins took with them a supply of oil beyond that which was contained in their lamps; but the foolish ones neglected to take this

precaution. It so happened that the bridegroom failed to make his appearance at the expected time ; and while they were waiting for him, the virgins fell asleep. But at midnight they were aroused by a cry announcing his approach ; on which they proceed to trim their lamps, but the foolish virgins find theirs on the point of becoming extinguished. In their dismay they turn to the wise, and ask them for a supply of oil. These however had only provided sufficient for their own use ; and they advise the foolish ones to go and buy for themselves. Before however they had time to do this, the bridegroom arrived, and the wise virgins entered with him into the festal chamber ; and forthwith the doors were closed. After a time the foolish virgins presented themselves also ; but notwithstanding their entreaties, they were refused admission.

What then is the moral of the parable ? Our Lord Himself has given it. " Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour."

The virgins therefore and the kingdom of heaven resemble each other in this, that as in the case of the virgins the presence or the absence of vigilance and suitable preparation was the cause of their admission or exclusion from the marriage feast, the same causes will occasion the admission or the exclusion of the members of the kingdom of God from the enjoyment of its blessings, whenever the parousia of the bridegroom of the Church shall take place.

Various attempts have been made to assign a spiritual meaning to the imagery of this parable, even in its subordinate details. Its imagery, it should be observed, is simply drawn from the ordinary concomitants of a Jewish marriage at the time when it was uttered. Such meanings have been assigned to the lamps, to the oil, to the advice to purchase of the dealers, and in fact to every detail of the parable, as though they were intended to set forth important doctrinal truths, and truths moreover which can nowhere be found in our Lord's direct utterances. But in

applying this principle of interpretation to the advice given by the wise to the foolish virgins, it has been most conveniently forgotten that their asking admission to the feast after their return evidently implies that they had been successful in obtaining a supply of oil, although the spiritual meaning which is put upon this circumstance is founded on the assumption that it was impossible to purchase it. On the other hand it is equally absurd to deduce from this advice the utility of priestly intervention. The plain truth is that all such modes of interpreting parables render it necessary to infuse the truths into them by the aid of the imagination before it is possible to find them there.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

This parable closely resembles that of the pounds; the chief distinction being the substitution of the larger talent for the smaller mina, and the different percentage of profit made by the servants in their employment of the sums entrusted to them. These points however make no essential difference in the meaning; and the moral conveyed by them is the same, viz., the duty which is incumbent on the members of the kingdom of heaven of making a right use of the various gifts with which they have been entrusted; and the greatness of their responsibility for so doing. It will be unnecessary therefore to consider it further.

#### THE PARABLE OF THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS.

This parable sets forth the great truth of the separation of the evil from the good in the kingdom of God, prior to its entering on its perfect and glorified state. The Son of man—i.e., the King Messiah—is here depicted as seated on the throne of His glory, surrounded by the angels of His might as His ministering servants. Before Him are assembled *all the nations* (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) whom He separates one from another, as a shepherd divides his



sheep from the goats. The sheep He places on His right hand, and the goats on His left. "Come," He says to the former, "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink," &c. The righteous, in surprise at this gracious declaration, ask Him when they had thus seen Him in distress and relieved His wants. The King answers: "Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even the least of them, ye did it unto me." He then addresses those on His left hand: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels." For this sentence He also assigns the reason—neglect of Him in His distress. These also reply that they had never thus seen and neglected Him. But He answers, that in neglecting the least of His brethren, they had neglected Him. "And these shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The two first of these parables are clearly intended to set forth the principles on which the King of the kingdom of heaven will execute judgment on those who have enjoyed its privileges, before it enters on its perfected condition. Like as the wise virgins were admitted to the marriage feast because they had supplied themselves with the requisite oil to keep their lamps burning, and the foolish ones were excluded because they had neglected to do this, so shall it be in the glorious manifestation of the kingdom of God. What then is denoted by the symbol of the lighted lamp? It is one of no doubtful interpretation in the New Testament. It means holiness in active operation. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. v. 16). "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." Holiness therefore, or the want of it, will be that which will admit or exclude professors from the enjoyments and the employ-

ments of the perfected kingdom of God. In the parable of the talents it is no less clearly set forth that those who have enjoyed the privileges of the kingdom of God in the present dispensation will be judged according to the use which they have made of the gifts with which they have been entrusted.

What then is the special point intended to be set forth by the parable of the sheep and the goats? Obviously that the King when He comes in His glory will pronounce sentence on those whom He judges, according to their use or abuse of the opportunities which they have had of doing good to others ; and that He will view such acts in the same light as if they were done to, or withheld from Himself. But who are "*all the nations*," which are represented as assembled before Him? In nearly every other place where it occurs in the New Testament (and its occurrence is frequent), the expression means the Gentile nations who have not enjoyed the benefit of a revelation, in contradistinction to the Church which has enjoyed that privilege. The parable is therefore intended to set forth the principles on which they will be judged. The King will accept those who have performed acts of kindness to others, as if they had been performed to Himself; and will call on them to enter on the possession of the kingdom which has been prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Surely this is a veritable Gospel of good news with which to bring our Lord's ministry to a conclusion; fully corresponding with the proclamation of its gracious character which He made in the synagogue of Nazareth at its commencement, and unspeakably different from that which has too often been published in His name, consigning virtuous heathen and even unbaptized infants to an everlasting hell.

The chief characteristics of the kingdom of heaven as set forth both in our Lord's direct, and in His parabolic teaching, may be thus briefly enumerated:—

1. The kingdom of heaven is the Church of Jesus Christ,

from the time of its first erection as a visible community, until it has fully realized the purposes of its institution.

2. It was intended by its Founder to pass through successive stages of development and growth, both as a community and in its individual members.

3. The most remarkable of these stages are designated manifestations, or "comings" of the kingdom.

4. It was designed to form a mixed society of imperfect men during the period of its gradual development.

5. At a later period of its history, a separation is to be effected between its good and its evil members, when the holy will be put in exclusive possession of it.

6. The only lawful means by which its boundaries can be extended is persuasion.

7. Its foundation is conviction of truth ; to which its King came to bear witness.

8. It has been founded exclusively for religious and moral ends ; and moral means constitute the sole instrumentality by which it is intended to exert an influence on mankind.

9. It utterly repudiates the use of force.

10. Its coming, growth, and various developments are not spasmodic, or attended with outward display, but continuous and gradual, analogous to the operations of God in nature.

11. It is intended to embrace in one community every race and condition of mankind on terms of equality in respect of privilege ; the only distinction which it recognizes being that of holiness in its members.

12. One of the great purposes sought to be realized by its institution is to bring all men into voluntary subjection to its King.

13. Another is the education of its members in holiness.

14. Another is by a secret operation to leaven the entire mass of humanity with its principles.

15. As all kingdoms and states require as the preconditions of their existence certain preconditions in the minds of those who compose them, so the kingdom of

heaven requires certain moral and spiritual preconditions to enable men to become members of it, and certain others to make them acceptable members.

16. The state of moral and spiritual feeling which will render men worthy members of it, is the opposite of Pharisaic exclusiveness, self-righteousness, ritualism, pride, legalism, and casuistic morality.

17. It is a community which readily admits even the most degraded of mankind, when truly penitent; in whose recovery to holiness its King takes a special interest.

18. Membership in it confers great privileges, but at the same time great responsibilities; and for the right use of these privileges its members will be called to a solemn account hereafter.

19. The common bond of union between its members is the person of its King; and it differs from every existing kingdom or institution, in being a kingdom purely spiritual and moral.

20. Of this kingdom Jesus Christ claims to be the King.

## CHAPTER XIV.

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### THE NEW COVENANT—ITS FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES.

RESPECTING the new covenant, or the fundamental principles of the legislation of the kingdom of God, the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes as follows :—

“But now hath he (*i.e.*, Jesus, as the High Priest of the Christian dispensation) obtained a ministry the more excellent, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been found for a second. For finding fault with them, he saith : Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah ; not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of Egypt ; for they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them ; and I will be to them a God ; and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his fellow citizen, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord ; for all shall know me from the least to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to

their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more. In that he saith, 'A new covenant,' he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old, and waxeth aged, is nigh unto vanishing away" (Heb. viii. 6-13).

Such is the view which this writer entertained of the contrast between the legislation of the Old Testament dispensation and the New. The same idea is more briefly expressed by St. Paul, as follows :

"Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men : being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God ; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh. And such confidence have we through Christ to God-ward. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to account any thing as from ourselves ; but our sufficiency is from God ; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant ; not of the letter, but of the spirit : for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life " (2 Cor. iii. 2-6).

Both writers are obviously speaking of the Church during the present dispensation ; not that it has actually realized the fulness of the prophetic delineation, but it is descriptive of the principles on which the legislation of the kingdom of God is founded ; being a description of what it actually is in incipency, and what it is ultimately destined to realize, when the leaven of its influences shall have penetrated humanity. From these two passages we may draw the following conclusions respecting the nature of its legislation :—

1. Its principles are essentially different from those of the old theocracy : the leading characteristic of the one being that it consisted of a body of special enactments, reduced to the form of a written code ; while that of the other is the announcement of the fundamental principles of moral obligation to be engraven on, and to energize in the heart.

2. Its purpose is the substitution of the spirit of obedience for the letter ; the inward reality for the outward form ; and

the creation of a state of mind in which the fundamental principles of duty and obligation are so deeply engraven on the spiritual being of the individual, that instead of regulating his conduct by rules and enactments, he becomes capable of being a law unto himself.

3. It effects a change in the centre of moral obligation ; from obligation as measured by rule and positive enactment to obligation as an act of voluntary self-surrender under the promptings of love ; in other words, a substitution of a living affection, which knows no limit, for that feeling of limited obligation which is involved in acting on the principles of legalized morality.

4. In the creation of a spiritual power, which is adequate to render the moral law an actuality in practice, and is incapable of being supplied by a mere system of legalized morality ; such, for instance, as is spoken of by the Apostle when he says, "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death."

This difference between the legislation of the old and the new covenant is abundantly shown in almost every line of our Lord's teaching ; but more especially in the Sermon on the Mount. Whether this is to be taken as a single discourse, or consisting of several shorter ones united by St. Matthew in his Gospel, is immaterial to our purpose ; for it is evident that the Evangelist regarded it as a summary of the fundamental principles of the legislation of the kingdom of God. As we have already referred to this subject, a few observations only will be necessary here.

It begins by setting before us in a striking point of view the contrast between the legislation of the new and the old covenants. The moral law of the old dispensation is founded on the law of the ten commandments, that is, on eight negative and two positive precepts ; one of the latter, though founded on an eternal principle, being in strict truth a ceremonial ordinance. On the other hand, the King of the kingdom of God commences His legislation by solemnly pronouncing His blessing on eight positive states of mind,

viz., humility, mourning (for sin), meekness, earnest desire for righteousness, mercifulness, purity of heart, the desire to promote peace, and that state of mind which is ready to suffer for righteousness sake. These differ wholly from legal precepts even in a positive form, being as many great moral principles intended to energize in the heart, and thereby to regulate the life.

Eight of the ten commandments are simply negative precepts, each forbidding a single sin. The sin thus forbidden, it is true, is the chief one of a class, the indulgence of any one of which incurs the danger of leading to the commission of the sin thus specially forbidden: but respecting these subordinate sins these commandments are silent. Seven also of the eight refer only to outward acts, and leave the inward principle (*i.e.*, the desire) which generates them unnoticed; but the eighth goes beyond this, and forbids the harbouring of sinful desires in the mind. So complete however is the silence of the other seven on this point that St. Paul, who had in his own experience fathomed the depths of legalism, assures us that as far as the law was concerned he should not have known the secret harbouring of evil desires to be sinful except the law had said "Thou shalt not covet."

Further: not one of these eight commandments enjoins a positive duty. The obligation to perform such duties, and the fact that each commandment forbids the entire class of sins to which it belongs, can only be got out of them by a course of inferential reasoning. Thus it has been often urged that the forbidding the chief sin of a class implies the condemnation of all the subordinate sins of the same class; and that the forbidding of a sin is equivalent to the enjoining the discharge of the opposite duty. But this is an inference which is far from being obvious to the ordinary mind. On the contrary, those to whom the ten commandments were addressed would naturally conclude that if they worshipped God alone, made no graven image or symbolical representation of Him, used His name reverently, observed



the Sabbath, honoured their parents, did not commit murder, adultery, theft or perjury, and restrained covetous desires for other men's property, they had done all that the law required of them. Thus it would have required a difficult process of reasoning on their part to get out of the bare precept, "Thou shalt not kill," the duty of universal love; or out of the precept, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," the duty of the highest purity of thought and action; from "Thou shalt not steal," the duty of doing to others as we would they should do unto us; or out of the negative precepts of the first three commandments, the duty of loving God with all the heart, mind, soul and strength; or out of the command to honour parents, the duty of obedience to civil government. Cultivated minds might have deduced such inferences through an elaborate course of reasonings, but ordinary men would draw the conclusion that if they realized these commandments in their letter, they fulfilled all that the law required. The truth is that, viewing these commandments in their strictly legal aspect, these duties must first be put into them before they can be found in them. The answer of the young ruler to our Lord, when He enumerated the last six as necessary for inheriting eternal life, was from a strictly legal point of view a not unnatural one: "All these have I kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?"

Consequently our Lord announces that while He came to destroy neither the law nor the prophets, yet, as legislator of the kingdom of God, He came to supplement the imperfections of their teaching by converting legal enactments suggestive of bare obedience to the letter into eternal principles of moral truth. He therefore opens his discourse by proclaiming in place of the eight negative precepts of the decalogue which formed the foundation of the Mosaic moral legislation eight positive states of mind as constituting the fundamental premisses of the moral law of the new dispensation. These were to be the salt with which his disciples were gradually to salt the world by exhibiting

them as living principles regulating their lives. He then proceeds to metamorphose the old law into the law of the new covenant, not making use of the course of reasoning above referred to, but on his own sole authority. The precept, "Thou shalt not kill," is to be changed into a great principle, not only declaring it a duty to injure no one by word, deed, or thought, but to go far beyond this, and to realize it in a law of universal love which is to regulate the conduct of the members of the kingdom of God to one another and to the world. Their aim is to be perfect as their Father, who is in heaven, is perfect, by imitating Him who causes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and who sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

In a similar manner the precept, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," becomes in the legislation of the kingdom of heaven an injunction to maintain the highest purity in thought and act : the command not to commit perjury, an injunction to consider one's word as binding as an oath, and to practice alike the duty of truth-speaking and of truth-acting. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," which, although not one of the ten commandments, is one of the Mosaic precepts, is replaced by one enjoining the duty of doing to others as we would wish to be done by ; and that of loving one's neighbour and hating one's enemy, by the duty of universal love ; and even of praying for our bitterest foes.

Having given these illustrations of the principles of His legislation, the Divine Speaker proceeds to lay down that no lower moral principle can be received as the realization of them than that state of heart which consists in the feeling of sonship to our Father who is in heaven ; and the recognition of the truth that duty must not be measured by the law of selfishness which prompts us to render no more than is required by the letter of the legal enactment, but to adopt the higher principle of doing all that we can, and of longing even to do more. Thus our Lord lays down as the fundamental law of the kingdom of God :—

“If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” He then proceeds to illustrate the mode in which these precepts are to be applied to details; the underlying principle being the relative unimportance of the outward, and the all-importance of the inward reality. Thus He pronounces outward acts of righteousness and ostentatious almsgiving to be worthless. In his kingdom, almsgiving, and all similar acts are to be done in secret, as far as is consistent with the principle just laid down of letting our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven; but with this exception they are, as far as possible, to be known only “to him who seeth in secret.” Similarly, when a man prays, he is to avoid publicity by retiring into his chamber, to be alone with God. When a man fasts, all the external signs of fasting, such as the rending one’s clothes, wearing sackcloth and disfiguring one’s face, are to be laid aside; and the usual appearance of cheerfulness is as far as possible to be maintained. As for anxiety about food and raiment, the one thing, says the Divine Speaker, which is alone worthy of anxiety is the kingdom of God and the righteousness suitable thereto; and where this exists, its members may rest in the assurance that the God of providence, who is also their heavenly Father, will provide the rest. They are therefore to lay their wants before Him in prayer, and trust Him who provides for the fowls of the air, and who decks the lilies with beauty, that He will provide for them also; under the assurance that man is much better than they, and therefore more worthy of his maker’s care. In a word, everything which savours of unreality and hypocrisy (for all unreality is hypocrisy) is utterly repudiated in the kingdom of God, in which each man’s conduct is to be regulated by the one great principle which embraces in the length and breadth of its expansiveness the entire range

of human action: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them, for this is the law and the prophets."

The announcement that this broad principle is to be the one which is to regulate the conduct of one towards another in the kingdom of God, proves that certain utterances in this discourse which, if taken in their letter, would be "hard sayings," were not intended by the Divine speaker to be interpreted as literal rules or laws, but as modes of enforcing a great principle by means of those antithetical forms of contrast which are so common among Orientals, and which abound in the language of the Old Testament. Of this mode of our Lord's teaching, the following passage is a striking example:

"I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil, but whosoever smiteth thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh of thee; and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away" (Matt. v. 39-44).

There can be no doubt that these precepts, if viewed as commands to be acted on in the letter, would be subversive of society; but Orientals would be in no danger of misunderstanding this kind of teaching. Yet men of a more prosaic temperament have interpreted them as laws intended to be regulative of the conduct of Christian men towards others in their most literal sense. Thus interpreted, they would unquestionably affirm that evil is under no circumstances to be resisted; when a man gets a legal decision against him, whether it be right or wrong, he is to offer the prosecutor something valuable in addition; when a public officer impresses the services of a private man, without paying him for his labour—a well known exercise of absolute power in Oriental countries—he is to give him double of that which is demanded of him; and finally, that it is the duty of a Christian to give away his property to every one who chooses to ask it of him; and that too, without inquiring

whether he is an idler, a rogue, or a deserving character. Such is undoubtedly the literal meaning of these utterances—a meaning so staggering as to prove beyond all question that it could not have been the one intended by the Divine Speaker. Our Lord himself has however sufficiently guarded against such a mis-application of his injunctions by affirming that they are summed up in the one great universal principle, “*Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them,*” and are therefore to be regarded as illustrations of it in the hyperbolical style of Oriental teaching.

I am aware that it has been attempted to save the literal interpretation of these and similar precepts by assuming that they are not intended to regulate our conduct during the present state of things, but to be applicable only to the perfect state of the future kingdom of God. To this however there is the very obvious answer that the forms of evil referred to will no longer exist in that perfect kingdom. Thus: the precept, “to resist not him that is evil,” or “to turn the cheek to the smiter,” will be useless, for evil will be purged out of it, and the smiter will not be found there. These precepts must therefore have been intended to be applicable to that condition of the kingdom of God in which the evil is still mingled with the good. Our Lord however, by the one great utterance above referred to, the practical observance of which He declares to be the realization of all these special and subordinate sayings, shows that their literal interpretation as so many legal precepts is wholly foreign to the object of this great discourse, which is to make each individual conscience a law unto itself. The remainder of the Sermon on the Mount is simply an expansion of the same principles. It will therefore be only necessary to examine a few of our Lord’s most remarkable utterances which are elsewhere recorded.

I have already drawn attention to His repeated reference to the great prophetic declaration, “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,” as embodying one of the fundamental principles

of His teaching, not only in opposition to the current ceremonialism of the day, but as distinguished from that of the Old Testament dispensation. It forms an emphatic declaration of the relative worthlessness of the outward and the ritual as contrasted with the inward and the spiritual, even when the former could claim the sanction of a Divine institution.

The same principle is again and again affirmed in His answers to the oft-repeated objections of the Pharisees against the non-observance of those numerous ceremonies and purifications which encompassed the life of the ordinary Jew. These objections were for the most part urged against the disciples ; but on one occasion the objectors ventured to express their wonder at the conduct of the Master in not having complied with the usual ceremonial practice of washing his hands before sitting down to meat. From this fact we learn that the practices which had been adopted by the disciples were really the usual practice of our Lord. Both His conduct and His teaching therefore were studiously designed to impress on His contemporaries the great truth that outward ritual and ceremonial are in themselves incapable of producing moral and spiritual results, either good or bad, although when relied on for the production of such results the effects are injurious and morally degrading. From this the inference is inevitable that the ceremonial and ritual have a place in the kingdom of God, not as being intrinsically valuable, but so far only as they are conducive to order, decorum and edification ; and, even in the last-mentioned case, only when they directly point to the spiritual and the moral.

The same inference follows from our Lord's repeated performance of cures on the Sabbath day, and from His discourses in vindication of His conduct in so doing. The frequency with which He performed cures on this day proves that He must have purposely selected it for doing such acts of mercy with the design of counteracting the prevalent ideas respecting the nature of the Sabbath rest. In de-

fending His conduct and that of His disciples in respect of their disregard of the commonly accepted Sabbatical regulations, our Lord formulated one great principle. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Wherefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

This utterance involves a principle applicable to the circumstances of the Church throughout all time, and which may be thus briefly expressed :—The observance of particular days and seasons, and of every ordinance of a similar character, is not a matter of rigid law in the kingdom of God, but has a place therein only as far as they are conducive to the good of man; and—as the kingdom of God deals with the conscience alone—only so far as they are conducive to the good of the individual and to the general order. They are in fact, like the Sabbath, made for man and not man for them.

I have already referred to the discourse recorded in the 23rd chapter of St. Matthew, in which our Lord pronounces every form of unreality to be excommunicate from His kingdom; I say unreality, for unreality in religion is hypocrisy. It will therefore be sufficient to enumerate the states of mind thus denounced.

1. The practice of exhorting others to do what we habitually fail to exhibit in our own conduct.

2. The making ostentatious displays of religion by peculiarities in dress.

3. The love of precedence, and the eager seeking after it.

4. The narrowness of mind which claims the kingdom of God as the exclusive inheritance of our own sect or party; and which throws obstacles in the way of others entering it.

5. The zeal for proselytism which is unaccompanied with zeal to promote the holiness of the convert.

6. The spirit of religious and moral hair-splitting, which explains away great duties by the aid of casuistical dis-

tinctions; and which, while it attaches great importance to lesser duties, lives in habitual neglect of great ones.

7. Zeal for the externals of religion, while the inward man remains unsanctified and impure.

8. The spirit which proclaims its superiority to the sins and errors of former generations, yet, when the greater degree of light which it enjoys is taken into account, perpetrates far greater crimes, whereby those who thus act bear witness against themselves that they are the genuine descendants of their wicked fathers.

These and all kindred sins our Lord most solemnly denounced. We may therefore draw the conclusion that the opposite principles are fundamental to the legislation of the kingdom of heaven. The great declaration in which He proclaims that spiritual worship is the only acceptable worship in the kingdom of God; and that where this exists, all worship, without distinction of place or form is alike acceptable to Him, has been already noticed. It will therefore be unnecessary to allude further to it here, except to draw attention to the fact that His teaching affirms in the strongest manner that under the new covenant the temple of God is not a material building made with hands, but the pure and the holy heart; and that from the pure and the holy heart acceptable worship may be rendered in every place, and in every form, without the intervention of any priest but one. "The hour cometh," says our Lord, "and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for such does the Father seek to be his worshippers." These words sound the death-knell of the superior acceptability of every form of local worship; and proclaim the great truth that all worship which is offered in spirit and truth to the Father in heaven is alike acceptable to Him, whether offered in the most gorgeous temple or in the catacomb, in the cottage or under the open canopy of heaven, in any attitude, or in any form of words. Henceforth in the kingdom of God the only real temple of that God who is a Spirit, is the holy



heart, in which He will abide for ever; the acceptable attitude in worship is humility of spirit; the most acceptable language of prayer is the deep desire of the heart; and the only acceptable sacrifice is the offering of a man's entire self to God.

Let us now briefly consider the views propounded by St. Paul on these subjects. Their importance is great, because he himself informs us that he did not derive his knowledge of Christianity from any human source of information, but from direct revelation from Jesus Christ. While as a Jew he had been the most rigid of legalists, as an Apostle he was the most determined opponent of the entire system. This makes his testimony pre-eminently valuable; for he speaks not from theory, but from an experimental acquaintance both with legalism and with grace.

To the student of the Apostle's writings, the question is an important one—What constituted the law of which he so often speaks? To this question there can be only one answer; that, except where the context renders it clear that he is speaking of the law of conscience, it is the entire system of the Mosaic legislation; not the moral or the ceremonial alone, but the two combined. To this may perhaps be added, as coming within his view, that vast pile of casuistic refinements which had been heaped upon it by the various Jewish Schools, and which must have so completely overlaid the daily course of life that it could hardly for a moment have passed out of the thoughts of any one who made a sincere attempt to fulfil its obligations. The two united had undoubtedly formed the system of legalism which St. Paul in his days of earnest Judaism had attempted to realize; but the general tone of his Epistles proves that when, after his conversion, he speaks of the law and of legal obligations, he refers almost exclusively to the Mosaic code, and not to the Rabbinical additions to it. This is the sense in which the word "Law" is used by him in that remarkable utterance addressed to the Galatians:

“I, Paul, say unto you, If ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing. Yea, again I testify to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. v. 2-4).

Law then, as contemplated by a legalist, consists of a class of definite duties carefully elaborated in systematic form, to which he is bound under penalties to yield obedience to the letter. These may be either moral or ceremonial; and in the case of the Jew, they included both. The complete realization of these duties constituted the fulfilment of the law; and the man who in his observance of them realized the letter of the commandment, did all that the law required of him. Whatever therefore he performed, or thought that he could perform, in excess of this, constituted a work of meritorious righteousness. Those however who only attained to the strict measure of legal obligation, were said to be justified by the law; and as far as it attached a reward to such obedience, the reward became a matter not of grace, but of debt. Both sides to the contract had in such a case only observed the terms of their bargain, which was in fact so much obedience for so much pay.

In studying the Apostle's writings therefore, we cannot be too careful to observe that the legal obedience to which he so frequently refers, means obedience according to a fixed rule and measured by some external standard. It is in fact the definite fulfilment of a contract between two parties, on the performance of which all further obligation ceases. But Judaism, even when viewed in its strictly legal aspect, embraced so vast a range of duties as to render a literal fulfilment of its requirements impossible, human nature being as it is. Hence the legalist, unless he took a very imperfect view of the law's demands, felt that after all his struggles he had been attempting to carry a burden which was too heavy for him to bear; and con-

sequently, if justification was only possible through strict obedience to the letter of the legal code, he was still under the law's condemnation.

Nor was this all; for the question could not help recurring to him, What are the actions which fall, and what are those that do not fall under the letter of legal obligations? The attempt to answer such a question must inevitably beget a vast system of casuistic morality, laying down a multitude of subtle distinctions between the importance of one duty and another. Legalism thus becomes a system of refinements harassing to the conscience, and bringing it into slavery to the letter. But still worse; when desire runs counter to law, the existence of a law forbidding its gratification adds, in no inconsiderable number of mankind, intensity to the wish to gratify it. This was the case with St. Paul, who thus describes his own experience:

"Sin finding occasion, wrought in me through the commandment all manner of coveting; for apart from the law sin is dead. And I was alive apart from the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was unto life, I found to be unto death; for sin, finding occasion through the commandment, beguiled me; and through it slew me" (Rom. vii. 8-11).

The Apostle's meaning in these words may be thus expressed in more simple language:—The legalist, with no more powerful motive to obedience than that furnished by the law, finds a positive enactment, forbidding the gratification of certain desires, a hindrance rather than a help to the discharge of duty. Hence, instead of aiding him in his efforts, the law aggravates his difficulties. It kindles the desire without supplying him with a motive sufficiently powerful to overcome it. Further, legalism, in attempting to exhibit moral obligation in the form of positive enactment, tends only to the multiplication of minute and subordinate duties; and as the Mosaic code added to these a vast range of ceremonial observances, the whole realized

the Apostle's words "the law entered secretly that sin might abound;" the immense multiplication of duties rendering it a burden too heavy to be borne. Further, conscience will persist in speaking of higher principles of duty than mere legal rules. It is therefore constantly whispering in the ear of the legalist the word "Imperfection," after his utmost struggles to fulfil the requirements of law.

Let us endeavour to realize how a legalist, such as St. Paul was before his conversion, must have contemplated the Mosaic law as a standard of obligation. It would have been possible, without much difficulty, to exhibit the ceremonial portion of it in a code of rules, which, however burdensome, might admit of a literal performance. But its moral code, viewed as a whole, was too comprehensive to be reduced to a formal system which should be capable of that mechanical application to daily life which legalism requires, and which would embrace the entire range of its obligations. Yet widely embracing as it was, a zealous legalist must have felt the necessity of making a constant succession of efforts to realize it in its minutest details, in order that he might come up to the exact measure of its requirements ; and consequently he must have experienced repeated failures in the attempt. Nor was this his only source of uneasiness. Conscience, from its nature, must ever be a distressing monitor to a legalist, for it persists in proclaiming something higher and nobler than the most comprehensive of legal obligations ; and for the failure to live up to which it never ceases to upbraid him. Man's moral nature, in fact, was never intended by its Author to be the slave of a set of legal rules ; and conscience, which really is the Author of that nature speaking in man, and proclaiming to him the moral law, declares that while it is his duty to be constantly paying, yet he is still in debt ; and that from the obligation to be ever doing more and more, no amount of payment can discharge him. The conscience of the legalist therefore never gives him rest, unless "the light which is in him has become

darkness," notwithstanding all his efforts to realize his highest ideal.

Such was Paul as a legalist. Though he tells us that in the common acceptation of the words he had "lived in all good conscience towards God," yet his writings prove that during this period he underwent the bitterest struggles in aiming to realize his ideal of duty. Of the Apostle's experiences on this subject, his seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans constitutes a record of undying interest; and the eighth a no less striking memorial of the mode of his emancipation from the bondage of legalism into the glorious liberty of the children of God; his doctrine of justification by faith being the exact counterpart of justification by legal observances. With Paul the Christian, as distinct from Paul the legalist, obedience rendered in faith is the direct antithesis to obedience rendered by those motives which legalism is able to supply, prompting to the voluntary offering of self, and giving its all, instead of the effort to fulfil a mere legal obligation. This in his view constituted the one all-embracing rule of moral duty in the kingdom of God.

I will now set before the reader a few of the Apostle's chief utterances on this subject, as explanatory of the mode in which he understood the teaching of his Master.

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were through the law, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were holden, so that we may serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of the letter" (Rom. vii. 4-6).

These words form the introduction to that portion of the chapter in which the Apostle details his experience as a legalist. Its affirmations are sufficiently explicit.

1. In Christ, Christians are become dead to the law, *i.e.*, not dead to a sense of duty and moral obligation, but to law, contemplated as a system of legalism.

2. While resting on the only motives which legalism can supply, man's sinful passions are so powerful that they are capable of bringing forth nothing but fruit unto death.

3. When freed from the spirit of legalism and united to Christ, we are capable of bringing forth fruit unto God; serving in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.

The following passage is a striking portraiture of his experiences when acting only on those motives which legalism could suggest:—

“For that which I do I know not; for not what I would, that do I practise; but what I hate, that I do. But if what I would not, that I do, I consent unto the law that it is good. So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but to do that which is good is not. For the good which I would, I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I practise. But if what I would not, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then the law, that to me, who would do good, evil is present. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom. vii. 15-23).

This picture of the Apostle's struggles is so terribly vivid, that a brief commentary on it will be all that is necessary. His I, or ego, *i.e.*, his personality, which includes the higher faculties of man's moral nature, acquiesced in the law of God, and earnestly desired to realize its requirements. But those portions of his being which were animal and earthly, hurried him violently in an opposite direction, and proved too strong for his higher

and better aspirations. To overcome the former, legal sanctions supplied him with no adequate motive power. Consequently, notwithstanding all his struggles, he found himself subject to the dominion of evil, and utterly unable to realize the requirements of that law which his conscience pronounced to be reasonable and good. Hence his bitter exclamation, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Such was the condition of Paul the legalist. As such, he could find no power to help. But widely different is that of Paul the Apostle:—

"I thank God," says he, "through Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the ordinance (margin, *requirement*) of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. vii. 25; viii. 2-4).

Not to quote more of this remarkable description of the triumph of faith over legalism than is absolutely necessary, I will only cite the following passage as illustrative of our position :

"So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh; for if ye live after the flesh, ye must die: but if by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 12-27).

About the meaning of these passages there can be no mistake. Legalism has no place in the legislation of the

kingdom of God. Its sanctions are utterly weak, as motives to obedience; and consequently are powerless to enable a man to realize that righteousness which even the law requires; still more so must they be to enable him to fulfil the demands of the higher law of conscience. But there is a power, which is centred in the person of the King of the kingdom of God, which more than supplies this deficiency. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" sets the believer free from this law of sin and death; for what the law with all the motives which it was able to suggest, could not effect in consequence of the strength of man's animal and earthly propensities, the motives set before us in the person of Jesus Christ enable us to accomplish; so that the requirement of the law becomes capable of being realized in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. In the kingdom of God the service rendered is no longer that of slaves (bondage again to fear), nor even that of hired servants (*i.e.*, so much payment for so much work), but of sons, who feel themselves to be heirs of all its blessings. In it, wide principles of obligation take the place of narrow legal rules; the service of freedom, that of the service of bondage; voluntary self-surrender, offering its all, that of a service rendered in conformity with a definite standard of rule and measure. "Ye have received," says the Apostle, "the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." How striking is the contrast here presented between Paul the son of God and fellow heir with Christ, and Paul the legalist exclaiming, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

To the same effect is the following passage in which the Apostle is arguing that his doctrine of justification by faith is not a doctrine of licentiousness :

"For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law, but under grace? God forbid" (Rom. vi. 14, 15).



Still more strongly is the same truth set forth in his remonstrance addressed to St. Peter, on the occasion of his weak compliance with the party of the legalists.

“For I, through the law (margin, through law) died unto the law (law), that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ, yet I live; yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought” (Gal. ii. 19-21).

The Greek of this last passage leaves it uncertain whether the law spoken of is the Jewish law, or law generally, as in the margin of the translation. However this may be, it will not affect our argument; for the affirmation is express that the motives which legalism can suggest are inadequate not only to render possible the fulfilment of the moral law of conscience, but even of its own rules and ordinances. Hence the Apostle affirms that through the attempt to live by law he had become dead to law, in order that he might live to God. Under the deepest conviction of its impotence as a principle of holiness, he had become, as it were, crucified with Christ; but he still lived; yet not his old legal self, but Christ lived in him; and the life which he now lived was lived not by legal motives, but by faith in him who had loved him and given himself for him, *i.e.*, by the offering of love to love.

But the Apostle was aware that legalists would object that in making the affirmation that Christians are not under law, but under grace, he was destroying the principles of moral obligation. Such an insinuation however he rejects with indignation, as being founded on a total misconception of his position; for instead of opening the flood gates to sin, it forms the very reason why sin should no longer reign within us; and supplies us with a motive power which is adequate to enable us to break its yoke. Why, says he,

did I renounce legalism as a motive? Not that I might live to sin, but that I might live to God. But how did this renunciation enable me to live to God? With Christ, and under a sense of his love, I became dead to those lusts which render legal obligations powerless. Christ's love to me is now both my only rule of duty, demanding my all, and at the same time the mighty spiritual power which renders the performance of duty possible. Do we then make the law of none effect through faith? God forbid. Nay, we establish the law.

In a passage in the Epistle to the Philippians, St. Paul makes the following remarkable declaration. Having cautioned his converts against the seductions of Jewish legalists in such words as "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision," and having pointed out that if any one could boast in legalism, he could do so beyond most, both as a Jew of the purest blood and as a rigid observer of legal righteousness according to the most approved principles of the Pharisaic School, he thus writes:—

"Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and I do count them but dung, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law; but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect; but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forward to the things that are before, I

press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 7-14).

This passage presents us with a contrast between Paul the legalist and Paul the Apostle, contemplated from a different point of view from that which is set before us in the Epistle to the Romans. He is here exhorting the Philippians to take warning from his own experience against the seductions of Judaizers. Such men, he says, must be very self-confident in seeking justification by an attempt to realize legal righteousness, if they expected that their success would be greater than his own; for he had started with the greatest advantages of outward privilege in his favour, and strained to the utmost his efforts in making the attempt; yet so complete was his failure, that the things which he had once accounted his highest gain, he now regarded as mere dung and refuse, that he might gain Christ; and instead of a mere legal righteousness might attain to a righteousness which is of God by faith; a righteousness sustained not by legal motives, but by a knowledge of Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings.

The Apostle proceeds to describe himself as earnestly labouring to attain to this righteousness, and as having already partially succeeded in his efforts. Was then this a righteousness of imputation, or a righteousness of personal holiness? It could not be the former; for an imputed righteousness is incapable of partial attainment. Yet he writes, "Not that I have already obtained, or am already perfect; but I press on, if so be I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended by Christ Jesus." Such language affirms that partial attainment of the end in view was with him a present fact. He then proceeds to affirm that its perfect attainment was the object to which all his efforts as a Christian were now directed. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forward to the things that are before, I press on toward

the goal of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." What then was this prize? Complete personal righteousness, the crown of which the Apostle was persuaded that the Lord, the righteous judge, would bestow on him on the great day of His personal manifestation.

But what was "the resurrection from the dead," unto which the Apostle strove by every means to attain? This must denote a spiritual, and not a corporeal resurrection; for it would have been superfluous to inform the Philippians of the obvious fact that he had not yet attained to the latter. Consequently the resurrection at which he aimed, and which he had partially succeeded in obtaining, was the appropriation to himself of that spiritual power which resided in the risen Christ, and which alone could liberate him finally and for ever from the law of sin and death.

Such then is the contrast which the Apostle intended to set forth before his Philippian converts, between Paul the legalist and Paul the Christian. As a legalist he had relied on his circumcision, on his descent from Abraham, on the strictness of his observance of the legal rites, on his zealous opposition to every heretical deviation from the traditions of his fathers, and on the outward blamelessness of his observance of the letter of the moral law. Paul the Christian counted all this as worthless in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. He now renounced every form of righteousness which attempted to measure moral obligation by a legal standard. His sole and earnest aim was to know Christ as a motive power which would enable him to attain to the righteousness of God. As a legalist he was ever looking backwards on the attainments of the past; but never with satisfaction: as a Christian he had learned habitually to forget the past and to look forward to the conquests of the future. As a legalist he measured duties by the letter, by rule, and by rigid enactment; as a Christian, under the influence of the law of the Spirit of Life he recognized no limit to his obligations, but the attainment of the measure of the stature

of the fulness of Christ. As a legalist he viewed the literal performance of the law's enactments as a full discharge of the law's demands—to attain this was perfection. I am never perfect, says Paul the Christian; with me it is ever onward, onward, onward; as fast as duties are discharged, ever increasing obligations arise. All I long for is to be able to do more and more.

Such is the Pauline view of Christianity, as revealed to him by Jesus Christ.

The attainment to this standard of spiritual power, of duty and of obligation, is the end which the legislation of the kingdom of heaven aims at realizing. It refuses to recognize any inferior rule. "Let us therefore," says the Apostle, "as many as be perfect be thus minded." To these he adds the following remarkable words:—

"And if in anything ye be otherwise minded, even this shall God reveal unto you; only whereunto ye have already attained, by the same rule let us walk."

How could a Christian be otherwise minded? The Apostle was fully conscious that the principles of legalism, so natural to man, still retained a strong hold on the Jewish section of the Church. Therefore he expresses his confidence that God would so enlighten them in due season as to enable them to perceive that that which he had described was the only standard of obligation which the laws of the kingdom of heaven could recognize. Still, imperfect Christians as were these otherwise minded members of the Church, yet their union with Christ and their acceptance of His teaching as their rule of duty was a pledge that they recognized in Christianity higher principles of obligation than such as could be formulated in mere legal rules. Let us therefore, says the Apostle—numbering himself with his weaker brethren—be careful to walk by that higher standard to which we have attained, and not fall back on the legalism of the Jewish teachers.

It is unnecessary to adduce further citations, for the meaning of those above quoted is unmistakable. His views

on this subject are patent on his every page. Legalism, as a principle of action, he utterly repudiates; whenever he complied with its formal ordinances he did so out of regard for consciences less enlightened than his own. The outward he felt to be valueless, the inward to be all in all; the moral law was no longer contemplated by him as a burden, but as a law of freedom. Voluntary sacrifice of self, in return for Christ's sacrifice of Himself for him, was the only principle of obligation which satisfied the conscience of the converted Paul. With him to live is Christ. He is a prisoner, but a prisoner of the Lord. Once he had known the Messiah after the flesh; henceforth he will know Him after the flesh no more. He can now do all things; but it is through Christ strengthening him. Christians, if called in slavery, are Christ's freemen; if called in freedom, they are Christ's servants. Children are to obey their parents, but they are to do it in the Lord. Slaves are to obey their masters, but the obedience is to be rendered as unto Christ. Masters are to regulate their conduct to their servants with the consciousness that they have a Master in heaven, with whom there is no respect of persons. A wide range of social duties is incumbent on Christians; but they are to be rendered as a reasonable service, a sacrifice rendered to Christ in return for His sacrifice of Himself for man. In a word, the legislation of the kingdom of heaven recognizes only one kind of debt, namely a debt which is capable of perpetual payment, and of perpetually recurring obligation to pay—the duty of loving one another. Christ is the Christian's one example, the measure of his duty, and at the same time the power which renders that duty actual. His character is to be put on as the Christian's special uniform and his daily dress. The Church and its individual members constitute the true temple of the living God: in it, and in them, Christ dwells by His Spirit; and where He abides there is no longer the slavery of the letter, but the freedom of a reasonable service. In short, in the Pauline Epistles legalism is nowhere; Christ is everywhere as the one

measure of obligation, and the one spiritual power adequate to enable Christians to discharge it. Such are the Pauline views of the new covenant.

Finally : its entire legislation is summed up by our Lord Himself in three great commandments, within the wide scope of which every duty is embraced, and under some one of which every obligation is included. Two of these He has incorporated from the more elevated teaching of the elder dispensation ; the third is pre-eminently His own, and Christianizes the other two. Of these the first, which He designates the great commandment, is :—

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.”

“And a second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets.”

To these two our Lord added a third, to which He gives the special designation of His “new commandment” :—

“A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John xiii. 34, 35).

The first of these commandments in the width of its comprehensiveness embraces every duty which man owes to God : the second, every duty which man owes to man ; and measures by our own self-love the extent of the obligation. If the inquiry be, What are the duties which I owe to God ; or does this or that particular duty fall within them ? the answer must be, I owe my all, even life itself to Him who gave it. If on the other hand the question arises, What are the duties which I owe to man, and what are their limitations ? conscience returns the answer, Measure the duties which you owe to others by the love which you feel for yourself ; and it proclaims the precept reasonable which says : “Whatsoever ye would that men

should do unto you, the same do unto them." In other words, it makes a man a law unto himself.

The third is a new commandment, because it propounds a new measure of the duties which man owes to man; substituting for the love which a man feels for himself the love which Christ has not only felt, but exhibited for man, and for every individual of mankind, making the measure of obligation external to the individual. Under the second of these commandments it might be pleaded, that if a man felt little love for himself, he was only bound to exhibit correspondingly little love to others; and because a thing was agreeable to himself, he might plead that it ought to be so to others also. But under the new commandment such a plea would be impossible. Your duty is to love others, not as you love yourself, but "*as I have loved you.*"

"Let this," says our Lord, "be your badge, and by your loving one another, as I have loved you, let all men recognize your discipleship to Me." Such are the three great principles on which the legislation of the kingdom of heaven is founded; under which every subordinate duty falls, and which, when engraven on the heart, supersede all legal codes by making the love of Christ to man alike the centre and the measure of the obligations which man owes to man; representing them to be only a reasonable return for the self-sacrifice of Christ. It is therefore at once the measure of duty and the motive power to render its performance possible.

In conclusion then let us never overlook the all-important fact that the legislator of the kingdom of heaven has not defined the right of citizenship in it by the profession of a formal creed, which ends in barren orthodoxy (such a creed can be found neither in the Gospels nor in the Epistles), but by union with and imitation of himself. Too often has the former taken the place of the latter in the professing Church, to its own injury, and in disregard of the teaching of its founder: "He that hath my commandments,



and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him. If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John xiv. 21-23).

This, and not systems of metaphysical theology, constitutes Christianity.

## CHAPTER XV.

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### THE CHRIST—THE OBJECTIVE REVELATION OF GOD.

WE have now arrived at the most important stage of our inquiry. According to the position taken by the writers of the New Testament, the person of the King of the kingdom of God, His work, and teaching, constitute the essence of Christianity as a revelation; compared with which the remaining contents of the New Testament, and the entire contents of the Old, occupy a subordinate place. This is the result of assuming the Incarnation to have been a fact. In that case, the Divine character and perfections must shine forth and manifest themselves in the Incarnate Being. Consequently, if Jesus Christ is a manifestation of the Divine on the sphere of the human, such as He is, such must God be; His moral attributes must be manifestations of corresponding attributes in God; and the actions of His human life must be either manifestations of the Divine character, or of the Divine will; showing the relation in which man stands to God; and the duties which in consequence of that relationship man owes to man. Our Lord's teaching must also be the most perfect manifestation of the Divine will, free from any admixture of the imperfection which necessarily results from its having been communicated

through an imperfect human medium, as was the case with the prophets of the Old Testament, and the prophets, and even the Apostles of the New.

In using the word "Incarnation," I am aware that I am employing a term which is nowhere found in the New Testament. The conception however is the underlying idea of the following passage of St. John's Gospel: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as from the only Begotten from the Father) full of grace and truth. . . . The only Begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" John i. (14-18). I must therefore ask the reader to observe that I use it only as giving in a single word a convenient summary of the various statements of the writers of the New Testament respecting the superhuman which they affirm to have manifested itself in the person of Jesus Christ. I shall therefore make no attempt at any further definition than that which is contained in the passage above quoted.

The whole phenomena of the New Testament afford a proof, which few at the present day will venture to controvert, that the idea of the manifestation of the Divine in the human in the person of our Lord is one which underlies the entire volume. I do not mean that its writers take precisely the same view of the degree of the Divinity which they ascribe to Him, yet it is true that even where the Divine is less apparent, as in the Epistle of St. James, the character presented to us is not that of an ordinary man, or even of an inspired prophet, but one which is in the strictest sense superhuman. The time was when numerous attempts were made to prove that the statements of the New Testament were capable of being interpreted so as to be consistent with ascribing to our Lord a purely human character. This position however has long been abandoned by every writer of note, as untenable; and the course now adopted by those who affirm his purely human character is the far more rational one of denying the authority of its

writers on this subject, and the accuracy of their reports of our Lord's utterances concerning Himself; especially those in the fourth Gospel. But to enter into this controversy is beyond the scope of the present volume; my simple duty is to take the New Testament as it has been accepted by the Church; and by a careful examination of its contents, to ascertain what in the opinion of the primitive followers of our Lord constituted the essence of Christianity as a revelation. The point therefore which I have to prove is, that in the opinion of the writers of the New Testament the person of Jesus Christ, His actions and teaching constitute a manifestation of the spiritual and moral character of God in a manner which has been effected by no previous revelation. The importance of this is great; for this is precisely the point where all previous revelations are obscure. The universe speaks definitely enough of His Being, His power, and His wisdom; but with respect to His holiness, His justice, and His benevolence, its testimony is indistinct, and requires supplementing. This arises from the large amount of physical and moral evil existing in the world; and from the fact of its government being conducted in conformity with invariable laws which—so far as we can see—make no distinction between the evil and the good. The universe therefore, as we behold it, presents two aspects; the one testifying to the benevolence of its Creator, from the vast amount of the means of happiness and enjoyment in it which He has provided for His creatures; the other looking in the opposite direction, owing to the moral evil and suffering which exist in it. In order therefore to solve these difficulties a clearer revelation of the moral character of God is absolutely necessary, unless man is destined to walk in darkness and uncertainty, both as to his present and his future condition. Such a revelation can only be made in an objective form, in a human personality; for things which are not moral agents can tell us little or nothing respecting the character of God. This revelation the writers of the New Testament affirm to have been made

in the person of Jesus Christ. Let us therefore examine their testimony on this subject. We will take them in the following order; first, the Gospel of St. John; second, the Apostolical writings; and third, the Synoptics. I adopt this order, because the Synoptics may be not inaccurately described as “the Gospel of the kingdom of God;” the fourth Gospel, and the Apostolical writings, as the Gospel of the person of its King. Of the numerous passages in the fourth Gospel which bear on this subject, I need only quote the following, as they are conclusive on the subject:

“Jesus saith unto him (*i.e.*, Thomas), I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father; and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake” (John xiv. 6-12).

The reader should observe that when Philip asked for a manifestation of the Father, he had in his mind such a manifestation as the Epiphanies of the Old Testament, and especially the one made at Sinai. For the purpose of correcting his ideas on this subject, our Lord in this passage most distinctly affirms:—

1. That while the Godhead in the true essence of His Being is invisible to mortal eyes, those who witnessed the perfections of our Lord’s character, His actions, and His teaching, beheld manifested in His person the invisible perfections of God. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

2. That while men crave for a manifestation of God

which shall be visible to the eye of sense, the only real revelation of Him is one which is moral and spiritual. "Lord," says Philip, "show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." "Have I been so long time with you," is the reply, "and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, show us the Father?"

3. Jesus Christ so abides in the Father and the Father in Him, that the words and actions of the one are the words and actions of the other. "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father abiding in me doeth the works."

4. The knowledge of Jesus Christ involves the knowledge of the Father. "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also. From henceforth ye know him and have seen him."

It would be hardly possible to affirm more distinctly that Jesus Christ in His Divine person is the objective revelation of God. To the same effect are the following:—

"I and my Father are one. . . . If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and understand, that the Father is in me, and I in the Father" (John x. 30-37, 38).

"I am the light of the world. . . . They said therefore unto him, where is thy Father? Jesus answered, ye know neither me, nor my Father; if ye knew me, ye would know my Father also" (John viii. 12-19).

"Jesus answered and said unto them, my Father worketh even until now; and I work. . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doeth, these also the Son doeth in like manner" (John v. 17-19).

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, we speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye

believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things? And no man hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven" (John iii. 11-13).

In the first of these utterances our Lord definitely asserts that His works were His Father's works; and that He performed them in order that those who witnessed them might know and understand that the Father was in Him, and He in the Father. In the second, He proclaims Himself to be the light of the world. This is the necessary consequence of His being the objective revelation of God. Then, having spoken of the witness which the Father bore to Him, the Pharisees contemptuously ask Him, where they should find His Father? To this He replies, that those who knew Him, would know His Father also; thus distinctly affirming that He is the objective revelation of the moral perfections of God.

In the next of these utterances our Lord affirms that He co-operates with the Father in His providential working, and that He does nothing of Himself; but what the Father does He does likewise; and in the fourth, that He teaches not with a borrowed illumination, but with the most absolute knowledge of eternal realities. "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." Though on earth, He is also in heaven, *i.e.*, in the most intimate union with the Father. He is therefore the manifestation of the Father's purposes in Providence, and the perfect revealer of His mind and will.

The best commentary on these utterances will be found in the words of the Apostolic writer, as set forth in the prologue of this Gospel. They leave no doubt as to his opinion of their meaning:—

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by (*διὰ*, through) him; and without him hath not anything been made that hath been made. In him was life; and the life

was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness apprehended it not. . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John i. 1-18).

Among the important truths stated in this prologue it will be only necessary to notice four :—

1. The writer affirms the incarnation of One whom he designates "the Word," whom he invests with Divine attributes, and identifies with Jesus Christ.

2. That Jesus Christ in His incarnate personality is the revelation of the moral and spiritual attributes of God.

3. That this revelation is not a mere relative revelation of the perfections of the Godhead; but one that is absolute and real.

4. That He is the one sole medium through which the perfections of the infinite God can be seen and contemplated by the finite. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son hath revealed him."

Such is the testimony of this Gospel. Let us now consider that of the Apostolic writers; and first that of the author of this Gospel in the introduction to his first Epistle :—

"That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands handled, concerning the word of life (and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the life eternal, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us). That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you" (1 John i. 1-3).

To this let us add the concluding words of the Epistle, observing only that all that intervenes is a practical treatment of the theses set forth in the introduction :—

"We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true;



and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. My little children, keep yourselves from idols" (John v. 20, 21).

In the first of these passages the Apostle makes the following affirmations:—

1. The subject which he proposed to treat of in the Epistle, *i.e.*, its thesis, is "concerning the Word of life."

2. This Word of life was not an abstract conception, but had a historic existence; in other words, it was manifested in One whom the Apostle had heard, whom he had seen with his eyes, and had handled with his hands.

3. The Person in whom this eternal life was manifested was the Son of God, Jesus Christ, *who is the true God and eternal life*.

4. This Person in whom eternal life resided, existed in the beginning with the Father, but was subsequently manifested in One whose human life was so real that He was capable of being perceived by the bodily senses of those who held converse with Him.

5. That it was the great end and purpose of the Apostolic ministry to bear witness respecting this eternal life which was manifested in Jesus Christ.

This passage therefore constitutes the strongest affirmation that Jesus Christ was a manifestation of the Divine in a human personality. This being so, His person, actions, and teachings must constitute an objective revelation of God.

Equally decisive are the affirmations of St. Paul on this subject. Of these it will be sufficient for our present purpose to cite only a few of the most remarkable:—

1. "Who is the image of the invisible God" (Col. i. 15).

2. "It was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness (*i.e.*, the fulness of the Godhead) dwell" (Col. i. 19).

3. "That they may know the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden" (Col. ii. 2, 3).

4. "Take heed lest there be any one who maketh a spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ; for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 8, 9).

5. "That the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" (Eph. i. 17).

6. "The unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. iii. 8).

7. "Have the mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, yea, the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 5-8).

8. "Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified; unto Jews a stumbling block, and unto Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. ii. 22-24).

9. "But if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to them that are perishing, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them" (2 Cor. iv. 3-5).

10. "Seeing it is God that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face (*i.e.*, person) of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6).

11. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. v. 19).

It will be unnecessary to comment on each of these passages. Taking them as a whole, they show clearly that their writer must have held that the person and work of Jesus Christ constituted a great revelation of the moral and spiritual

perfections of the Godhead. To a few of these however I must draw the reader's specific attention.

1. The Apostle twice designates our Lord "the image of God." But if He is the image of God, it follows that in His person, works and teaching, He must constitute an objective revelation of God.

2. Twice also he declares that the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him; and once, that the fulness of the Godhead resides in His incarnate person. "In Him dwells the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*." It should be observed, that the word "fulness" is a technical expression, which the Apostle found in use in the philosophical systems of the day, and especially in those which, when he wrote this Epistle, he was engaged in combating. In these systems this word had a very different meaning from that which it conveys to the modern reader. They postulated a number of intermediate agencies between the supreme God and the finite Universe, which they designated "Eons," each growing more and more imperfect, in proportion to its distance from the source from which it emanated. Those lowest in the scale had made this present world with all its imperfections. "The fulness of the Godhead" therefore meant in these systems, Deity in its most absolute form; Deity, as it existed apart from its Eonic emanations, and from all the confusion which the remote and imperfect Eons had introduced into the Universe. In addressing persons who were no strangers to the tenets of this philosophy, (and some of whom were infected with them,) the Apostle adopted this term as his own; and affirmed that whatever the fulness of Deity meant in these systems, it abode and permanently manifested itself in the person of Jesus Christ. It would therefore have been hardly possible for him to have employed language which would have conveyed to their minds in more definite terms the idea that God had made an objective revelation of Himself in the incarnate person of our Lord than in the words, "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily*."

3. He affirms in several of these utterances that in Jesus Christ reside all the treasures of the knowledge of God. Thus he speaks of "the unsearchable riches of Christ;" "the spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of him;" "Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God;" "the light of the knowledge of God" as revealed in him; "the glory of God in the face or person of Jesus Christ." Incidental expressions of this kind, which are numerous in his writings, prove, even more than any formal enunciations, that this idea was constantly present to his mind. The same truth forms the fundamental idea of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is thus set forth in the introduction:—

"God. . . hath in the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son; who is the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance" (Heb. i. 1-3).

These words are so plain that they need no commentary.

To the Epistle of St. James I have already alluded. Its author nowhere refers to revelation as made in our Lord's person. As I have observed above, it contains a less advanced Christology than any other of the sacred writings; yet at the same time it distinctly recognizes our Lord's superhuman character, but without the smallest attempt to define the degree of the superhuman which its author attributed to him. In the last chapter however He is four times referred to by the name of Lord; and it is worthy of remark that this title is applied to Him interchangeably with the Jehovah of the Old Testament. Thus the Apostle writes:—

"Be patient, therefore, brethren until the coming of the Lord. . . . Stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. . . . Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience, the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful" (James v. 7-12).

The Lord referred to at the commencement of this

passage is evidently the Lord Christ; the Lord referred to at its conclusion is no less clearly the Jehovah of the Old Testament. The Christology of the Epistle of St. Jude bears a close resemblance to that of St. James, but the Epistle is too brief to contain anything very explicit on this subject.

The Christology of the two Epistles attributed to St. Peter occupies an intermediate place between the two just referred to and those of St. Paul and St. John. In several places their author distinctly refers to our Lord's super-human character, though he nowhere expressly designates Him as the revelation of the Father. Yet He is more than once referred to as the medium of communication between God and man. The prominent idea of the two Epistles is the suffering Christ glorified. The strongest passage occurs in the second Epistle in the words, "Grace unto you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord." Here the knowledge of God and of our Lord seem to be identified.

With respect to the Apocalypse, it will suffice to observe that not only is its Christology of a highly elevated character, but our Lord, under the designation of the Lamb, is throughout the whole book described as the revealer of the Father. It is in fact designated as the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His servants.

We must now consider the testimony of the Synoptic Gospels. I have already given my reasons for considering them last, viz., because their contents show that they were intended to be descriptive of the kingdom of God rather than of the person of its king; whereas that of St. John takes the precisely reverse view. The reasons which have led each respectively to adopt this course are beyond the scope of the present work to investigate. I must be content to accept the fact that it is so. The Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke however contain one utterance of our Lord which forms, as it were, the bridge which connects the discourses which they record with those of the fourth Gospel. It is thus given by St. Matthew:—

“At that season Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes ; yea, Father, for so it was well pleasing in thy sight. All things have been delivered to me of my Father, and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father, neither doth any know the Father, save the Son ; and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him ” (Matt. xi. 25-27).

The utterer of these words unquestionably claims for himself the character of the revealer of the Father. There are only two ways of escaping from this inference—either to affirm that our Lord never uttered them at all, or that they are a report of some utterance which has been so deeply coloured by His followers that it is no longer possible to determine what it really was. The discussion of such questions however is foreign to our present purpose. I have simply to accept the passage I have quoted as a genuine record of our Lord’s teaching. The words which bear on the subject now before us are the following :—

“No one knoweth the Son save the Father ; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him.”

According to this declaration the Son is of a nature so transcendent that no one can comprehend Him but the Father ; and the Son has such a knowledge of the Father as is possessed by no finite being, *i.e.*, His knowledge of Him is absolute. Further, He is the only source of that knowledge of the Father which is possessed by others. “None know him, except him to whom the Son is willing to reveal him.” A being therefore, whom none can fully comprehend but God ; who has a perfect knowledge and comprehension of God ; and who, while he possesses this knowledge, is also man, must be in the highest sense of these words a manifestation of the Divine in a human personality.

The gracious invitation by which this utterance is fol-

lowed proves that when our Lord affirmed that He was the sole revealer of the Father, the revelation made in His person is a moral and spiritual revelation.

"Come unto me," he says, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt xi. 28-30).

This invitation, and the declaration that He is the exclusive source of all knowledge of the Father, stand here in the closest connection with each other. "I will give you rest," says our Lord. The rest which He promises is obviously the result of that knowledge of God which He is prepared to reveal; for a knowledge of His moral character and perfections is that alone which can afford rest and refreshment to the wearied spirit of man under the burden of sin and suffering, and the uncertainties of earthly things. But how is this rest to be obtained? By coming to Him, and learning of Him. "Learn of Me," He says, "for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls." As He teaches by means of the moral and spiritual perfections which shine forth in His Divine character, this meekness and condescension must therefore have something in them which corresponds to the character of His Father; for without this it would be incapable of affording rest to the human spirit.

Lastly: "His yoke is easy, and his burden is light." What then is the yoke and the burden referred to? Obviously the Divine law of the kingdom of God, in contrast to that yoke, respecting which we have Apostolic authority for asserting that it was a burden too heavy to be borne. Our Lord however, in His perfect knowledge of God, has a Divine law to proclaim, under which obedience will no longer be a heavy yoke, but the loving service of children rendered to a loving God, for "God is love."

It has been necessary to call particular attention to this passage, since it is the only one of our Lord's utterances

recorded in the Synoptic Gospels which contains a direct affirmation respecting His Divine person similar to those in the fourth Gospel. Its importance arises from the fact that it forms a clear bond of union between the former and the latter ; and removes the difficulty which might otherwise be felt in accepting the discourses recorded in the fourth Gospel as veritable utterances of our Lord ; proving, as it does, that such were not unknown to the traditions on which the Synoptics were founded. It is therefore of no little importance that it is recorded by both St. Matthew and St. Luke ; the one Gospel being evidently intended for the use of Jewish, and the other of Gentile converts, thereby proving that it was widely accepted in the Apostolic Church as a genuine utterance of our Lord. It should also be observed that its Christology is equally elevated with anything that can be found in the fourth Gospel or the remaining writings of the New Testament.

But while this is the solitary utterance to be found in the Synoptics in which our Lord makes a categorical assertion respecting His own superhuman character, I must ask the reader's attention to the fact that these Gospels contain numerous utterances of our Lord which, although they do not directly affirm it, are nevertheless intelligible only on the assumption that He was fully conscious of possessing it. For example :—

“ He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. . . . He that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it ” (Matt. x. 37-39).

2. “ Everyone therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven ; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven ” (Matt. x. 32, 33). Luke has “ before the angels of God.”

3. “ And behold there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And



Jesus stretched forth his hand, and touched him; saying, I will: be thou clean; and immediately his leprosy was cleansed" (Matt. viii. 2-4).

4. "And in the time of harvest I will say unto the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn. . . . The harvest is the consummation of the ages, the reapers are the angels. The Son of man shall send forth his angels," etc. (Matt. xiii. 30, 39, 41).

5. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all the nations. . . . Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 31, 32, 34).

6. "And he said, Jesus, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom. And he said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke xxiii. 42, 43).

Utterances such as these—and the Evangelists abound with them—are only explicable on the assumption that he who uttered them had an habitual consciousness of the indwelling of the Divine. It is simply incredible that one who like our Lord was perfectly self-possessed, and free from any taint of fanaticism, could have spoken thus if He had regarded Himself as an ordinary man, or even as a prophet. In that case the arrogance of the utterer would have been inconsistent with humility or holiness. Yet the character of our Lord, as it is depicted by the evangelists, is one in which the humility is perfect, while it is habitually united with a self-consciousness of greatness. The utterances in question are therefore correlated in the closest manner with those affirmations respecting himself in the fourth Gospel which we have just considered. The one in fact is the justification of the other. But the important point directly bearing on our present argument is as

follows:—If our Lord was habitually conscious of the indwelling in Him of the Divine, it follows that His person, actions, and teaching must constitute a revelation of the moral and spiritual character of God.

Such is a general view of the assertions of the writers of the New Testament, that our Lord's Divine person constitutes the essence of Christianity as a revelation. A large portion of its contents might have been cited as affording indirect proof of the same great truth; but those which have been adduced alone are amply sufficient for our purpose. They put it beyond question that our Lord Himself affirmed, and that the sacred writers accepted it as a fundamental truth, that the Christian revelation was made, not like former revelations, in a number of utterances delivered in the name of God, and in which the Divine message, and the medium through which it was communicated, stood separate and distinct; but objectively in the person, actions, and teaching of Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER XVI.

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### THE NATURE, EXTENT, AND LIMITATIONS OF THE KNOWLEDGE COMMUNICATED THROUGH THE INCARNATION.

THE fact of the incarnation being accepted on the testimony of our Lord, we now proceed to consider the nature of the knowledge of God which is imparted by it, and the limits within which that knowledge is necessarily bounded. In doing so it must be observed that I use the word "incarnation" as meaning the indwelling and manifestation of the Divine in and through a human personality, without regard to any theory respecting the mode in which it has been effected. I simply accept it as a fact, under the full persuasion that more accurate definition transcends the powers of human thought.

Assuming therefore the incarnation as a fact, it settles for ever, at least as far as Christians are concerned, a question of the greatest importance which has been raised by philosophy in connection with theology; I allude to the controversy as to whether the Divine attributes, as they are conceived of by us, are measures of realities as they exist in God, or are only relative, or—to adopt a term which has been employed by a well-known theological writer—merely regulative. Without attempting to discuss the profound

metaphysics which underlie this question, the point is one of such practical importance that a few observations will be necessary in order that the reader may be able to form a judgment on a question which involves the very essence of Christianity itself.

A form of philosophy, known as Agnosticism, has attained a wide acceptance among men of cultivated intellect. This philosophy maintains that while the belief in the existence of a first cause of the universe, which it designates God, is a necessity of thought, yet this first cause, or God, owing to the limitations of the human intellect, must forever remain unknown and unknowable to man. In other words, that it is impossible to affirm of it a single attribute ; and that to assert that it possesses personality, volition, intelligence, or a moral character, is nothing less than anthropomorphism ; by which is meant, that to ascribe such conceptions, *being purely human*, to the first cause of the universe, is simply to manufacture a God after our own likeness. The God of this system therefore, while the assumption of His existence satisfies an intellectual necessity, is precisely the same for all moral purposes as if He existed not. For anything that we can know, He is incapable of caring for us, or regarding our conduct ; and we in like manner may both live and die without any regard for him.

The foundation on which this system rests is the allegation that it is impossible to comprehend the infinite in such a manner that it can be made a definite subject of human thought. Consequently as theism affirms the infinitude of God, it is impossible to make any affirmation respecting the realities of the existence of a being whose infinitude places him beyond the range of human apprehension. The position in question will be made clearer if stated thus : all finite ideas, owing to their finitude, are inadequate measures of the infinite. But all human ideas are finite. Therefore they are incapable of imaging in thought the realities of an infinite being. But as personality, intelligence, volition, and every moral attribute of which we can conceive, are not only purely

human conceptions, but inasmuch as their finitude constitutes their essence, all such conceptions, when predicated as attributes of an infinite being, are unthinkable; and consequently can denote no corresponding reality in His existence.

As a further proof that the attainment of any knowledge of the first cause of the universe is impossible, beyond the fact that it exists, it is urged that the position which is taken by theists compels them to maintain that God is not only infinite, but that He is the absolute Being, and at the same time the cause of all finite existence. Now the philosophic system of which I am speaking affirms that these positions are contradictory, and therefore self-destructive. Thus it is urged that if God is infinite, He must include all finite existence as a portion of Himself, for if anything exists which is not included in His being it must constitute a limit to His infinity; while of anything which is included therein He cannot be the creator. But on the other hand it is argued that if God is the absolute being, it involves a contradiction to affirm that He is the creator, or first cause of finite existence. It should be observed that by the term "absolute being" is meant a being who exists independent of all relations to any other being, eternally the same. This being so, it is inferred that the moment He created finite existence, He necessarily entered into relation with it, as its cause; and consequently that He must have henceforth ceased to be absolute. For similar reasons various positions which theists assume respecting God are pronounced either unthinkable, or to involve contradictions. From this the inference is deduced that the God of theism is a purely anthropomorphistic conception, to which there is no evidence of any corresponding objective reality.

But the all-important point in this system of philosophy is, that on its principles, even if these difficulties can be got over, and if the existence of a God who is at the same time infinite, absolute, and the first cause, be conceded, it is impossible to ascribe to Him a moral character; because all

our conceptions which are essential to the idea of a moral being, as for example personality, are necessarily finite; and therefore as soon as they are attributed to a being who is infinite, they cease to be capable of being imaged in thought. Thus it is alleged that as the conception of finiteness is an essential constituent of our idea of personality, to speak of the infinite being as a person is devoid of meaning. Also, as our idea of freedom is of a similar character, it is equally absurd to speak of God as a free agent. But personality and free agency are essential constituents of our conception of a moral being. It is therefore impossible to ascribe a moral character or a moral attribute to the infinite; for every moral attribute, as we are only able to conceive of it, is not only necessarily finite, but being a conception which arises out of the relation of finite moral agents to each other, it can form no adequate representation of the relation in which the infinite being stands to beings that are finite. To speak therefore of holiness, justice, mercy, faithfulness, or benevolence as attributes of God, is neither more nor less than to project a number of finite anthropomorphic conceptions into the infinite being, which when attributed to Him, present no idea to the mind which is capable of being imaged in rational thought.

It is not my intention to enter into the subtleties of these metaphysical controversies, which in truth are only comprehensible to a very limited number of mankind, even if they are really intelligible to any. The object of this work is a far humbler one—not to deal with a body of abstractions, but with the facts of Christianity, and to deduce from them such inferences as are justified on the assumption of their truth. With whatever metaphysical difficulties these facts may be attended, we are justified in accepting them as we do other facts; and forbear to inquire into the how, and the wherefore, as lying, if not beyond the limits of human knowledge, at least beyond those of our present inquiry. We are justified in adopting this course, because even the facts

of ordinary life may by the aid of metaphysical ingenuity be made to involve heights and depths of thought in explaining their ontology, in the attempt to fathom which, our intellects become giddy. I shall therefore enter on the consideration of this subject only as far as it bears on the incarnation.

To render my subsequent remarks intelligible, it will be desirable to point out a fallacy which underlies the entire system of thought above referred to. Its fundamental principle, as we have seen, is, that inasmuch as the finite cannot comprehend the infinite, the infinite is incapable of becoming the subject of finite thought. From this it draws the inference, that as the infinite is incomprehensible by our finite intellects, it is impossible to affirm anything as true respecting it, except the bare fact of its existence, and that everything else transcends the boundaries of human knowledge; and consequently, that every finite conception, when predicated of it, is really destitute of meaning. But to this the reply is obvious. While it is perfectly true, that no finite being can form a conception adequate to represent the infinite *in its infinity*, yet it by no means follows that we cannot form such a conception of a being who is infinite, as will be adequate for certain limited purposes of thought. I fully admit that it is impossible to form a positive conception of infinitude, because the term "infinite" is one which is purely negative, being simply a denial of limitations to the particular thing of which we are speaking. Thus when theists speak of God as a Being who possesses infinite power, the thing intended is, that He possesses all power which is conceivable, *plus* all power which is beyond the limits of the human faculties to know, or to conceive of. So likewise when we speak of space as infinite, all that we mean is that space must extend beyond any limits which our intellects can assign to it. In a similar manner when we speak of a number *ad infinitum*, we mean a succession of finite numbers, carried on to the utmost point that our conceptions are capable of reaching, and then onward

without end. But our denial of limits to power, space, or number by no means invalidates our original conceptions of either power, space, or number; for in each case, the thing of which we are speaking still continues to be power, space, or number. It is true that as our idea of space is a finite conception, we cannot form a positive idea of space *in its infinity*; but it is no less true that we are unable to conceive of space as having actual limits; *i.e.*, we affirm that space must be infinite; yet this by no means invalidates our original conception of space. Precisely similar is it with all our other conceptions into which the idea of infinity enters. No small portion of the intellectual fog in which this subject has become involved has arisen from the practice of discussing the question of the infinite in the abstract instead of in the concrete. When we adopt the latter method, a large portion of it disappears.

Further: the obscurity in which this subject has become involved has been greatly increased by the prevalent habit of speaking of the infinite as though it was a positive idea, instead of being, what it really is, a simple negation of finite limitations to some particular subject. This practice has greatly prevailed in systematic theology; and has involved in inextricable confusion many questions into which the idea enters. Thus the idea of infinite, when applied to God, is conceived of as denoting a positive idea which we are capable of imaging in our minds; whereas all that it can really mean is the denial to Him of finite limitations. This error is even largely shared by philosophy. Popular theology also is in the habit of speaking of God as "infinite," distinct from any conception of Him in which infinite can reside in the concrete. Consequently the affirmation, if it conveys any meaning to our minds, can only convey one of the vaguest character. But if, instead of saying that God is infinite, we affirm that He is an infinite Being, the words convey the definite meaning, that to His existence it is impossible to assign the limitations of time or space. So likewise when we speak of Him as a Being whose power



and wisdom are infinite, we ascribe to Him the two positive conceptions of power and wisdom, and add to them the negative one that His power and wisdom are without limitations. Consequently, although being, power, and wisdom are conceptions which we are capable of distinctly imaging in our minds, yet it is impossible to form a conception of the Divine existence, power, or wisdom in their totality; that is, as devoid of limitations. All reasonings therefore about God, *quâ infinite*, must be devoid of validity, because they belong to regions of thought into which the human intellect is incapable of penetrating; yet this does not hinder it from accepting the more humble position—which is alone suited to our finite understandings—of conceiving of God as a being who actually exists; who possesses power and wisdom to which no limits can be assigned, and who stands to us in the relation of creator and preserver. Although such conceptions of Him may be imperfect, yet there is no rational ground for affirming that they do not, as far as they go, denote corresponding realities in Him. This being so, we are fully justified in reasoning on them for all practical purposes; and deducing consequences from them, under a deep sense of the limitations of our finite understandings, and the consequent errors to which they are liable. All that the systems above referred to prove—and this they do prove—is, that we cannot know God in *his infinitude*, or penetrate by our finite reason into the secrets of His ontology; yet this is perfectly consistent with the fact that our knowledge of Him, as far as it goes, is a real knowledge. The fallacy which underlies the systems of which we have been speaking is, that all knowledge which is real, must be perfect and all-embracing; and that all which is not so, must be unreal.

One more point demands our notice, as having an intimate bearing on the present subject. Great confusion of thought has been introduced into this discussion by an indefinite use of the term “infinite,” as applicable to all the attributes of God. Infinite however is a quantitative conception, and

therefore only capable of being predicated of such ideas as admit of being conceived of as quantitative. These are limited to those into which the ideas of time, space and number, enter as factors. We therefore justly speak of the Divine existence as infinite, because it is devoid of the limitations of either time or space. So also of God's power and wisdom, and perhaps His benevolence and goodness, because these attributes admit of being conceived of in a greater or less degree as quantitative. But to several of His moral attributes this idea is entirely inapplicable, as for example His truth, justice, and holiness. As these do not admit of a quantitative measure, perfection, not infinitude, is their proper designation as they exist in God. Thus God is not infinitely true, just, or holy, but perfectly so; and, to speak accurately, He is not infinitely good and merciful, but perfectly so. The same remark is true of all His other moral attributes. The importance of this distinction will be seen hereafter.

The above positions have a most important bearing on the subject we are now considering, owing to the attempt of an eminent theologian to enlist in the defence of Christianity the very same arguments which have been employed in the attack. His line of argument may be briefly stated thus: while the constitution of our minds compels us to believe that the infinite exists, yet owing to their finiteness, we are incapable of knowing anything respecting it except the fact of its existence. Consequently we are unable to make it the subject of rational thought; and therefore, whenever we attempt to reason on it, or even to predicate any attribute of it, we do nothing but involve ourselves in a mass of inextricable contradictions. So also the constitution of our minds compels us to think of God as the absolute being, and the first cause of all finite existence; yet for the same reason we are incapable of imaging either of these conceptions in terms of rational thought; and all our attempts to reason upon them lead to contradictory conclusions. Further: it is urged by him that the ideas of the infinite, the

absolute, and the first cause, when viewed as attributes of one and the same being, are mutually destructive ; for a being to be infinite must include the finite. Otherwise the being of whom infinity is affirmed would be limited by the finite. An infinite being must also be absolute, *i.e.*, he must exist independent of all relations ; for if these relations existed independently of him, they would constitute a limit to his infinity. An absolute being also cannot be the first cause of the universe ; because as the creator of the finite he necessarily enters into relations with it. Further : the conception of the infinite and the absolute implies existence which is incapable of change. Consequently such a being cannot be the creator of the finite ; for if finite being owes its existence to the will of a creator, it must have been created out of nothing at some definite period during the eternity of the past. Prior to its creation therefore the first cause could only have been a first cause *potentially* ; but in the act of creation he must have passed from the condition of a potential first cause into an *energetic* one, a state of things contradictory alike to the attributes of infinity, absoluteness, and unchangeableness which we assign to God.

From these principles the writer above referred to deduces the conclusion that all our knowledge on this subject is purely relative, and not one of realities as they exist in God ; and that we are consequently incapable by means of our natural faculties of attaining to any real knowledge of God ; and that such knowledge can be derived from revelation only. By a singular Nemesis the principles thus laid down by this learned theologian as a defence of revelation against the assaults of unbelievers have been made the basis of that practical system of atheism, which is designated Agnosticism ; Mr. Herbert Spencer, the writer who has given the most complete exposition of its fundamental principles, informing us that he cannot better state them than in the words of the theologian in question. I need hardly observe that no more

dangerous enemy of Christianity exists at the present day than this system of thought; for if it is true, Christianity must rest on a foundation which is absolutely baseless.

Another position which is directly deducible from the above principles has a still more important bearing on Christianity as a revelation. If, *because God is infinite*, our finite conceptions are incapable of representing realities as they exist in Him, they can only denote relative and not absolute truths. Consequently our conceptions of justice, holiness, mercy and goodness, when applied to God, are nothing better than imperfect analogies projected into the being of the infinite. As a consequence of this it has been argued that these attributes, as they exist in God, may denote qualities very different from our human conceptions of them. Hence it follows that even in the case of a revelation, when it ascribes certain attributes to God, we must accept them *as intended to be regulative only*, and not as revelations of the realities as they exist in Him.

Thus, for example, we are told that when revelation ascribes perfect justice to God, the thing intended is not that our human conception of justice is an accurate representation of the reality as it exists in Him; but that, because God is infinite, Divine justice may be something different from our human conception of justice. So must it also be with His holiness, His mercy, and His goodness. In fact justice in God may differ from justice in man; and so with respect to all His other moral perfections. This is what is meant by designating the affirmations of revelation respecting these attributes of God as *regulative only*; in other words, that men are to act on the principle that God is just in the human sense of justice; but yet that the reality, as it exists in Him, may differ widely from our human conception of it. This theory has been invented for the purpose of evading the difficulties with which certain systems of theology are attended; and above all, the moral difficulties suggested by portions of the Scriptures of the Old Testament. The position however is contradictory to

every utterance of the Scriptures of the New ; and if true, renders a genuine revelation of the Divine character impossible.

But while the principles to which I have been referring ought to be repudiated by every Christian man, the controversy connected with them has been attended with one great benefit to Christianity, by bringing to light, in a manner never duly appreciated before, the nature of the limitations of the human intellect ; and by proving, in consequence of these limitations, the utter hopelessness of the attempt to penetrate by the instrumentality of our logical faculties into the secrets of the Divine ontology. As such, it will be the means of liberating Christianity from the burden of that mass of metaphysics under which its simple truths have been almost buried during the ages of the past, and by means of which it has been transformed from a moral and spiritual power intended to operate on the heart, and to energize in the life, into a philosophy designed to satisfy the aspirations of the intellect. But while its services in this respect must be thankfully acknowledged, we must not close our eyes to the fact that there is great danger of pushing the argument to the extent of laying down certain principles which, if their truth is admitted, afford a plausible foundation on which it may be possible to erect a system of agnostic philosophy. Further : so far is this system from constituting a defence of Christianity, as it was intended by its learned author, that if its fundamental principles are true, any real knowledge of God, whether it is supposed to be derived from reason or from revelation, is alike impossible. Before however I consider the limitations of the human intellect as they bear on the subject of the incarnation, it will be necessary to offer a few remarks respecting our knowledge of God : whether that knowledge be derived from reason, or communicated by revelation.

I have already pointed out one of the fundamental errors of this system, viz., that because our finite intellects are

not capable of comprehending the infinite in its infinity, our inability to do so renders all knowledge of God impossible. My position on the contrary is, that while we are incapable of comprehending the infinite (*i.e.*, God) in His infinity, or of entering into His ontology, yet we are fully justified in believing in God, as a being who is powerful and wise, although we are incapable of distinctly imaging to our minds the conception of a being whose power and wisdom are devoid of limitations. The boundlessness of the Divine power and wisdom forms no obstacle to our accepting it as true, that our human conceptions of power and wisdom represent realities which exist in God. The same remark is true of all His other attributes, whether we view them as infinite, or as perfect.

But in reference to our present argument it is most important to observe, that our alleged inability to attain this knowledge does not arise solely from the inadequacy of our faculties to explore the secrets of the Divine ontology, but from the fact that our finite conceptions are inadequate representations of the realities as they exist in God. This being so, it follows on the above principles that we cannot get any other than a merely relative knowledge of Him, even by revelation; for all revelation must be made in terms of our finite intellects, and must therefore participate in their imperfections. Consequently, if the infinite alone can comprehend realities as they exist in the infinite, our finite conceptions of God, though derived from revelation, must be equally inadequate measures of the Divine realities, with those which we derive from reason. From this it follows that all our knowledge of God, from whatever source derived, fails to be an adequate representation of the Divine realities, and can only convey to us a relative knowledge of Him; and that too only so far as the finite presents an analogy to the infinite, of which analogy we can have no certainty that it exists; or to use the term employed by the writer above referred to, even the knowledge of God which revelation professes to impart is not a real, but a merely regulative

knowledge, intended to be a practical guide to men ; but it fails to disclose to us the realities as they exist in God.

A single illustration will suffice to explain more clearly the foregoing observations on this point, which is so important in its bearing on our present inquiry. On the principles above referred to, when the Scriptures affirm that God is just, we are not to measure justice as it exists in God by our human conception of justice, since the infinitude of God may cause the Divine justice to differ materially from the conception of justice as it exists in man. This theory is a startling one ; but I must not hesitate to place it before the reader in language which will leave no mistake as to its meaning. According to this theory then, justice as an attribute of God, and justice as an attribute of man, may be two different conceptions, and not the same quality, differing only in degree ; or in plain English, what would be unjust in man, may be just in God. As it is obvious that the same principle is applicable to all the other attributes which revelation ascribes to God, it will be unnecessary to go through them *seriatim*.

The consequences which follow from the acceptance of these principles as true, are of the most serious import in their bearing on Christianity. It follows from them that even revelation itself cannot impart to us a knowledge of the moral character of God as it really exists. The dangerous character of this position has been ably exposed by the late Mr. Mill, though in language somewhat irreverent. I need only refer the reader to his pages. It will be sufficient here to express the general result of his reasoning, which is as follows : If our human conceptions of justice, goodness and holiness, are not measures of these attributes as they exist in God ; but the Divine justice, holiness and goodness may differ from our human conceptions of these qualities, it follows that to affirm that God is holy, just, or benevolent, is either to use words without meaning, or to flatter Him by ascribing to Him qualities which differ from the actual ones.

But this is not all. The idea that the moral attributes which the Scriptures ascribe to God are merely regulative, and not the images of the veritable realities themselves, is subversive of the fundamental principles on which Christianity rests. How far a merely regulative idea can exert an influence on a man's conduct, it will be unnecessary for us to inquire, since it must be evident to every student of the New Testament that this is not the mode in which Christianity professes to act on the human heart. On the contrary its mode of acting on it is, by the revelation of the moral character of God in Jesus Christ to create certain affections of the human heart which correspond to that character ; and through these to act powerfully on the life. Thus for example, St. John enunciates as a great truth that " God is love ;" and then adds, " We love, *because* he first loved us," *i.e.*, God's love to us, firmly believed in as a reality, generates in us a corresponding love to God. But the love which can generate love must be an actual love—a love such as we understand by love—and not a mere regulative idea. To kindle the affection of love, the object exciting it must be really lovely ; but a regulative love is a mere abstract idea, cold and barren, which can arouse no corresponding affection in the heart of man. We are so constituted, that we are incapable of feeling love for a *thing*, still less for an idea. Love can only be felt for a *person* ; and consequently all theories which deny the personality of God, or which affirm that love, as it exists in God, may be an affection which differs from our human conception of love, render it impossible for us to feel love towards God. It will doubtless be replied by those who accept this theory, that the thing intended is, that we should feel and act towards God on the assumption that our human conception of love is a reality in the Divine character. But to this I answer, that it is impossible to kindle a feeling of either love or gratitude towards a being whose attributes are assumptions to which there is no known corresponding reality ; *i.e.*, towards a merely regulative idea, which after all is nothing



but a convenient fiction. The same principle is no less true of the other attributes of God. To enable them to awaken corresponding emotions in us, we must contemplate them as the representations of qualities which really exist in Him; and not as mere regulative ideas to which no reality may correspond. Great would have been the surprise of the Patriarch, when he pleaded, "shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" if he had been told that the justice to which he appealed was a mere regulative idea, without any corresponding reality in God. So also is it with respect to holiness. If it is conceivable that our human conception of holiness may be no accurate representation of the Divine reality, then the exhortation, "Be ye holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy," becomes meaningless; because God's being holy in one sense, can be neither reason nor motive for man's being holy in another. The general position therefore seems too plain to require any further argument. If the attributes which Scripture ascribes to God are merely regulative ideas, and do not denote realities corresponding to our conceptions of them, then it is impossible that such attributes can awaken any corresponding affections in man. This being so, the entire teaching of the Old and New Testament is simply nullified, and is based on fiction and unreality.

But there is yet another consequence of this theory, of still more serious import. It is a virtual denial of the truth of the incarnation. It is strange that its learned author, who propounded it as a defence of Christianity, did not perceive that this was a necessary consequence of it. I make this affirmation for the following reasons:—

If it is a legitimate inference from the infinitude of God and the finiteness of man, that our conceptions of the Divine attributes do not denote realities as they exist in God, but are only regulative, it follows that the affirmation of St. Paul, that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, and that the fulness of the Godhead dwells in His incarnate person; that of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews,

that He is the effulgence of God's glory and the very image of His substance, and that of our Lord Himself, that he that hath seen Him, hath seen the Father, can no longer be sustained as true. Assuming the incarnation to be a fact, I ask, is it conceivable that our Lord's Divine person, work, and teaching, can be a revelation of God which is merely regulative, and not of His moral character as it actually exists? Are we to be asked to believe, in deference to a number of metaphysical abstractions, involving ideas which transcend the intellect of man to fathom, that the Divine compassion which dwelt in the bosom of our Lord, and which produced the self-sacrifice of His life, is not the very counterpart of compassion as it exists in God; or His holiness, not of God's holiness; or His patience, not of God's patience; or His mercy, not of God's mercy; or that sense of justice which, while it pronounced solemn condemnation on the wilful sinner, yet made every allowance for human infirmity, and even for human prejudice, is not the perfect representation of justice as it exists in God? Unless the moral perfections of Jesus Christ are manifestations of corresponding realities in God, His declaration, that God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life, is divested of all intelligible meaning.

If then we accept the incarnation as a fact—and if it is not a fact, Christianity is untrue—the theory which affirms that because our moral ideas are finite, they do not represent corresponding realities in God; and therefore that our conceptions of God's character, even those which are derived from revelation, have only a regulative value, falls to the ground, notwithstanding the plausibility of the abstract reasonings by which it may be supported. That it should ever have been accepted as affording a basis for the defence of Christianity is simply wonderful. One of the reasons why it commended itself to many was, that it seemed to afford a foundation on which on *à priori* grounds,

to rest the necessity of a revelation, by proving the inability of the human mind to penetrate by the aid of its natural powers into the secrets of the infinite, and thus apparently turning the weapons used by various systems of unbelieving philosophy against themselves. But in the eagerness of many to accept this result, they failed to observe that it was a weapon which admitted of being wielded with equal efficacy against Christianity, and even against all religion, as against unbelief. Another, and perhaps still more powerful reason was that to which I have already alluded, viz., that it seemed to open a way of escape from various moral difficulties inherent in certain systems of theology with reference to the Divine justice, holiness, and benevolence. These difficulties pressed heavily on the minds of many; and when the idea was suggested, that because God was infinite, justice, holiness, and benevolence in Him might differ from our finite conceptions of those qualities, it seemed to afford a kind of solution of the difficulty. But this also unfortunately is a two-edged weapon, more efficacious for the purpose of attacking Christianity than when it is wielded in its defence.

It has been necessary thus briefly to survey the unchristian aspect of this system of thought, when pressed, as it has been, and still is by the agnostic system of philosophy, beyond its legitimate limits; from which inferences are drawn which are not only subversive of Christianity, but of theism—at least of a theism which can exert any practical influence on mankind. But as I have already intimated, there is another side to this question, viz., the practical benefit which this controversy has conferred on Christianity by proving that in connection with various dogmas which have been made the subjects of violent dissensions in the Christian Church there are certain depths of thought into which the faculties of the human mind are unable to penetrate, and on which we must be contented to remain in ignorance. To this aspect of the question therefore let us now turn, and consider the light which this discussion has thrown on

the great controversies respecting the ontology of the incarnation, and the various subjects connected with it; how far such questions are accessible to the human intellect; and the limits within which our knowledge of it, and the knowledge which is communicated by it, are necessarily bounded. The consideration of this subject is of the utmost importance, because the numerous attempts which have been made to fathom the Divine ontology, and to define it in terms of logical thought, from the commencement of the fourth century downwards, have left a deep and permanent impress on Christian theology, and have gone far to convert Christianity from a moral and spiritual power, mighty to energize on the heart, into a mere system of philosophy addressed to the intellect.

If the view of Christianity out of which these controversies originated is correct, it follows that it must have been the chief aim of revelation to produce orthodoxy of belief, rather than holiness of life. Too often has the Church acted in past ages, as if it were so; and hence the vehemence with which it has insisted on the belief in a number of abstract metaphysical dogmas as necessary to salvation. Happily the interest of these disputes is rapidly passing away, never to return. This is largely due to the fact that modern investigations into the powers of the human mind have established it as an unquestionable truth, that there are limits to our knowledge of things, which we cannot pass; and that when we attempt to transcend those limits, all our reasonings become nugatory; and that this is the case in all our attempts to penetrate into the ontology of deity. To this result the controversies, such as those alluded to, have largely contributed, and so far, whether they have originated in the attacks of opponents, or in the unwise defences of friends, their results have been an unquestionable gain to the real interests of Christianity, by disencumbering it from the burden of a mass of abstract metaphysical dogmas with which its essence had become enshrouded. We now know

that a philosophy of the ontology of deity is impossible. Of this important truth our predecessors in the faith were practically ignorant. On the contrary, they laboured under the delusion that there was hardly any depth of thought which the logical intellect of man was not competent to explore—an error which they held in common with most of the philosophical systems of the ancient world. Hence the futile attempts which have been made in past ages to fathom these profound depths, and to define the mode of the Divine existence in terms cognizable by our finite understandings. Although this form of thought is rapidly becoming extinct under the combined influence of science, philosophy, and the application of a sound exegesis to Scripture, yet nearly every confession of faith in Christendom has been framed under its influences; and consequently abounds with attempts to define such subjects in terms of the logical understanding.

One of the most striking examples of the kind of discussions in which the Church has been thus involved is to be found in the great Trinitarian controversy which broke out in the beginning of the fourth century, and which continued for centuries afterwards to agitate the Church. Among the numerous ontological questions which became the subjects of fierce discussions were such as the following: Is the Son in His Divine nature of the same substance as the Father, or of one precisely similar? Do the words (I dare not call them ideas) Filiation and Procession constitute accurate measures of the relation in which the Son and the Spirit stand to the Father as the fountain of deity; or define the mode in which they derive their being from Him during the eternal ages?—a derivation, be it observed, which had no beginning, and will have no end. Does the Spirit in the ontology of His eternal existence proceed (*i.e.*, derive His being) from the Father only, or from the Father and the Son conjointly? It seems scarcely credible that questions so abstract and impalpable should ever have become the subjects of heated controversy, and absorbed nearly all the intellect of the

Christian Church in their discussion ; yet to this hour, the last of these forms one of the four great points on which the separation between the Oriental and Occidental Churches is based ; and on account of diversity of opinion on this subject they mutually charge each other with heresy and schism. Nay more, the schism thus created has been attended with the most serious political consequences to Europe, viz., the capture of Constantinople by the Turks, and consequent on that most disastrous event, the four centuries of slavery of Oriental Christendom to an oppressive anti-Christian power. It seems hardly credible, but it is a fact, that the question whether the Spirit proceeds from the Father only, or from the Father and the Son, formed one of the four points of difference which produced the rupture of the negotiations between the Eastern and Western Churches ; and the consequent withholding of aid to the crumbling empire of the Greeks in the hour of its utmost need. Of this the permanent enthronement of the Turkish power over Oriental Christendom has been the result.

Other questions equally abstract, of which the following are specimens, have been fiercely debated respecting the incarnation : What is the nature of the union between the Divine and the human in the person of Jesus Christ ? In what relation does the Divine Logos stand to His human soul ? Has our Lord two wills,—a Divine and a human—or one only ? Was the incarnation effected by God's becoming man, or by the incorporation of manhood with Deity ? Inasmuch as our Lord is God, is not His virgin mother the mother of God ? and does not the denial of her being so involve the existence of a two-fold personality in our Lord, viz., that of the Divine Logos and of the human Jesus ? I have merely cited these as examples of the innumerable metaphysical questions connected with the ontology of deity, which during several centuries have engrossed the attention of the Oriental Churches, as though the very existence of Christianity depended on their solution. To determine such questions councils have been

summoned, fierce contests have been engaged in, disingenuous artifices have been resorted to; anathema on anathema has been hurled against dissidents; and the Church has been shaken to its centre. The vehemence of the controversies aroused by these abstract discussions is at the present day difficult to realize; yet they were not confined to the council chambers of theologians; but they became the watchwords of parties among the populace, and, incredible as it may seem, the distinctive marks of factions in the circus; the contests between orthodoxy and heresy not unfrequently ending in riots and bloodshed. As an illustration of the violence with which these disputes were engaged in, one of the councils held for the settlement of these abstract metaphysical questions has not inaptly received from history the designation of the *Council of Robbers*. Would that its proceedings had been solitary and unique. Nothing can be more unlike the Apostolic writings than the records of these discussions. In the one we breathe the atmosphere of holiness and love; in the other one which is tainted by the violation of every Christian principle.

The class of controversy above referred to has chiefly raged in the Oriental Churches, though they have left a deep impress on the confessions of faith which have been adopted by the Churches of the West. But in these latter the controversy respecting the ontology of the incarnation has taken a different form, in the various attempts to define the nature of our Lord's presence in the Holy Communion, to which reference has been made in a previous chapter. This has been made the subject of endless metaphysical refinements, to form a conception of which we need only peruse the examinations of the Protestant martyrs during the Marian persecution. Both sides were doubtless sincere in their opinions; but it is impossible at the present day to believe that such subtleties and verbal hair-splittings have anything to do with the essence of Christianity. Yet the victorious party shed torrents of Christian blood for the purpose of enforcing a uniformity of belief in these

impalpable distinctions ; and ruthlessly consigned dissidents by thousands to the burning stake.

But while the vain attempt to elaborate a philosophy of the ontology of the Godhead was distracting the attention of the Oriental Churches from Christianity as a spiritual power, mighty to act on the heart, and to regenerate the life of man, another class of questions equally abstract, and equally insoluble by the human intellect, was absorbing the attention of the most active intellects of the West. I allude to the great Pelagian controversy, and the innumerable questions either directly involved in it, or growing out of it, such as predestination and election, the nature of grace and the mode of its action on the heart, the nature and extent of human depravity, the origin of evil, etc. To these must be added that enormous mass of metaphysical subtleties of which "the scholastic philosophy" is largely composed. Questions of this kind involve not only the ontology of Deity but the ontology of man ; and are in fact an attempt to elaborate a philosophy of Christianity and of man. Under the influence of these, and kindred systems of thought, Christianity ceases to be a spiritual power, and becomes metamorphosed into a philosophy designed merely to satisfy the demands of the intellect. In this respect however its failure has been complete.

I must now ask the reader's attention to the causes of this failure.

1. All attempts to penetrate into the regions of ontology transcend the powers of the human understanding. This arises from the fact that, with the exception of our primary intuitions, our entire knowledge is limited to phenomena. While it is true that our reason compels us to recognize the existence of a reality which underlies phenomena, it furnishes us with no instrumentality which will enable us to penetrate into the mode of its existence. Our two great instruments for the discovery of truth are the principles of induction and of deduction. The former is limited to the investigation of phenomena, and is therefore incapable of affirming anything



respecting the realities which underlie them. The latter can only exercise itself on such data as the mind possesses, viz., its primary intuitions, the affirmations of our consciousness, and its phenomenal conceptions; and as neither of these furnish us with any information respecting underlying realities, it is impossible for us to attain to the knowledge of them by any amount of deductive reasoning; for in all deductive reasonings the truth which is affirmed in the conclusion must be contained in the premisses. The fact is that deductive reasonings are only absolutely conclusive within that very limited range of subject-matter where demonstration is possible; and this is only possible when they have to deal only with our simplest conceptions, such as space, number, and a few others equally definite; but the moment we attempt to deal with complicated abstract conceptions, such as those above referred to, we cease to have any certainty that the ideas which enter into our conclusions are the precise equivalents of those in our original premisses; and the introduction of a conception, however slightly different from the original one, in a long chain of reasoning, vitiates the entire argument. Hence it follows that the results of all such deductive reasonings require to be submitted to the test of verification before they can be accepted as conclusive; and this is impossible in all cases of abstract thought. The impossibility of discovering truth by the use of deductive reasonings alone, except in the few cases above referred to, is proved by the entire history of philosophical and scientific thought of all ages.

But if, owing to the limitations of our intellects, we are unable to penetrate into the ontology of the phenomena by which we are surrounded, how impossible must it be, with no other instrumentality to penetrate into the ontology of the Godhead, or to explore the secrets of the Divine subsistence. Of phenomena we have experience; and yet their ontology we cannot formulate in terms of definite thought. Of this the numerous attempts to define the reality which underlies our conception of matter are a striking proof.

I will mention one of them, that which defines matter as a centre of force; or again, the definition which has been given of consciousness, as a permanent possibility of sensation. What, I ask, are these but to define one unknown thing by another still more unknown and vague? Of phenomena however we both have experience, and our conceptions are capable of presenting definite images to our minds; but of the Godhead it is as true now as it was more than three thousand years ago,

“Behold I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him” (Job xxiii. 8, 9).

And, “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea” (Job xi. 7-9).

From the above principles the following conclusion is a necessary consequence. Our finite conceptions being inadequate measures of the fulness of the realities as they exist in God, it is impossible that they can form a basis on which to rest long chains of deductive reasonings; and even if this were possible, that such reasonings should disclose the secrets of the Divine ontology, or even image them to our understandings in terms of our finite intellects.

Let us now briefly sum up the chief points which are proved by the preceding arguments as directly bearing on the subject under consideration.

1. Since it is impossible to formulate in thought the ideas of the infinite, the absolute, and the first cause, as existing in a single personality, although we cannot help thinking that these conceptions must harmoniously co-exist in God, the attempt to draw inferences from them must be futile; and as the entire subject transcends the limits of our understandings, the attempt to penetrate into it can only result in a barren logomachy.

2. While we cannot help ascribing personality to God—(for unless we do so, it is impossible to think of Him as a moral being); but at the same time are incapable of framing in our minds a definite image of one who, while He is a person, is yet devoid of limitations, all reasonings founded on such premisses must fail to conduct us to a knowledge of the Divine ontology.

3. Similarly, while the constitution of our minds compels us to believe in the existence of a first cause of all finite existence, itself uncaused; and therefore to ascribe to God an existence which never had a beginning; yet at the same time we are incapable of definitely formulating in thought the conception of a being whose existence is independent of the limitations of time, it follows that abstract reasonings founded on such data cannot disclose to us the secrets of the Divine subsistence.

4. So also it is with our conception of God as the creator of the finite. Not to believe in Him as such, is equivalent to a denial of His existence. Yet the conceptions of creation, and of non-existence, we are unable to formulate in definite thought. Hence the various efforts which have been made to lay down by means of abstract reasonings, a theory of the relation of the infinite to the finite, have necessarily been barren of result.

5. If we believe in God at all, we cannot help believing in Him as incapable of change. At the same time we cannot help believing that during some period of the eternity of the past He created the finite. But how a being can be unchangeable, and at the same time the creator of the finite, transcends our powers of comprehension, because the very conception of creation involves the idea that the being who had existed alone, and without change, during the eternity of the past, must by the very act of creation have put forth a fresh energy, and entered into a new relation. This alone is sufficient to prove that all abstract reasonings founded on such data must be devoid of validity.

6. As the Divine ontology transcends the limits of our experience, we are unable to make it the subject of inductive reasoning, by which all the great discoveries of science have been effected ; and consequently we are unable to test the value of our deductive reasonings by applying to them the principle of verification.

7. Inasmuch as abstract reasonings which cannot be verified by an appeal to facts are unreliable as guides to truth,—and the entire class of reasonings which we are now considering are of this character,—it is impossible to arrive by means of them at conclusions which would be entitled to demand our acceptance as unquestionable religious verities.

8. While the limitation of our faculties renders us unable to penetrate into the secrets of the Divine existence ; and while it is impossible for us to know God in His infinitude, there is nothing which hinders such finite knowledge of Him as we derive from nature or revelation from being a veritable representation of realities which exist in Him.

The foregoing conclusions have a very important bearing on our knowledge of the incarnation and its limitations. They prove,

First :

That by no efforts of either inductive or deductive reasoning is it possible to penetrate into its ontology, or to define it in terms of our finite thought.

Secondly :

Inasmuch as this inability results from the inadequacy of our finite conceptions to measure the abstract realities of the Divine existence, a knowledge of them cannot be communicated even by revelation ; because revelation, in order to be comprehensible by our finite intellects, must be expressed in terms of the finite.

Thirdly :

Inasmuch as the various conceptions which enter into the controversies above referred to are either derived from our own consciousness, or from the finite objects by which we

are surrounded, no reasonings on them can enable us to transcend the limits of that consciousness, or of the phenomena from which the analogies are derived; and consequently they can impart to us no additional knowledge respecting the realities themselves.

Fourthly :

While our mental powers are inadequate to image to our minds the mode of the Divine existence, they are fully competent to conceive of that existence and to believe in it as a fact.

Fifthly :

An incarnation is no more inconceivable than the idea of creation; by which I mean the bringing forth of being out of non-being. While the mode in which this has been effected transcends the power of our finite intellects even to image in thought, yet we are fully competent to conceive of it as a fact; and on adequate evidence we are fully justified in believing in it as a truth. Precisely similar is it with respect to the incarnation. The mode in which it has been effected transcends our finite powers to comprehend; but the fact is conceivable, and on sufficient evidence, believable.

Sixthly :

The grounds on which an incarnation becomes believable as a fact are the following :—

Either the incontestable manifestation of a superhuman character in a particular person, as laid down in the prologue of St. John's Gospel.

Or,

The affirmation of the incarnate being, founded on the direct consciousness of the Divine within Him.

Or,

From the assertions of others, who are able to authenticate the truth of their affirmations by an adequate Divine attestation.

Other evidence of it there can be none. Thus our Lord claims belief in His affirmations of His own superhuman character, in virtue of His absolute sinlessness; and also

because the works which He did in His Father's name bore witness of Him. In the first of these cases however, as such an affirmation might be attributed to an excited imagination, the clear and unmistakable manifestation of a superhuman character on the part of the person in whose behalf such lofty claims are made is absolutely necessary to entitle it to credit. In the case of our Lord however, assuming that the facts which are recorded in the Gospels are trustworthy, the evidence is more than sufficient to substantiate the claim.

Seventhly :

Our entire knowledge on this subject is limited to our Lord's affirmations respecting Himself, and to the record of His actions and teaching as it is preserved in the Gospels, and to the authoritative explanations of it in the other writings of the New Testament. All our other supposed knowledge on this subject is simply a deduction of our logical intellects; and as such, must be subject to all the imperfections to which our limited understandings are liable.

Yet notwithstanding this impotency of reason to penetrate into these profound depths, theologians of past ages have not hesitated to map out the ontology of the incarnation in definite forms of finite thought, and to erect their deductions into dogmas which they have declared to be such essential portions of Christianity that they must be accepted and believed in under peril of damnation. A well known creed,—which is only too faithful an image of the theology of the past,—proclaims, "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith, which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." It then proceeds to announce that the Catholic faith consists of a number of abstract dogmas respecting the ontology of the Godhead. "The Catholic faith is this," says this creed, "that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance." It then in the course of twenty-three versicles enunciates

no less than seventy dogmas respecting various abstract points concerning the Divine ontology, and then proceeds to affirm that, "Whosoever will be saved must thus think of the Trinity." But the imposition of this burden on the consciences of others was far from contenting its author; for he immediately adds: "Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and then proceeds not simply to affirm it as a matter of fact, in language taken from the Scripture, but to propound a number of abstract propositions respecting its ontology, and the mode of the union of the Divine and human in our Lord's person; and concludes with the affirmation, "This is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved."

But a higher authority has affirmed that the belief in the Catholic faith which is necessary to salvation is as follows:—

"The word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is the word of faith which we preach; because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. i. 8-10).

The contrast presented in this passage between the belief which St. Paul considered to be all that is necessary to salvation, and the multitude of metaphysical abstractions which are superadded as essential by the author of this creed is so striking that it will be unnecessary to draw further attention to it. If St. Paul is right, it is evident that the creed has added a number of most unnecessary conditions. Its damnable clauses are so distressing to the Christian conscience that even Convocation has felt itself compelled to adopt the absurd course of affixing to it a kind of rubric, explanatory of the sense in which they are accepted by the Church of England, *i.e.*, it explains them in a sense which the reader instinctively feels to be non-natural; but even

this sorry device leaves the attempt to define the ontology of the Godhead in terms of human thought untouched.

I shall only adduce a single passage from the concluding portion of this creed as illustrating the futility, nay, the absurdity of this attempt. I allude to its definitions of the mode in which the Divine and human are united in the person of our Lord :—

“God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the world; and man of the substance of his mother, born in the world. Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Who, although He be God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ. One, not by the conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by the taking of the manhood into God. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh are one man, so God and man is one Christ.”

Respecting these assertions I observe, that it is impossible for us to know whether they are true or false, because the mode of the union of the Divine and the human in a single personality is a thing which stands outside the entire range of human experience. Respecting it therefore, that experience can affirm nothing. Nor do the Scriptures tell us anything about the mode in which the incarnation was effected. The passage which has the nearest approach to affording information on the subject is the affirmation of St. John in the prologue of his Gospel, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us;” but even here he is only affirming a fact, *and not explaining how the incarnation was effected*. But the rationalism of the author of the creed enables him to penetrate deeper into the Divine ontology and to inform us that it was effected “not by the conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by the taking of the manhood into God. He then attempts to throw additional light on the subject by the following analogy : “For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.” But how is it possible for us to know that analogies derived from the



experience which we have of our own existence are able to convey to us any knowledge as to the mode of the Divine existence, which so utterly transcends it? No two things can be more unlike than the unchangeable existence of the infinite God and the ever-changing existence of finite man. It follows therefore that no analogy derived from the testimony of our consciousness, or from the most careful observation of our own mental processes, can form a valid ground for reasoning about the mode in which the Divine and human co-exist in our Lord's personality, or as to the manner in which they act and re-act on each other. All that we can do is to accept the statements of our Lord respecting Himself, and those of the sacred writers respecting Him, as facts; but to penetrate into the realities behind them, or to explain the difficulties which they present, is impossible, for the simple reason that the entire subject, and everything connected with it, lies outside the limits of our experience; and all such explanations can only be made in terms of that experience.

But even if our experience of ourselves could form a valid ground of reasoning on this subject, we are confronted by the fact that it has not yet enabled the profoundest thinker to penetrate into the realities which underlie his own being, or the mode in which the various parts of it act and re-act on each other. Thus we know that we consist of body and mind; but how body and mind co-exist, so as to form that personality of which we are conscious, we are profoundly ignorant. So likewise we know that we consist of a bodily organism, a vital principle, of appetites, of passions, and of an intelligence which is common to us and the higher races of animals; and in addition to these, of a higher reason, and a spiritual and moral nature which constitute the special peculiarity of man; but respecting the mode of their co-existence, how they unite in a single personality, and a single consciousness; and how they act and re-act on each other, we are utterly in the dark. Again, science has proved that the

things external to ourselves which excite sensations in us, are motions; but how these motions are transformed into sensations in our brain; how these sensations become thought; how these thoughts undergo those further transformations which are manifested in the highest displays of our mental activity, are secrets into which the most acute intellects have failed to penetrate; and respecting which we still continue as ignorant as we were before the dawn of either science or philosophy. So again the fact that we are conscious beings is the highest of our certitudes. But respecting the nature of that consciousness, or those parts of our being which we do not conceive of as included within our own personality, and the nature of our relation to them, our ignorance is profound. In like manner we are certain of our own personal identity; we know it as a fact; but of what that identity consists, and how it is preserved amidst incessant change, we know nothing. It would be easy to enumerate a number of other things connected with our being, of whose existence our experience is direct, while our ignorance of their ontology is equally profound.

The bearing of these points on our present argument is obvious. If we are unable to penetrate into the realities which underlie our own being, of which we have experience, and of those facts, the truth of which our consciousness affirms as the highest of certitudes, how is it possible for us to penetrate into the mode of the union of the Divine and the human in the person of our Lord; or the manner in which they act and re-act on each other, respecting which our experience is *nil*, and our consciousness is unable to furnish us with the smallest information? One might have hoped that our demonstrated inability to penetrate into the secrets of the one would have deterred even the most presumptuous of men from attempting to penetrate into the secrets of the other; still more, that it would have restrained them from proclaiming a number of abstract dogmas on points of this description to be essential verities of God's revelation; and from demanding their acceptance by others

under penalty of present exclusion from the kingdom of God, and of “without doubt perishing everlastingly” in the world to come. I have only further to observe, that the above principles are equally applicable to numerous other points of abstract theology which, taken at their best, are not an exposition of Christianity, but only of its supposed philosophy.

These limitations of the human intellect have likewise a very important bearing on various attempts which have been made to explain the difficulties arising out of the affirmations of the Gospels respecting the limits of our Lord’s knowledge. Thus it is generally felt that these limitations, if they really exist, militate against the truth of his deity, on the ground that if he is truly God, his knowledge must be without limits. Hence the numerous attempts which have been made to explain away what is obviously the natural meaning of these affirmations; or else the expedient has been had recourse to, of dividing our Lord’s personality into two factors, and assuming that when either Himself or the Evangelists have affirmed or implied limitations to His knowledge, they affirmed those limitations not of Jesus Christ in the unity of His being, but in His human nature only, thus apparently assigning to Him two distinct consciousnesses; which seems a near approach to attributing to Him a double personality.

The existence of limitations to our Lord’s knowledge is distinctly affirmed by Himself in the following words:—

“But of that day and that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father” (Mark xiii. 31).

The corresponding passage in St. Matthew in the Revised Version is still more express:—“But the Father only.”

I will not trouble the reader by setting before him any of the attempts which have been made to explain away the obviously natural meaning of this declaration; but I shall at once assume that it unquestionably affirms a limitation of knowledge in Him who is here designated “The Son;” whether the day and the hour here mentioned refer to the

time of the destruction of the temple, or to some other great event in God's providence, or to our Lord's final manifestation in glory.

I do not wish to deny, if our ordinary human standards of reasoning are applicable to such subjects, that this declaration involves a great intellectual difficulty. The general mode adopted for its solution is to assume that the word "Son" does not refer to our Lord's individual personality, but to His human nature only. But even if this interpretation threw any real light on the subject—which it does not—we are confronted by the fact that such usage of the word "Son" is unknown to the Gospels, where it uniformly denotes His entire personality; as in the following instances:—

"All things have been delivered unto me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father" (Matt. xi. 27).

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."

"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing."

"The Father loveth the Son."

"That all men may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

"If therefore the Son shall make you free."

But the difficulty in question is by no means confined to the simple passage above quoted; for while this is the only one in which our Lord has directly affirmed that His knowledge was limited, numerous statements of the writers of the Gospels either affirm or imply the same truth. Out of a large number of such passages the following will suffice as examples:—

"And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke ii. 52).

"And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom (or as the margin reads, becoming full of wisdom), and the grace of God was upon him" (Luke ii. 48).

The first of these passages definitely affirms an increase of knowledge as well as of stature in him whom the Evangelist calls Jesus. But knowledge which is capable of increase, must be a limited knowledge.

Again : St. John writes—

“ When therefore the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John . . . he left Judea, and departed into Galilee ” (John iv. 1-3).

Similar is a statement of St. Matthew :—

“ And when Jesus heard of it (*i.e.*, the murder of John the Baptist), he withdrew from thence in a boat to a desert place apart ; and when the multitudes heard thereof, they followed him on foot from the cities ” (Matt. xiv. 13).

The natural meaning of these two passages is that our Lord’s movements on each of these occasions were determined by His having received information concerning things of which He was not previously aware. In the last of them the Evangelist assigns the movements of our Lord and of the multitudes to precisely the same cause—“ And when Jesus heard of it ; ” and “ when the multitude heard thereof.”

But not to multiply examples of similar modes of speaking—which are extremely numerous in the Gospels—it will be sufficient to quote St. Mark’s narrative of the blasting of the barren fig-tree :—

“ And on the morrow, when they came out from Bethany, he hungered ; and seeing a fig-tree afar off, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon. And when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season of figs. And he answered and said, No man eat fruit from thee henceforward for ever. And his disciples heard it ” (Mark xi. 12-14). Here again it is impossible to mistake the natural meaning of the words used by the Evangelist. They unquestionably imply his belief that our Lord was not aware that the fig-tree was destitute of fruit until, by actual examination of it, He ascertained its

barrenness ; and they do not merely imply, but they actually affirm, that He went up to it with a view of satisfying His hunger. Yet according to the usual mode of explaining this passage, it is necessary to assume that our Lord was already fully aware of the facts ; and consequently that His going up and examining the tree was a scene got up and acted for the benefit of the disciples. Nothing but the direst necessity ought to induce us to attribute such conduct to Him who said, "I am the truth." "To this end have I been born, and to this end I am come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." To teach by parable, figure, or outward act, after the manner of the prophets, is one thing ; but the narrative positively affirms that the object of our Lord in going up to the fig-tree was to see if there was any fruit on it wherewith to satisfy his hunger ; and when on the following morning His attention is called to the withered state of the tree, His simple reply is : Have faith in God.

It will perhaps be urged that the Evangelists have described our Lord's actions as they appeared to the outward eye ; and that they were in error in attributing to Him the motives to which they have assigned them. It is inconceivable however that they should have written as they have, if they had felt any of the difficulties above mentioned. But the perusal of the Gospels leaves on the mind of the reader the impression that the Evangelists understood these passages in their natural sense ; and that they intended them to be so understood by others : otherwise it is incredible that they should not have offered some explanation such as that which the modern commentator is in the habit of interposing. There is not a hint from one end of the Gospels to the other, that our Lord as mere man was ignorant of this or that, and that He knew it as God. Even the author of the fourth Gospel, notwithstanding the loftiness of his Christology, has never once offered an explanation of the difficulty in question by drawing attention to the distinction between our Lord's knowledge

as God and His knowledge as man, although he not unfrequently comments on His utterances and the reasons for His actions. He contents himself with ascribing to Him an insight into human nature, which we may justly designate as superhuman; as in the following passages: but even in these no reference is made to the distinction in question:—

“Now when he was at Jerusalem at the passover, many believed on his name, beholding the signs which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, for that he knew all men, and because he needed not that any should bear witness concerning man, for he himself knew what was in man” (John ii. 23-25).

Again: “Jesus knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at this, said unto them, Doth this cause you to stumble? . . . For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him” (John vi. 61-64).

Yet the same author also wrote the passage above quoted, “When therefore the Lord knew how that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John. . . . he left Judæa” (John iv. 1-3), and saw nothing incongruous in it.

Further: the whole tenor of this Gospel makes it evident that its author was acquainted with the synoptic narrative; yet he takes no notice of the difficulty involved in the limitation of our Lord’s knowledge which they either affirm or imply; nor can any reference be found to it in the other writings of the New Testament. From this it is the natural inference that the sacred writers either did not trouble themselves about it, or were unconscious of its existence.

Several passages in the Epistles bear on the same question. It will be sufficient to quote two of them.

“Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God: but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled

himself, becoming obedient, even unto death, yea the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 6-8).

And—

"Wherefore it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Heb. ii. 17).

Both these passages affirm that the Divine Logos in the incarnation entered into limitations; but respecting their extent they furnish us with not the smallest information; and the same is true with respect to the New Testament generally. However interesting therefore this subject may be as a matter of speculative inquiry, this silence on the part of the sacred writers proves that they considered the entire question to be outside the limits of Christianity as a revelation.

Whatever mode theological ingenuity may adopt for breaking the force of the numerous indirect allusions contained in the Gospels to the limitations of our Lord's knowledge, we arrive at this point at last, that the fact that it had limitations must be admitted. By no torturing of His words is it possible to get rid of His own express declaration, that He, the Son, was ignorant of the day and the hour of His parousia. This one case of the limitation of His knowledge being admitted (and to dispute it involves the denial that the discourses recorded in the Gospels are accurate representations of His genuine utterances), there is no difficulty in the fact that it had other limitations also. To reduce these limitations to a minimum, and to propound this as a solution of the difficulty in question is to evade it, not to solve it; for the difficulty arises, not from the number of the limitations, but from the fact that there were any.

If the point which we are considering was one which came within the range of our experience, the validity of the following reasoning would be indisputable:—The Divine knowledge is destitute of limitations. But Jesus Christ is God. Therefore His knowledge must be destitute of



limitations: consequently He must have known the day and the hour of His parousia. Against this conclusion however stands the fact that we have His own express affirmation that it was unknown to Him. This being so, two alternatives have commended themselves to theologians of opposite schools of thought; the orthodox one, that our Lord, when speaking of Himself as *the Son*, meant to make the affirmation with regard to His human nature only; and that which has been propounded by various schools of heterodox theologians, that although He may have been superhuman, He is not Divine. With respect to the first of these, it will be sufficient to remark that the word "*Son*," as a designation of our Lord's human nature only, is unknown to the writers of the New Testament. It usually denotes His incarnate person; and occasionally His Divine subsistence prior to the incarnation.

The only adequate explanation of this and similar difficulties is that to which I have repeatedly referred, viz., that the entire subject of the incarnation lies so completely outside the range of human experience, that our ordinary reasonings are inapplicable to it. In fact we are without the means of determining whether an incarnation does, or does not include limitations in the incarnate personality. Respecting this our reason can affirm nothing. Of ourselves and our mental operations we have experience; and therefore our reasonings, when founded on the facts of that experience, are valid, as long as they keep within its range; but when we attempt by their aid to penetrate into the secrets of our own ontology, they fail. We know, for example, that we consist of an animal and a spiritual nature, which are united in a single personality. Yet we are totally unable to comprehend the nature of the union, or the mode in which these two factors of our being act and re-act on each other; or how far the one is limited by the other. But an incarnation lies entirely beyond the limits of our experience; and of the mode of the union of the Divine and the human, or how the attributes of the one are related

to, or limited by the other when united in a single personality, we know absolutely nothing. If therefore the experience which we have of ourselves, and the closest observation of our own mental operations, leave us completely in the dark as to the mode in which the animal and spiritual factors of our being are united in us in a single personality, and in a single consciousness; and how far the one limits the action of the other, or makes it different from what it would have been if these two factors had existed separately; much more must our want of all experimental knowledge of an incarnation render our reasonings as to the mode of union between the Divine and the human factors in the person of Jesus Christ, and on the mode in which they act and re-act, and respectively limit each other, hopelessly invalid. Consequently all *a priori* reasonings as to whether an incarnation of deity involves, or does not involve, a limitation of knowledge in the incarnate personality, having no ground of experience on which to base themselves, must be futile. Hence all our knowledge of this subject must be a knowledge of facts only, viz., either the facts of the incarnate life itself, or the testimony of the incarnate person respecting himself. Other information we can have none. The facts we can accept and believe in, in the same manner as all other kinds of facts, notwithstanding the abstract metaphysical difficulties with which they may be surrounded; in truth we are bound to do so on every principle of reason, when they are proved on an adequate attestation to be veritable facts. In this respect the incarnation is not peculiar; for difficulties which are insoluble by our reason underlie every department of thought, even the facts of common life. Thus the existence of a material atom, and the mode of its action on other atoms, involves mysteries into which we cannot penetrate; yet we justly accept facts as facts, although the mode of their existence, the how and the wherefore, lie beyond our ken. With respect to the incarnation therefore we have only one alternative. We must accept the Divine facts on the

testimony of the writers of the New Testament with all the difficulties which they involve to our finite understandings—for these writings constitute our sole authorities—or reject them altogether. This kind of testimony is the only evidence which the case admits of. So also we must accept the belief in the existence of a God who is a moral being; in the free agency and responsibility of man; and in our own existence beyond the grave, *on their own proper evidence*, notwithstanding all the metaphysical difficulties which have been referred to in the course of the preceding reasonings, or fall back on the still greater difficulties of agnosticism;—a system which, although it is not theoretical, is practical atheism;—because, while it proclaims that the existence of a God, *i.e.*, of a first cause, is a necessity of thought, at the same time it declares that He must for ever remain unknown and unknowable to man; in other words that He is a being whose existence may be safely, nay, advantageously ignored in practical life, since we can know nothing respecting His character, His providence, His justice, or His mercy; nor even that He is the moral governor of the world, or is capable of discriminating between holiness and sin; and consequently that we have nothing either to hope or to fear respecting Him as to the future.

## CHAPTER XVII.

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### THE CHRIST OF THE GOSPELS.

THE fourth Gospel attributes the following utterance to our Lord:—

“If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also; from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I say unto you I speak not of myself; but the Father abiding in me doeth his works” (John xiv. 7-10).

The discussion of the genuineness of the discourses attributed to our Lord in this Gospel is wholly foreign to the purposes of the present work; and could only be adequately treated in a volume specially devoted to it. On the contrary, our purpose throughout has been, taking the New Testament as it stands, to endeavour to ascertain from it what its writers viewed as constituting the essence of Christianity; and to lay down a clear distinction between it and that mass of subject-matter which theology has almost succeeded in identifying with Christianity itself. This being

so, it is my duty, as far as the present work is concerned, to accept these discourses without first endeavouring to prove their genuineness.

Assuming therefore that our Lord really uttered the words above quoted, they contain a distinct affirmation that He regarded Himself as being in His person, actions and teaching, a revelation of the moral perfections of God. They definitely affirm that if those whom He was addressing had known Him, they would have known His Father also; and that now, after He had drawn their attention to the fact, they both knew Him and had seen Him. One of the Apostles however, having before him the theophanies of the Old Testament, observed, that if our Lord would show one such theophany of the Father, it would be all that they could desire for their fullest conviction. Our Lord's reply is virtually as follows:—These appearances were no real manifestation of Him whom no man hath seen or can see. Do not imagine that those who witnessed them really beheld God. They were intended for special purposes; and failed to manifest the realities of the Divine character. These realities are seen in me. He that hath seen me hath seen all that can be made visible of the Father to mortal eye. I am in the Father, and the Father in me. He therefore that has seen me has seen the Father. My teaching has not been my own, but His; the works that I do are not mine, but the works of the Father abiding in me. I am the manifestation of the moral perfections of God.

How then, now that eighteen centuries and a half have passed away since our Lord has ceased to be visible to human eye, are we to behold this vision of the Father? Has it ceased to be possible now that He is no longer present among men? I answer, that all of it that is necessary for us to behold is exhibited in the portraiture of the Divine Christ of the Gospels. All who steadily contemplate the glorious character therein depicted may still behold a revelation (not of God in His ontology, but) of the moral

character and the perfections of God. Such as Jesus was, such is God.

Let us therefore, in full reliance on our Lord's declaration that "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," and "The things that I have heard of him, these speak I unto the world," contemplate the Father as He is revealed in the person, actions, and teaching of the Divine Christ.

### 1. JESUS CHRIST IS THE REVELATION OF THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

Our Lord throughout His entire teaching as it is recorded in the Gospels speaks of God as "the Father." It is comparatively rarely that He speaks of Him simply as God. The idea of Fatherhood therefore in His view not only exists in God, but forms the most prominent aspect of the Divine character. The idea of paternity and of sonship is realized in their highest form in the relation in which He stands to God, and God to Him. "Thou hast loved me," He says, "before the foundation of the world." Thus there never was a time when the conception of Fatherhood did not exist in God. But this conception of Fatherhood and Sonship, as it exists between Himself and God, He uniformly treats as the image of the Divine paternity and sonship between God and man. Yet He invariably speaks of the Divine paternity towards Himself as something special—it is in fact the perfect realization of the idea—and He carefully distinguishes it throughout His entire teaching from God's paternity in relation to others. Speaking of the relation in which God stands to Himself, He uniformly uses the words "my Father;" speaking of that in which He stands to others, it is, "your Father;" and never once does He use the words "our Father" as applicable in common to others and Himself. Of this usage the following passage constitutes a striking example:—

"Go to my brethren, and say unto them . . I ascend unto my Father, and to your Father ; to my God, and your God " (John xx. 17).

But while our Lord affirms that the conception of Fatherhood, as it exists in God, receives its perfect realization in the unique relation in which He stands to God, yet it is the image of that in which God stands to His creatures : the one being the relation of paternity in the highest sense in which it is possible to conceive of it, and the other, that of paternity by creation, which is the only possible one which can exist between the Creator and the creature ; yet, so close is the resemblance, that, while our Lord carefully distinguishes the one from the other, He designates His disciples by the term *brethren*. Thus, in the passage above quoted, He says, "Go to *my brethren* and say unto them."

It will be sufficient to quote a few passages from the Sermon on the Mount to prove that the Fatherhood of God in relation to man occupies a place of the highest importance in our Lord's teaching. Thus we read:—

"That ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust " (Matt. v. 45).

"Ye therefore shall be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect " (Matt. v. 48).

"Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them : else ye have no reward with your Father which is in heaven " (Matt. vi. 1).

"That thine alms may be in secret : and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall recompense thee " (Matt. vi. 4).

"Having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall recompense thee " (Matt. vi. 6).

"Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him. After this manner therefore pray ye : Our Father which art in heaven " (Matt. vi. 8, 9).

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men

their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses " (Matt. vi. 14, 15).

" That thou be not seen of men to fast, but of thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall recompense thee " (Matt. vi. 17, 18).

" Behold the fowls of the air, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; and your heavenly Father feedeth them " (Matt. vi. 26).

" For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things " (Matt. vi. 32).

" If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him " (Matt. vii. 11).

The Sermon on the Mount therefore is a reiterated affirmation of the Fatherhood of God. It likewise affirms (despite of all philosophical systems which assert the contrary ; and the absurd charge urged against theists of manufacturing anthropomorphic conceptions of deity) that the human relation of Fatherhood constitutes the fundamental conception of Fatherhood in God. This is directly affirmed in the context of the passage last quoted :—

" What man is there of you who, if his son ask of him a loaf, will give him a stone ; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent ? " It will doubtless be objected by a certain order of thinkers that God can only be the Father of the holy, and that He cannot be the Father of the evil. My reply to this is, that it directly contradicts our Lord's affirmations respecting the Divine Fatherhood, and conspicuously the following :—

" That ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."

Thus God causing His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and His sending rain on the just and on the unjust, is referred to by the Divine Speaker as a manifestation of His universal Fatherhood.



Again : the persons addressed throughout this discourse are supposed to be only imperfectly good, as in the following utterances :—

“ For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Yet the Divine Speaker speaks of God as the Father of such.

Still more, he speaks of Him as the Father even of the evil.

“ If then, ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him.”

The distinction in question is therefore due to the exigencies of certain systems of theology ; but it is not to be found in the teaching of Him who “ spake that he knew and bore witness of that he had seen.”

I fully admit that a son who is persistently rebellious may justly forfeit all the privileges of sonship ; but this is not the question here, but whether God is revealed by our Lord as standing to all mankind in the relation of a Father, and whether an overwhelming majority of the human race no longer participate in the blessings of the Divine Fatherhood. It will hardly be contended that the utterer of the parable of the Prodigal Son did not intend to picture the Father in the parable as yearning with the feelings of a parent over his lost son, or that it is not intended to be an image of the relation in which God stands as Father even to those who are infected with the evil spirit of which the prodigal son is the type. “ He is kind,” as St. Luke reports our Lord’s words, “ to the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”

I conclude therefore that our Lord’s teaching as it is recorded in the Gospels sets forth the all-important truth, that the relation in which God stands to mankind as their creator and preserver is best represented by that which a father bears to his offspring ; and that their sonship is the

image of his own. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son."

It will doubtless be objected by unbelievers, that in thus ascribing Fatherhood to God we are simply projecting into Him a quality which exists merely as a human relationship, and that thus, while we imagine that we are conceiving of God as He actually exists, we are only creating a God in the likeness of man. This objection however rests on the assumption that man is not made in the image of God. That he is, is in itself far more probable than that man manufactures a god after his own image. But if man is made after the image of God, then the paternal and the filial relations in man are images—imperfect, I grant, but yet images—of the perfect reality which exists in the Godhead between the Father and the Son; only God's fatherly character is more perfect, more loving, more tender and more holy than the relation which exists between a human parent and his child. The position taken by Christianity is, that man is made in the image of God; and consequently we rightly ascribe to Him the moral attributes of man; but with this qualification, that in God they exist in a perfect, and in man in an imperfect form.

Surely the affirmation is far more philosophical, that man, with all his God-like powers, is made in the image of God, than that he has been produced by some unknown process of mechanical or chemical evolution out of some being destitute alike of intelligence, freedom and morality.

The Fatherhood of God to man is therefore affirmed by our Lord in the most definite terms, and His relation to mankind, as their Father, rather than as their Creator, forms one of the most special aspects of Christianity as it is exhibited in His teaching. God, it is true, is occasionally spoken of in the Old Testament as a Father, but His Fatherhood is limited to that of the Jewish nation. His usual designation is God Almighty, "Jehovah," and "Jehovah (or as in the authorized version, Lord) of Hosts." This latter title occurs only once in the New Testament,

(James v. 4, "Lord of Sabaoth") in what is almost a quotation from the Old, its place being taken by that of Father, or the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The term also is not unknown even to Pagan literature. Thus we find its supreme God not unfrequently designated as the Father of Gods and men; and in the Greek and Roman Pantheons the conception of Fatherhood formed an integral portion of his name. Yet the Fatherhood thus ascribed to the supreme God of Paganism contained scarcely a single moral element, and was therefore destitute of moral value. It was in fact the simple Fatherhood of derivation of being, and was compatible with actions of a most unfatherly character. Still it bears witness to the great truth that the conception is congenial to the human mind, though it was unable by the exercise of its rational powers to form the conception of a moral Fatherhood.

The cause of this is evident; for when we interrogate reason on the subject, it speaks of God's Fatherhood with a faltering voice, I mean of His moral Fatherhood. Nature, it is true, abounds with instances of the beneficence of its author, as witnessed by the vast mass of enjoyment diffused throughout the sentient creation. Against this however reason cannot help setting the physical and moral evil which, like a dark cloud, overshadows the life of animals and of men; and also the fact that God in His government of the universe acts in conformity with invariable law, and steadily pursues His course—as far as man can see—regardless of the sufferings which necessarily result from it. Thus the mystery of evil, into which no light of reason enables us to penetrate, greatly obscures our view of the moral paternity of God. This can only be attained from a higher standpoint, which will enable us to take a wider view of the Divine government than falls within our present vision. In other words, we can only be assured that God's paternity is a moral Fatherhood on the testimony of one who "speaks that He knows, and testifies that which He has seen," and who can therefore convey to us the assurance

that that which in the Divine government we are unable to see now, we shall see hereafter. This is done by Jesus Christ in His revelation of the moral Fatherhood of God. Reason affords a foundation on which to rest this assurance when thus testified to us ; but it cannot of itself supply it.

On this revelation of the moral Fatherhood of God our Lord has erected the great edifice of His moral teaching : perhaps it would be more correct to say that He has placed moral obligation on a new basis, by resting it on the Divine paternity ; for this forms the basis of His great doctrine of the brotherhood of mankind. Viewed in this light, the two great commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy might, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," become transformed from a law of duty to God as Creator into a law of love freely rendered to Him as a Father. So completely does this view of the relation in which God stands to man pervade the teaching of the New Testament, that whenever the Divine name is mentioned, His fatherly relationship is almost invariably pre-supposed. Thus He is "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," "the Father of mercies," "the God of love," "the God of all comfort," "the God of patience and consolation," "the God of hope," "the God of peace," "the Father who sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

Assuming therefore that not only is God's Fatherhood to man one of the fundamental principles of our Lord's moral teaching, but that His life of self-sacrifice is the perfect embodiment of the idea, the following all-important conclusion necessarily results. All the dogmas of theologians which attribute to God a character or ascribe to Him actions inconsistent with the conception of moral Fatherhood, can form no portion of that revelation which He has made to man in Jesus Christ. They must be either inaccurate interpretations of it or mere deductions of human reason ; and if such reasonings contradict this fundamental principle of our Lord's teaching, it is evident that a flaw must exist somewhere in the processes

by which such dogmas have been arrived at; for the paternal character as ascribed to God is meaningless unless it involves the primary moral conceptions which enter into the idea of Fatherhood in man. Among these therefore must be love in its purest form; a watchful care for the well-being of his children; compassion for their weaknesses; a careful allowance for the power of internal and external temptation as compared with their strength to resist it; the exercise of impartial justice between the different members of his family; the not holding one responsible for the sins of another; and the not punishing as sin the errors which a man cannot avoid. All these, and similar qualities are essential to the moral conception of Fatherhood; and the human father in whom they are wanting may be justly designated as devoid of proper parental feelings. These qualities must therefore exist in Him who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, in absolute perfection; a perfection of which the gift of Jesus Christ for man constitutes the measure and the revelation. To apply the words of the Psalmist to a somewhat different subject; whatever clouds and darkness may obscure our vision of God in the present dispensations of His providence, justice and judgment must be the habitation of His paternal throne; mercy and truth must go before His face. The government of the universe will ultimately appear not to be a mere government conducted in the energy of Almighty power and arbitrary will, but of a power and a will which is the perfect manifestation of the relation of a father to his creatures.

The above positions will doubtless be questioned by two opposite schools of thought, viz., by philosophical agnosticism, on the principles which have been disposed of in the last chapter; and by those various theological schools to whose confessions of faith such a conception of the Divine Fatherhood as is taught by our Lord is plainly repugnant. The latter, marvellous to say, follow closely in the line of thought which is adopted by the former; and affirm that the

conception of Fatherhood in man forms no measure of the Divine paternity ; and that the latter may be a very different thing from the former. This must be so if the systems of which I am speaking are true.

To the above objection I have only one reply, but it is one which every Christian must allow to be conclusive. If our human conception of paternity is not merely an imperfect, but an inadequate representation of the reality as it exists in God, then the affirmation that it is so is equivalent to asserting our Lord's teaching on this subject to be misleading ; for all his illustrations are drawn from the human idea of Fatherhood. To ascribe therefore to God a Fatherhood which is widely different from Fatherhood in man, and to designate such a quality by the name of Fatherhood, is to ascribe to Him a character wholly different from the natural meaning of the terms employed.

The position against which I am contending is disposed of for ever by the following utterance of our Lord :—

“ And of which of you that is a Father shall his son ask a loaf, and he give him a stone ? or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent ? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion ? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ? ” (Luke xi. 11-13).

It is of the highest importance to concentrate our attention on the Fatherhood of God as taught by our Lord, because it forms one of the great principles, by means of which the various systems of abstract theology can be brought to the test of verification. I have already drawn attention to the difficulties which beset our logical understandings in dealing with such abstract questions ; and that consequently some test, by means of which the results of our reasonings can be verified, is absolutely necessary before we can rest with anything like confidence in their conclusions. This principle of verification is furnished us in our Lord's teaching respecting the Fatherhood of God. Whenever our

theological systems contradict this conception of Fatherhood, they must be the result, either of faulty interpretations of Scripture, or of the assumption of premisses which are untrue, or of illogical deductions from them. Either way the conception of the Divine Fatherhood will enable us to "try the Spirits, whether they be of God;" and when they have been thus tried, it will be found that many false prophets have gone out into the world. Let us take a few instances by way of illustration. The whole system of theology which is popularly associated with the term Calvinism is a direct contradiction of the moral Fatherhood of God. I need not enter into particulars; for some of its dogmas will suggest themselves to every reader. I shall only add that they ascribe principles of action to God which an enlightened conscience would pronounce simply horrible in any human parent. On the other hand, equally contradictory to this revelation of God in Christ are those sacramental systems which consign unbaptized infants to everlasting perdition on account of Adam's transgression, in which they had no share; and the theological systems which consign virtuous heathen to the same fate, from want of faith in Jesus Christ, of whom they never so much as heard the name. So it is also with that theological system which we have been considering in the preceding chapter, which ventures to pronounce without a single qualification that those who are unable to accept its highly abstract definitions of the Catholic faith "shall without doubt perish everlastingly." It would be easy to multiply instances of this kind, but they cannot fail to suggest themselves in abundance to the reader. I have only to observe in conclusion, that however elaborate may be the reasonings on which such systems rest, they are broken to pieces as soon as they are brought into collision with that rock on which Christianity has been erected by its Founder, "the Fatherhood of God." Would that the systematizers of the past had thus verified their respective systems. It would have prevented the glorious revelation of God in Christ from

being obscured, nay, almost buried, under a mass of the traditions of men.

## 2. THE BENEVOLENCE OF CHRIST.

Having laid the foundation of the revelation of the moral perfections of God in the conception of Fatherhood, as denoting the special relation in which God stands to our Lord, and as the image of that relation in which God stands to man, the consideration of the special moral perfections of our Lord's character, as revelations of corresponding realities in God, need not detain us long. They are summed up in the conception of paternity and sonship; but a brief consideration of a few of the special perfections of His character will give us a clear conception of the nature of those moral elements of which that Fatherhood consists.

It is almost a platitude to affirm that the portraiture of our Lord as it is delineated in the Gospels constitutes an embodiment of benevolence in the purest form. So perfect is this benevolence, that the highest flights of poetic imagination have never succeeded in depicting one equally perfect. It is a benevolence, not of sentiment (the Jesus of the Evangelists is never sentimental), but of deeds; not of deeds which cost little or nothing, but an habitual sacrifice of self, persistently carried out through an entire life, and culminating in an ignominious death. It is in fact one continued act of self-sacrifice for the good of others, manifesting itself in unceasing efforts to cure the moral and spiritual diseases of those with whom he came in contact; to elevate the degraded to a life of holiness; to impart hope to the penitent, strength to the weak, and finally, in crowning such a life of self-sacrifice by giving it for the life of the world, not in the tranquil death of a Socrates, but in the ignominy and unspeakable anguish of the cross. Truly may it be said that love greater than this is beyond the conception of man.

If then it is true that he that hath seen Jesus Christ



hath seen the Father, the benevolence of this Divine life must be a revelation of the benevolence which exists in God. God therefore cannot be less benevolent than Christ. The incarnation itself is a manifestation of the Divine love. "We have beheld," says St. John, "and bear witness that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the World." Every system of theology therefore which sets before us a God who is less benevolent than Christ, or which ascribes to Him some unintelligible kind of benevolence which differs from the benevolence of Christ, contradicts our Lord's solemn declarations, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" "I am in the Father, and the Father in me."

Further: it follows that the benevolence of Christ as manifested in His self-sacrificing life and death must be the manifestation and the measure of the benevolence of the Fatherhood of God. Consequently all those deductions of human reason which have represented God as less benevolent than Christ (and numerous systems of theology have done so), must either have been based on incorrect premisses, or involve some flaw in the rational processes by which they have been deduced.

### 3. THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST FOR SUFFERERS AND FOR SINNERS.

How shall we give adequate expression to the sublime reality? Let the facts and statements of the evangelists speak for themselves; for they require no aid from the imagination to set them off in a richer dress.

"And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom; and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness. But when he saw the multitudes he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd" (Matt. ix. 35-36).

"And he came forth (he had just retired into a seques-

tered place to rest himself) and saw a great multitude ; and he had compassion on them, and healed their sick. And when evening was come the disciples came to him, saying: The place is desert, and the time is already past ; send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food. But Jesus said unto them, They have no need to go away ; give ye them to eat ” (Matt. xiv. 14-16).

“ And Jesus called unto him his disciples and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days and have nothing to eat ; and I would not send them away fasting lest haply they faint by the way ” (Matt. xv. 32).

“ The blind men say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. And Jesus, moved with compassion, touched their eyes ” (Matt. xx. 33, 34).

“ And when evening was come, they brought unto him many possessed with devils ; and he cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all that were sick ; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases ” (Matt. viii. 16, 19).

As it is inconceivable that the evangelist meant by this application of Scripture to affirm that our Lord, in curing these diseases, assumed them to Himself, it is obvious that the thing intended is that He was moved with such deep compassion at the sight of human woe that He seemed as if He were bearing the diseases which He cured.

“ When therefore Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in his spirit and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him ? They say unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept ” (John xi. 33, 34).

“ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings ; and ye would not ” (Matt. xxiii. 37).

“And when he drew nigh, he saw the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes” (Luke xix. 41, 42).

“And Jesus said, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke xxiii. 34).

Let us now turn to His compassion for sinners. This cannot be better delineated than in the words of His own inimitable parable, uttered in reply to the Pharisaic objection that He consorted with such degraded and polluted characters:—

“What man of you, having an hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he find it? and when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home he calleth his friends and his neighbours together, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep that was lost. I say unto you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine righteous persons which need no repentance” (Luke xv. 4-7).

This parable speaks for itself. Let it be observed however that it forms only a portion of that great delineation of the compassion of Christ of which the parable of the prodigal Son forms the conclusion. I quote from it only two sentences:—

“And when he was yet afar off, the Father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. . . . It is meet that we should be merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead and is alive again; and was lost and is found.”

Such is the Divine compassion for human suffering and for human sin which dwelt in the bosom of Jesus Christ. I have only again to urge that if His saying is true that “he that hath seen him hath seen the Father,” a similar Divine compassion must reside in God; as it is impossible that Christ can be more compassionate than God; for He is in

the Father, and the Father in Him ; and the Father abiding in Him doeth the works. Compassion therefore forms an essential feature in the paternity of God ; and every representation of God which is inconsistent with the existence of this Divine compassion must either be due to the imperfection of human reasoning or the result of narrow-mindedness and want of moral appreciation. Either way the God whom it creates is one formed after the tradition of men, and cannot be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a difficulty which cannot fail to strike every thoughtful person,—I may even say every one who is capable of thought—if God is thus compassionate and at the same time almighty, how comes it to pass that such a mass of evil exists in the universe ? Not only is it a fact that sin exists, and the suffering which is consequent on sin, but it is no less so that suffering exists independent of sin. If then God be almighty, and as divinely compassionate as Jesus Christ, why does He not annihilate it ? If Jesus Christ was thus divinely compassionate, why did He confine the exercise of His superhuman power within the limits which He did ? These objections are striking ; but it must be observed that they are neither more nor less than the old difficulty in a special form, arising out of the existence of evil in the universe of One whose power and wisdom are unlimited, and his goodness perfect. This difficulty arises not from the amount of the evil which exists, but from the fact of its existence in ever so small a degree. If it was a thousand times less than it is, the question might still be asked with undiminished force, Why is this amount of evil permitted to exist in the universe of Him whose goodness is perfect and whose power and wisdom are without limitation ? The only possible answer is that it involves a problem the solution of which transcends the powers of the human intellect. In order to comprehend it we must occupy a position from whence we can command a view of God's providential government *taken as a whole*, and not

merely of that limited portion of it which we see ; for it is evident that while we see it only in part our judgment of it, taken as a whole, must be imperfect. Until we can get this enlarged view we must accept facts as we find them, viz., the existence of evil together with a vastly preponderating amount of good in the universe of God. One thing however we can see, namely, that the evil is only incidental, whereas the good is the direct purpose of the Divine working. This gives us a ground for trust, although it cannot convey a positive assurance that the present mixture of evil with the good may be the means whereby ultimately a greater amount of good will be effected than would have been possible through any other instrumentality. This, I admit, is no solution of the difficulty ; but it enables us more readily to accept the great truth of the Divine paternity as it is imaged in the compassion of Jesus Christ, on the testimony of one who “spake that which he knew and bore witness of that which he had seen.” His witness therefore we must accept, or abandon ourselves to the despair of pessimism.

#### 4. THE MEEKNESS AND GENTLENESS OF CHRIST.

St. Paul intreated the Corinthians by these two aspects of our Lord’s character to exhibit a similar spirit in their own conduct ; and thus to render it unnecessary for him, in maintaining his position against his opponents, to invoke the special powers which were inherent in his apostolical office. The entire portraiture of our Lord as it is depicted in the Gospels is a perfect exhibition of these two qualities. Thus for example, in St. John’s Gospel, the Jews are represented as applying to our Lord two terms of the bitterest reproach :—

“Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil ?”

A more opprobrious term than the first of these was hardly possible for one Jew to apply to another. The second could not be otherwise than offensive to one

who professed that the object of his mission was to destroy the works of the devil. Let us hear His calm answer:—

“I have not a devil; but I honour my Father and ye dishonour me. But I seek not mine own glory. There is one that seeketh and judgeth” (John viii. 49).

So again, when one of the officers standing by, struck Jesus with his hand, saying, Answerest thou the High Priest so? His simple reply is, “If I have spoken evil bear witness of the evil, but if well, why smitest thou me?”

But the whole of the last scene forms a most perfect example of gentleness and meekness. It pre-eminently impressed the mind of the Apostle who denied Him, and who has described it in the following words:—

“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously” (1 Peter ii. 22, 23).

St. Luke furnishes us with the following remarkable incident as an illustration of our Lord’s mildness in the presence of religious intolerance:—

“And it came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem; and sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven and consume them? But he turned, and rebuked them. And they went to another village” (Luke ix. 51-56).

The revisers tell us that many ancient authorities insert the words, “Even as Elijah did;” and that some add, “And he said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of;” and some—but fewer—add, “For the Son of Man came not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” Assuming these additions to have formed a portion of our Lord’s real

utterance, they add greatly to the impressiveness of the scene.

These instances of the mildness and gentleness of our Lord under extreme provocation appear in a still more striking light when we remember that the Apocryphal Gospels have depicted the boy Jesus as striking people dead under the most trifling provocations.\*

Let us now contemplate another aspect of His gentleness :—

“And the disciples came to the other side, and forgot to take bread. And Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, We took no bread” (Matt. xvi. 5-7).

Extreme stupidity is in all cases very provoking, especially when it is closely united with the deepest prejudice ; and in this particular instance the stupidity manifested by the Apostles was almost incredible. On no point had our Lord laboured harder throughout the whole course of His previous ministry than to impress on them the all-important truth of the worthlessness, in a moral point of view, of all distinctions about meats and drinks, and the minutiae of ceremonial observances. Yet notwithstanding this, and also that the Apostles, being Jews, were accustomed to the parabolic mode of teaching, they actually imagined that our Lord uttered this emphatic warning against buying loaves which had been made with Pharisaic or Sadducean yeast, as though it was one of the objects of His mission to lay down distinctions in point of moral worth between one kind of bread and another. Anger under such circumstances would be scarcely avoidable in an ordinary teacher ; for it is hardly possible to regard such stupidity as other than wilful. But our Lord thus mildly but earnestly replies :—

\* See the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, chapters xxvi., xxviii., and xxix., and the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy, chapter xlvii., in Mr. B. H. Cowper's “Apocryphal Gospels and other Documents relating to the History of Christ” (5th edition, London, 1881).

“O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have no bread? Do ye not yet perceive, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not perceive that I spake not to you concerning bread? but beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?” (Matt. xvi. 8-11).

Let us now contemplate another aspect of our Lord's gentleness, in His mode of dealing with censorious hospitality and ill-concealed condescension on the part of a Pharisee who had invited Him to his house. During his visit, a woman, now a penitent, but who had been a notorious sinner, hears of His presence in the Pharisee's house, and comes in and falls at His feet, watering them with her tears, and anointing them with a costly ointment. The Pharisee, when he saw it, said in his heart, This man is only a pretended prophet, for otherwise he would have known that this woman is a notorious sinner, whose very touch is pollution. Our Lord perceived the hard thoughts which were passing in his mind, and thus addressed him:—

“Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee; and he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. The one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. When they had not wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house; thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto



her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace" (Luke vii. 40-50).

It is impossible better to summarize the general results of our Lord's mildness and gentleness than by quoting St. Matthew's application to them of an Old Testament prophecy:—

"A bruised reed shall he not break; and smoking flax shall he not quench, until he send forth judgment unto victory."

Finally, let us sum up these results once more in our Lord's own words:—"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. . . . Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" The character of God must therefore correspond to that of Christ in His gentleness and benevolence as well as in all other respects. All systems of theology which depict Him otherwise affirm in effect that Jesus Christ is in no true sense "the image of God."

## 5. THE HUMILITY OF CHRIST.

The whole of our Lord's incarnate life constitutes one great act of humiliation. So thought the greatest of the Apostles. It may seem strange to speak of the humility of Deity. I will therefore once more quote St. Paul's words, in which he speaks of the humility of Christ in the Incarnation:—

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Phil ii. 5-8).

I shall not attempt to explain the ontology which underlies the facts here affirmed by the Apostle; the facts alone are sufficient for our purpose; and if the positions taken in the previous chapter are correct, all attempts to pene-

trate into their ontology are vain. The natural meaning of the Apostle's words is sufficiently obvious. Jesus Christ pre-existed in the form of God; yet He did not esteem equality with God a prize to be grasped at. On the contrary, *He emptied Himself*, taking the form of a servant; being made in the likeness of men; and further, *humbled Himself, to the extent of becoming obedient unto death, the death of the cross.*

There is one point in the humility of Jesus Christ to which the attention of the reader of the Gospels should be steadily directed. While the Evangelical portraiture of our Lord forms an exhibition of the most perfect humility, that humility is uniformly represented as co-existing with an inherent sense of His own dignity and supreme worthiness. This inimitable trait of character runs throughout their entire structure; and to place it fully before the reader, large citations would be necessary; but two conspicuous examples will suffice for our purpose. And first, the exquisite narrative of our Lord's washing the disciples' feet, as recorded in the fourth Gospel:—

“Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And during supper, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came forth from God, and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments; and he took a towel and girded himself. Then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. . . . So when he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to

wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you" (John xiii. 1-16).

The second is that remarkable union of self-conscious dignity with humility contained in our Lord's own description of the Son of Man sitting on the throne of His glory :

"When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory : and before him shall be gathered all the nations ; and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats : and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee, &c. And the King shall answer and say unto them, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me" (Matt. xxv. 31-40).

Nothing is more difficult than to conceive of two such opposite poles of character as a sense of supreme dignity and the most profound humility as co-existing in the same person ; not to speak of the still greater difficulty of exhibiting them in harmonious action ; yet we have it here set before us in inimitable perfection. To enlarge the description from the imagination would be simply to spoil it. Yet this union is preserved throughout the entire Evangelical narrative. Our Lord is always great, and always humble. His humility is not one exhibited for effect, but one which is supremely natural. No less remarkable is His sense of inherent dignity and worthiness. His claims indefinitely transcend those of the greatest, the holiest, and even those which have been urged

by the most arrogant of men ; yet never does He betray by word or thought, that His claims transcend his inherent worthiness. The King seated on the throne of his glory remembers his state of humiliation with the deepest sympathy for the sufferings and humiliations of others. "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even the least, ye did it unto me."

In speaking of the humility of Christ, the question naturally suggests itself, What is humility? Does it, as a virtue, consist in thinking as meanly of ourselves as possible? Is it inconsistent with being conscious of such greatness and goodness as really exist in us? Such would seem to be the general opinion; but I answer that true humility consists in thinking of ourselves, not more highly or more lowly than we ought to think, but as we actually are. God is immeasurably high above us; therefore we cannot prostrate ourselves too low before Him; but while doing so, it is no true, but an acted humility, to refuse to recognize the reality of those various gifts with which He has endowed us. Our Lord's consciousness of His superhuman greatness is therefore no disparagement of His humility. Similarly St. Paul, while he felt that he was nothing in himself, was fully conscious that he had laboured more abundantly than all the Apostles.

What then does this all-pervading humility, united with a sense of the supremest worthiness in the character of Jesus Christ, reveal to us respecting the moral character of God? Can God be humble? Not with the humility with which man ought to be humble; nor with the humility with which the incarnate Christ was humble. Yet the Apostle tells us, that when pre-existing in the form of God, counting it not a prize to be on an equality with God, yet "he emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, and by being made in the likeness of men." Still, although it is impossible to conceive of God as humble, in the sense in which man ought to be humble, yet the humility of Christ, united with His own present sense of supreme dignity, may so image

a reality which exists in God, that his affirmation, "he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father," may be justly applied to it. Thus Christ was unobtrusive in His greatness and in His goodness; so is God in His. As Christ, while conscious that the Father had given all things into His hands, thought no act beneath Him, which tended to the good of man; so God in His greatness is capable of stooping to the wants of the meanest work of His hands. Thus while God is energizing in the forces of the universe, and carrying on the motions of planets and of suns, in numbers passing all finite comprehension; while the angels in heaven are sustained in existence by the energy of His might; while He supplies life and breath and all things to every member of the human family, He does not consider the sparrow too mean to be the subject of His providential care; nor is the animalcule, which is too small to be visible to the human eye, destitute of His regard. He energizes alike in the great and in the small, "Who," says the Psalmist, "is like to the Lord our God, who hath his dwelling so high; who yet humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth?"

One further aspect of our Lord's humility, contemplated apart from His superhuman greatness, requires notice. It constitutes the measure of the distance which separates the creature from the Creator; and consequently it sets before us the extent of the humility which it behoves even the most holy man to feel in the presence of God. Thus viewed, this, and several other aspects of our Lord's character, form a revelation of the Divine will respecting man; defining at the same time the duties which man owes to God, and through God to man. Thus, if Christ was humble in approaching to God, even when fully conscious of His own inherent greatness, how much more humble should those be who are destitute of that greatness. If Christ, while conscious of superhuman dignity, thought no act mean or contemptible which was conducive to the good of others, how much more should those in whose

consciousness superhuman greatness or superhuman goodness has no place, condescend to what are esteemed the most lowly acts, when engaged in promoting others' good. "I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done unto you. If I then, *the Lord and the Master*, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet."

As the idea of an incarnation involves the manifestation of the Divine in a human personality, there must be aspects in our Lord's character which belong to Him wholly as man. Such, for example, are His implicit obedience to the Divine law, and the perfection of His submission to the Divine will. Here however it is impossible to lay down a clear distinction between the two factors, the Divine and the human, as they co-exist in harmonious unity in the person of our Lord; for the Divine law which He obeyed, (the fulfilling of which, as He Himself affirms, constituted His very meat) is the image of God's holiness; and the Divine will to which He perfectly submitted was the will of the Father, "who," as He says, "dwelling within him, doeth the works." So perfectly do the Divine and the human shade into one another in "the Man Christ Jesus." Perhaps the only examples of the purely human within Him, to which there can be nothing corresponding in God, were the various acts of His obedience unto death; for the Divine could neither suffer nor die. It will however be unnecessary for the student of the revelation made in Him, to lay down a line of demarcation between these two factors in His character. All that he need observe is, that when certain portions of it are contemplated in their human aspect, in virtue of the incarnation they constitute a revelation of the relation in which God, as Creator, stands to man, as His creature, and of the acquiescence which in consequence of that relation man owes to the will of God, as set forth in our Lord's words: "Yea, Father; for so it was well pleasing in thy sight."

## 6. THE STERNER ASPECTS OF OUR LORD'S CHARACTER.

Under this head I include the various occasions on which our Lord manifested a righteous indignation, His denunciations of hypocrisy, and of sin which is not the result of infirmity; and the various occasions on which His perfect holiness was brought into collision with sin wilfully persisted in, and in which men, having had the opportunity to choose good, have rejected the good and freely chosen evil.

One of the most striking features of our Lord's character, as delineated by the Evangelists, is its union of the highest degree of benevolence, compassion for sufferers and for sinners, mildness, and gentleness, with the sterner aspects of holiness. In contemplating it we cannot help viewing the different attributes of which it is composed apart from each other; yet in the character itself no such separation exists; the benevolence, the compassion, the mildness, the gentleness, and the sterner aspects of holiness blend into each other as a harmonious whole. Its benevolence and its awful denunciations of wilful sin form, as it were, its opposite poles; but they unite in the burst of Divine compassion which succeeds, and even accompanies the denunciation.

Thus our Lord is depicted by the Evangelists as capable of being moved to anger. In considering this portion of His character it is important to observe what was uniformly its exciting cause. Never once is He thus moved by injury or insult offered to Himself, but only by certain special aspects of spiritual and moral evil, or when interrupted or thwarted in doing His Father's work. Of this we have a striking example in the following denunciation of blasphemy against the Spirit:—"Therefore, I say unto you, every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word against *the Son of man*, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against

the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age (margin), nor in that which is to come" (Matt. xii. 31, 32).

Of the occasions which aroused our Lord's indignation the following are typical examples:—

"And he entered into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had his hand withered, and they watched him, whether he would heal him on the Sabbath day, that they might accuse him. And he said unto the man that had his hand withered, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them *with anger, being grieved at the hardening of their hearts*, he saith to the man, Stretch forth thy hand; and he stretched it forth, and his hand was restored" (Matt. iii. 1-5).

Here it is evident that the exciting cause of our Lord's anger was the heartless display of that form of religious hypocrisy which assigns a higher importance to outward observances than to moral duties. This form of evil He has elsewhere affirmed to be more incurable than even the vices of the morally degraded. Addressing the Pharisees, he says, "The publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of God before you."

Again: "And they brought unto him little children, that he should touch them; and the disciples rebuked them. And when Jesus saw it, *he was moved with indignation*, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark x. 13, 14).

On this occasion the cause of our Lord's indignation was an attempt, out of what was probably a sincere desire for His honour, to hinder Him in doing His Father's work. Sternly severe is also His rebuke to Simon Peter; but it should be observed that to Peter's attempt to hinder Him in His work was added the offence, under plea of affection, of



placing before Him a strong temptation to decline to carry out the great purpose of His mission.

“Be it far from thee, Lord : this shall never be unto thee, . . . Get thee behind me, Satan : thou art a stumbling-block unto me : for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men” (Matt. xvi. 22, 23).

Against this form of temptation, whether it be wilful or only heedless, our Lord was stern, as is witnessed by the following utterance :—

“And he said unto his disciples, It is impossible but that occasions of stumbling should come : but woe unto him through whom they come. It were well for him if a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, rather than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble” (Luke xvii. 1-3).

The setting of an occasion of stumbling in the way of others is an act which directly contravenes the purposes of the Divine love. God is seeking to make men better ; the man who sets an occasion of stumbling in the way of others seeks to make men worse. Hence our Lord’s righteous indignation at this particular form of sin.

Again : our Lord’s indignation was deeply aroused when professed zeal for the glory of God was made the occasion of nullifying his moral law. Of this we have a typical example in the following passage :—

“Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honoureth me with their lips ; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men” (Matt. xv. 7, 8).

The instances recorded in the Gospels of our Lord’s holy indignation at these forms of moral evil are very numerous ; but it will be sufficient to refer to one more very remarkable example ; I need hardly say that I allude to His awful denunciations of Pharisaic hypocrisy, recorded in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew’s Gospel. On this occasion He is depicted as arising in all the majesty of

offended holiness against the varied forms of pretentious hypocrisy :—

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.” I need not repeat each awful denunciation. To the concluding words however I must ask the reader’s attention, as they present us with the most perfect delineation of the meek, the lowly, and the compassionate Jesus, when aroused in all the awfulness of holiness against that most deadly of deadly sins, a condition of hardened religious hypocrisy :—

“Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of Gehenna? Therefore behold, I send unto you prophets and wise men, and scribes ; some of them shall ye kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah the son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto her ! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. xxiii. 32-38).

Any commentary on this delineation of offended holiness united with the divinest sympathy would only weaken its effect. I will therefore leave it to speak for itself, with this single observation, that in this aspect of His character Jesus Christ is the image of the Invisible God. Here again His saying is true, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” The moral character of Jesus Christ is the manifestation of the Divine paternity, of the Divine benevolence, of the Divine compassion, of the Divine gentleness ; it is also the image of the Divine holiness when it comes into contact with sin wilfully per-

sisted in, and at the same time—in blessed union with it—of that Divine compassion for sinners which exists in God, even when He carries out the immutable laws of the moral world by the action of which suffering is the inevitable result of sin—a compassion realized in our Lord's declaration, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him" (John iii. 16, 17).

Let me now draw the reader's attention to the superiority of the form of revelation which we have been considering, viz., one made through the Divine manifesting itself in a human personality, and capable of being contemplated in the actions of a human life, as compared with one which consists of a body of abstract statements respecting God and man, accompanied with a code of moral precepts which lay down in the form of abstract law the duties which man owes to God, and which man owes to man. The latter kind of revelation necessitates a number of intellectual operations, many of which are of a highly complicated character. Before dogmas and precepts of this kind can reach the heart, and through the heart, act on the life, they must be formulated in the understanding. To render this possible, not only is a considerable cultivation of the intellectual powers absolutely necessary, but the act of formulation opens before us a multitude of questions which, while our reason asks for their solution, it is impotent to solve. But in the Divine Christ as He is depicted by the Evangelists we see God in His moral perfections; we behold Him; we converse with Him; we recognize that what Christ is, such is God. This Divine character is capable of speaking to every condition of the human intellect: the savage, who is unable to comprehend an abstract dogma, can feel the power of its Divine attractiveness: the loftiest intellect recognizes this power; and in addition, finds in the Divine Christ that which satisfies its highest aspirations. If the student wishes fully to

estimate this difference, let him place on the one side a body of systematic theology, elaborated with the utmost logical precision to meet the requirements of the intellect; and on the other, the Christ of the Gospels, as the revelation of God. By the contemplation of the one, he will become transformed into the same image from glory to glory; by the other, he will find his spiritual and moral being become stunted in proportion as his intellect on such subjects becomes subtle and acute. "I am," says our Lord, "the Light of the World; he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE CHRIST OF THE EPISTLES.

THE Epistles set before us the mode in which the Christ of the Gospels lived and energized as a mighty spiritual power in the hearts of the primitive believers. He constitutes the centre around which their entire contents revolve. They are almost exclusively occupied in treating of His person and work, His relation to the Church, and to the individual believer. To this the only exception is the Epistle of St. James, which in this respect is unique among the writings in the New Testament. These Epistles therefore fully set before us the realization of our Lord's promise, that the Divine Spirit should glorify Him, and take of the things which were His, and show them to the Church. They may therefore be justly regarded as constituting a kind of commentary on the Christ of the Gospels, setting before us the most matured views of their writers respecting His work and person.

Here again, as in the Gospels, we are not in the presence of a body of abstract statements respecting our Lord's person, but of a living Christ; a Christ who speaks not to the intellect but to the heart; and who is entitled to reign over the entire life. Divine attributes are again and again ascribed to Him; but nowhere are they formulated with

logical precision. In this respect the contrast between them and modern confessions of faith and treatises of theology is striking. These are addressed to the intellect ; and their object is to exhibit our Lord's person and work in a systematic form, comprehensible to the logical understanding. Such a purpose is wholly foreign to the writers of the Epistles. Their aim is not theoretical, but practical ; not to satisfy the demands of the intellect, but to set forth Christ as a moral and spiritual power, capable of energizing mightily on the heart of the believer. The Christ of the Epistles therefore is never a dead formula, but a living Christ, capable of being loved, served, and adored ; and who in right of inherent worthiness claims to dominate over the entire life of man.

Of this remarkable characteristic the most abstract statements in the Epistles form striking examples. It will be sufficient to refer to one, as an illustration of my position. St. Paul writes to the Colossians as follows :—

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth ; things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers ; all things have been created through him, and unto him ; and he is before all things ; and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church : who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things she might have the pre-eminence. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell ; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross ; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens” (Col. i. 15-20).

This passage, the prologue to the fourth Gospel, and the opening of the Epistle to the Hebrews, bear the nearest resemblance of anything which can be found in the sacred writings to those dogmatic systems of theology which attempt to define the ontology of our Lord's Divine person in terms of

the logical understanding. Let the reader however carefully note the difference between them and the statements of the Apostle. The object of the theologian is to define the Catholic faith on this subject in terms of the logical intellect; and to lay down in a number of rigid definitions the boundaries which separate orthodoxy from heresy. No such attempt is made by the Apostle. Of accurate definition the passage contains no trace. This is rendered evident by the use of such words as, "The image of the invisible God," the vagueness of which forms a striking contrast to the elaborate definitions of metaphysical theology, which aim at setting forth in terms of human thought the relation in which Christ, as the image of God, stands to the fountain of that Deity of which He is the image. So again the expression "the firstborn of all creation" leaves it entirely indefinite whether the writer conceived of Christ as the firstborn of created things, or as existing prior to finite existence. Further: while superhuman attributes are ascribed to our Lord, not one word is said respecting the mode in which the Divine and human co-exist in His person. Again: the affirmation, "It was the good pleasure of the Father that in him should all the fulness dwell," is undoubtedly open to the inference that the fulness of the Godhead did not dwell in Him inherently; the term "fulness" also being one of those indefinite expressions applied to the ontology of the Godhead by those philosophical systems which it was one of the objects of this Epistle to controvert. The contrast between this passage and the rigid definitions of metaphysical theology is at once apparent; the latter being addressed wholly to the intellect, and the statements of the former being evidently made for the purpose of enhancing in the minds of those to whom the Apostle was writing, their sense of the Divine love in redemption. This is proved by the context. The Apostle thus writes:—

"For this cause we also since the day we heard it (*i.e.*, of their love in the Spirit), do not cease to pray and make

request for you that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins" (Col. i. 9-14).

Such were the thoughts which called this declaration forth. The following is the conclusion which the Apostle deduces from it:—

"And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprouceable before him" (Col. i. 21, 22).

Nothing can be clearer therefore than that the object of the Apostle in writing this passage was to set forth our Lord's Divine person as a power which is mighty to operate in the spiritual and moral world.

I have already observed that in the Epistle of St. James the person of our Lord occupies a less prominent position than in any other writing of the New Testament. Owing to this peculiarity it will be necessary to give it a further brief consideration.

The writer is evidently a Jewish Christian. The Epistle may therefore be regarded as a portraiture of Christianity as it lived and energized among those members of the Church who, while they still adhered to Judaism, yet accepted Jesus as the Messiah of Old Testament prediction; its warnings being addressed to their particular failings, and against the temptations which assailed them. Its author introduces himself as "James, a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ." We pass on to the second chapter



before our Lord's name is again referred to. "My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect to persons." We then pass over nearly two-thirds of the Epistle, viz., to the sixth verse of the last chapter, where He is referred to as "the righteous one," before meeting with any further mention of His name. In the following paragraph however, the writer exhorts to patience "until the coming of the Lord;" and declares that His coming is at hand; the coming of the Lord here referred to being evidently the coming of Christ, who is apparently also referred to as "the Judge standing before the door." In this context the writer applies the term "Lord" to Christ, and to the Jehovah of the Old Testament in the following words:—

"Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord . . . The coming of the Lord is at hand. Murmur not, brethren, one against another, that ye be not judged. Behold the judge standeth before the door. Take, brethren, for an example of suffering and of patience (strange to say, the writer does not say Jesus Christ but) the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord. Behold we call them blessed which endured. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, how that the Lord is full of pity, and merciful" (James v. 7-11).

In the two first instances of the use of the word "Lord" in this passage the person referred to is evidently the Lord Christ; in the three last, the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

We meet with only one more reference to the person of our Lord in this Epistle. The elders of the Church are directed to "anoint the sick man with oil in the name of the Lord; and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him" (James v. 14, 15).

Here again the "Lord" referred to is evidently the Lord Christ.

Such are the brief references to our Lord's Divine person in this Epistle. I think that we must candidly admit that it occupied a far less prominent place in the mind of its

author, and of those to whom he wrote, than it did in the minds of the other Apostolic writers, and of those whom they were addressing. I do not make this remark merely with reference to the Christology, but to the place which our Lord's person holds in it. In the other Apostolic writings it forms the centre, around which their entire contents revolve ; it certainly does not in this Epistle ; but it comes in rather as an adjunct than as constituting its central position. It will doubtless be urged by those whose systems of Christianity are founded on the assumption that every writer who has found a place in the canon must have entertained precisely the same views respecting our Lord's person, that the want of prominence given to Him in this Epistle is due to the fact that the subject-matter of which it treats did not suggest such reference. This however is contrary to fact, and I think that the reader cannot help instinctively feeling that if St. Paul, St. John, or St. Peter had treated similar topics, we should not have been left with only six meagre references to our Lord's Divine person. It is far better at once to admit that the Christology of the Epistle is the imperfectly developed Christology of Judaizing Christians who united adhesion to the legal rites and ceremonies with a confession of faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

The Christology of the Epistles to the Thessalonians is of a less elevated character than that of the other Epistles, with the single exception of that of St. James : I mean that the Divine titles which they assign to our Lord are less strongly marked. Yet the place which He holds in them as the centre of Christian life differs widely from that which He occupies in the Epistle of St. James. Thus, the Church of the Thessalonians is "in God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ," from both of whom the Apostle supplicates grace and peace to its members. The Gospel which he proclaimed among them was Christ's Gospel. It had acted on them as a mighty moral and spiritual power. Towards Him they had displayed a work of faith and labour of love. He constituted the example which was to regulate their

daily life. Of His coming and their gathering together unto Him they lived in daily expectation. They looked on Him conjointly with the Father, as supreme in Providence. He is the source of love, and is able to establish them unblamable in holiness. Their departed dead were asleep in Jesus. He is the author of salvation, and the future Judge of men. The Thessalonian Church were beloved of the Lord, and in Him called to sanctification and belief of the truth. The Apostle has confidence in them in the Lord; and commands and exhorts them in His name, and by His authority. The great object which they are to pursue in their Christian life is, "that the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified in them, and they in Him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ." The Apostle prays that the Lord (*i.e.*, Christ,) would deliver both him and them from unreasonable and evil men; and direct their hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Himself. Finally, Christ is the Lord of peace, whom the Apostle invokes to give them peace always, at all times; and prays that His grace may be with them all.

It is impossible to mistake the divergency between these two Epistles and that of St. James as to the place which our Lord's Divine person holds in each. Although their Christology is less fully developed than in the other Epistles, yet our Lord's person is in them the leading thought which is never lost sight of; whereas in that of St. James it holds a place subordinate to the main subject. In this Epistle, although, as we have seen, His Divine character is recognized, He nowhere appears as a mighty spiritual power, enthroned in the heart and regulating the life; but only as the Lord whose servant the writer was, the Lord of glory, whom those to whom he wrote accepted as the Christ, the Just One, and the Judge of men.

The Christology of the four great Epistles, *viz.*, those to the Romans, the Corinthians, and the Galatians, is the same in principle as in the Thessalonians, only more elevated in tone. As they were written within a short interval of each

other, it will be best to consider them together. They leave no doubt as to the position which our Lord's Divine person occupied in Apostolical Christianity, for in them He is present in nearly every page. The opening words of the Epistle to the Romans "concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" might be justly placed at the commencement of every one of them, as a brief summary of their contents.

In this Epistle the Apostle affirms that he has received grace and Apostleship unto obedience of faith among all nations for his name's sake. The Gospel is an announcement of the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ. He is set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood. Through Him believers are justified freely; through Him they have peace, and free access to God; and He is the manifestation of the Father's love. He is the antithesis to the first Adam; death reigned by Adam; life reigns by Christ; by the one came the trespass; by the other, righteousness; by the one came judgment unto condemnation; by the other, the free gift unto justification. But while Jesus Christ is thus the antithesis of the first Adam, the ratio is one of inequality in the way of superabundant grace on the part of Christ. He is the spiritual power which renders obedience, sanctification and holiness possible in man. The law of the Spirit of life, in conformity with which Christians ought to live, is His law, setting them free from the law of sin and death. The Spirit of holiness who dwells in the Church is His Spirit, through whom He abides there also. Christians are joint inheritors with Him of God, and destined as such to be conformed to the image of His holiness. In Him they have no condemnation; and from His love it is impossible for any adverse power to separate them. In Him the Church exists as a spiritual body; and He is its sovereign Lord, and of the individual believer. To Him, Christians both live and die; He is the one great motive to obedience, being both Lord of the conscience, and Lord of the dead and living.

A similar Christology pervades the other three Epistles. It

will be only necessary to draw attention to what is peculiar to them. The subject-matter of the Apostle's Gospel which he habitually proclaimed was Christ crucified; yet it was a Christ who was the power of God, and the wisdom of God. His teaching was the mind of Christ. Christ is the foundation on which the Church is built, and the ground and centre of its unity. To Christ, and to Him alone, Christians are to study to be approved. Many members of the Church, who had been the prey of the most degraded vices, had been rescued from their sinful courses and sanctified through faith in Him. The Christian bondman is Christ's freeman; and the Christian freeman is Christ's bond-servant. The law of Christ is comprehensive of every duty, and all the ordinary duties of life are to be rendered not unto men, but unto Him. Christians are to imitate the Apostle, but only as far as he was an imitator of Christ; and they ought to be Epistles of Christ, known and read of all men. The Gospel is the light of the glory of Christ, and Christ is the image of God, in whose face, (*i.e.*, person,) the light of the glory of God shines. Christians are constrained by the love of Christ; He has died for all; and the purpose of His dying was that they should henceforth live not to themselves, but to Him that died for them and rose again. In Christ, God entreats men to be reconciled to Himself; and the Apostle entreats his converts by the meekness and gentleness of Christ; and declares that he suffered everything for His sake. The life which he now lives is his own no longer; but it is Christ living in him; and the life which he now lives in the flesh, he lives by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him. In Him all these distinctions which in former ages constituted a wall of separation between man and man are utterly abolished; and now under the Christian dispensation there is neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, or Scythian, male or female, bond or free, but Christ is all, and in all.

While the three Epistles of the imprisonment present us with a somewhat more advanced Christology than those

which we have been considering, yet in both our Lord occupies the same place as the central power of the Christian life. In all alike He is the Christian's supreme Lord, in whom and to whom he is to live and die; who is the mainspring of his spiritual life, to whom, as the motive of all duty, all his actions are to be referred; and by whose example all his duties are to be measured. Higher than this it is impossible to ascend. It will therefore be only necessary to notice the peculiarities of the Christology of these latter Epistles.

Christians are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. In Him they were chosen before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame before God in love. Through Him they are foreordained to the adoption of sons. It is the ultimate Divine purpose to sum up all things in Christ, whether things on earth, or things in the heavens. In Him Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, as an earnest of their future inheritance: those who were dead in trespasses and sins have been quickened together with Christ, and raised up with Him, and made to sit in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come God may show forth the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward them in Christ Jesus. Christians are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Of the Church, Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone, in which each separate building (*i.e.*, Jew and Gentile) grows into a holy temple in the Lord, and in whom individual Christians are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Such being the relation of Christ to the Church and to the individual Christian, the Apostle makes it his earnest prayer that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would grant to those to whom he is writing, that they may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith; to the end that they, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all saints what is the

breadth and length, and depth and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they may be filled with all the fulness of God. Christ being the author of every ministration in the Church, their end and purpose is that Christians may pass through a condition of spiritual and moral growth, the only limit of which is the attaining unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown spiritual manhood, viz., to the measure of the stature of fulness of Christ. They are therefore to be His in body, soul, and spirit, living unto Him under all the ever-varying circumstances of life. He is to be to each believer a source of spiritual joy ; and prayer and thanksgiving are to be offered in His name. Every duty is to be performed, not as due to others, but as a sacrifice of gratitude rendered unto Him. Thus, wives are to be subject to their husbands, as to the Lord Christ. Husbands are to love their wives, as Christ loved the Church. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord. Fathers are to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Slaves are to be obedient unto their masters ; but their obedience is to be rendered as unto Christ.

The Epistles to the Philippians and to the Colossians do not present us with any additional feature requiring notice. It will be sufficient to say that the same Christ is present in them in every page, as the one animating principle of the Christian life. A similar remark applies to the Pastoral Epistles.

The Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews is more theoretical than that of any other writing in the New Testament ; and as its contents are almost entirely argumentative, it sets before us only an imperfect delineation of the mode in which our Lord acted as a spiritual power on the daily life of those to whom it is addressed. The Epistle itself may be not inaptly described as a dissertation on one particular aspect of our Lord's person, viz., as He is the embodiment of every reality which underlay the imperfect

shadows of the Jewish dispensation. The chief points of its Christology are as follows :—

The Christian Revelation, as contrasted with all former revelations, is made in the person of One who differs from all other Divine messengers in being the effulgence of God's glory and the very image of His substance. Yet, while He is thus Divine, He is also human; One who is capable of every human sympathy, through His having had experience of human weakness; and who has not only learned obedience by that which He suffered, but has been perfected by suffering. Being thus Divine and human, Jesus Christ is the High Priest of the Christian dispensation; not only the Revealer of the Father, but the one all-efficient Mediator between God and man. The sacrifice which He has offered is the complete realization of the idea of sacrifice; being the voluntary offering of Himself without spot to God. Hence this sacrifice is once for all efficacious for the purging away of sin; and is so perfect that it will never require reiteration throughout the eternal ages. Having offered this sacrifice on earth, He has passed into the heavenly world; and has seated Himself on the throne of God, waiting until His enemies are made His footstool. Such in brief is the Christology of the Epistle. Its practical bearing on the Christian life is set forth in the following sentences :—

“Having therefore boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a great High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water: let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works” (Heb. x. 19-24).

Again: “Therefore let us also, seeing that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and



let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against themselves (margin, himself), that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls" (Heb. xii. 1-3).

Again: "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Heb. xiii. 12, 13).

Lastly: "Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb. xiii. 20, 21).

As far as the elevated character of its Christology is concerned, this Epistle differs little from that of the later Pauline Epistles; but it is contemplated in its intellectual aspect, rather than portrayed as a spiritual power energizing in the daily life of the believer. The difference may be thus briefly stated: its Christology ascribes to our Lord a number of attributes which ought to produce, and, if appropriated by faith, would actually exert such an influence; that of the Pauline Epistles sets before us a living Christ thus acting and energizing. The theory of the Christology of the Epistle is separated from its practical exhibition; and even when practically applied, it assumes the form of exhortation, and not of a delineation of it as it lived and energized in the minds of the writer and of those whom he is addressing. Yet although it surveys it in its intellectual rather than in its practical aspect, no attempt is made to exhibit it in a formulated system. The whole of its argumentative portion is occupied in running a parallel between Christ and Moses, and between the Christian and the Old Testament dispensation; to the exaltation of the

former, and to the comparative depreciation of the latter. Being especially intended for the use of Jewish Christians, its object is to prove that our Lord in His Divine and human personality is the realization of whatever truth underlay the rites and ceremonies of the elder dispensation; and that having been thus realized in Him, they have for all future time become nugatory and worthless. While the author in doing this, ascribes Divine attributes to our Lord, and depicts Him as the great Mediator between God and man, and as the High Priest of the Christian dispensation—and although he constantly touches on profound questions of abstract thought in connection with these subjects—yet he uniformly abstains from entering on their discussion as abstract questions, and from all attempts at logical definition. Thus, while he attributes to our Lord a character which unites the Divine and human, the relation in which the Divine and the human stand to each other and to the Godhead, is neither defined nor discussed. So likewise while His great act of self-sacrifice is again and again affirmed, and declared to possess an everlasting efficacy to unite God to man, and man to God, the innumerable questions which have been raised by theologians, as to how it has become thus efficacious, are unnoticed. So also with numerous other abstract questions which have been raised in connection with the subjects treated in this Epistle; its author simply passes them over in silence. He contents himself with affirming the great facts of our Lord's Christology; but he makes no attempt to unfold their inner depths, although the human mind has in all ages of the Church craved for such an explanation. Further: the points propounded by him are not propounded as mere abstract questions of ontology; but are truths which are capable of acting powerfully on the human mind, exhibiting either the greatness of the Divine love, or the completeness of the union which our Lord by His one act of self-sacrifice has effected between God and the believer.

The Christology of the Epistles of St. Peter closely

resembles that of the Pauline Epistles in portraying our Lord as a spiritual power mighty to energize on the heart. These Epistles are everywhere full of Christ. Thus Christians are begotten through Him to a lively hope by His resurrection from the dead. The end of their various trials is, that the proof of their faith, being more precious than that of gold which perishes, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearance of Jesus Christ. Although those to whom the Apostle wrote had never seen Him visibly present among them, yet they loved Him; and believing in Him, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. The Spirit resting on the prophets was the Spirit of Christ, who testified beforehand of His sufferings and glory. Christians are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot. In Him they are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God's own possession. It is their duty to be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. Slaves are to be subject to their masters for the same reason. Christians are patiently to suffer, because Christ suffered for them, leaving them an example that they should follow His steps. He is the shepherd, and bishop of souls; and it is the duty of believers to sanctify Him in their hearts as Lord. Their holy manner of life which others were compelled to notice, was holy conduct in Christ. Christians are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that at the revelation of His glory they may rejoice with exceeding joy. God is in all things to be glorified through Jesus Christ. Finally the writer of the Epistle, who describes himself as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also as a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed, exhorts his fellow elders to tend the flock of God, making themselves examples to the flock, so that when Christ, the chief shepherd, shall appear, they may receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

The Christology of the second Epistle displays similar characteristics. The writer affirms that those whom he is

addressing had attained like precious faith with himself through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, whose Divine power had granted unto them (and unto him) all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who had called them unto glory and virtue. They were to be "neither idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The kingdom of God is Christ's eternal kingdom. False prophets and false teachers "deny the Master who bought them." Christians have escaped the defilements of the world "through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." It is their habitual duty to obey His commandments. "The long suffering of our Lord (*i.e.*, Christ) is salvation." Finally: Christians are to "grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom glory is to be ascribed both now and for ever."

Such is the Christology of the Petrine Epistles. It does not consist of a number of abstract propositions, defining the relation in which the Son stands to the fountain of Deity, the mode in which the Divine and human co-exist in the person of our Lord, or even the mode in which His sacrifice is efficacious for the putting away of sin; but it presents us with a living Christ, energizing in the believer's heart, and sanctifying his life. His atoning work is definitely affirmed, but in terms of extreme simplicity, leaving the manner in which it was effected entirely unexplained. Thus the Apostle writes:—

"Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously; who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were going astray like sheep, but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls" (1 Peter ii. 21-25).

Proceeding now to the first Epistle of St. John and to the Apocalypse we find ourselves in the presence of the most elevated Christology of the New Testament, with the single exception of that of the fourth Gospel. The author of the Epistle declares in his prologue that it was his purpose to write "concerning the Word of Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us," whose teaching he had heard, and whose person he had seen and handled. Yet he does not attempt to define the nature of the union between the Father and the Son; nor the manner in which the Divine and the human unite in our Lord's person. These things are assumed as simple facts, without the smallest attempt to explain the mode of their existence. On the contrary the purpose of the Apostle is wholly practical; what he writes is not with the design of satisfying the demands of the intellect, but, to use his own words, "That the joy of believers may be full, and that they may have fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Accordingly the message which he has to announce is that "God is light, and God is love; that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin; that He is the advocate for sinners with the Father; and the propitiation for the sins of the whole world."

For what purpose are these affirmations made? Is it to unravel the depths of those mysterious subjects? No, he declares that his object in writing these truths was that believers might sin not; and to enable them to walk in the light, as God is in the light. Jesus Christ is the manifestation of the Father's love; but this love has been manifested to enable us to love God, and through loving God to love one another. In Him Christians abide; but whoever abides in Him sins not; whosoever sins hath not seen Him, neither known Him. The Son of God has been manifested; but the purpose of His manifestation was not to reveal the ontology of the Godhead, but to destroy the works of the devil. God has sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. "Herein," says the

Apostle, "was love ; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." What was his object in making this affirmation ? He himself tells us that it was to impress on those whom he was addressing the great truth, if God so loved us we ought also to love one another. The believer in Jesus Christ has the witness in himself ; he overcomes the world, he has eternal life ; but, adds the Apostle, this life is in His Son. Finally he affirms : " We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true ; and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. My little children, guard yourselves from idols " (1 John v. 20, 21). The Christology of the two shorter Epistles and of that of Jude possesses no distinguishing feature.

The Revelation differs from the writings which we have been considering in the fact that it is not an epistle in which the writer is expressing his own feelings and those of others, but an Apocalypse. Consequently its Christology appears in a more abstract form. Yet every attribute which it ascribes to our Lord has a highly practical bearing, and addresses itself directly to the heart of the believer.

The book itself is described by its author as " the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His servants." He is announced as " the faithful witness, the first born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth ;" as having loved the members of the Church ; as having loosed them from their sins in His blood, and as having constituted them a kingdom, and priests unto His God and Father. The writer then beholds a vision of the Son of Man Himself in His glorious majesty, on seeing whom he falls at His feet as dead ; whereupon he hears His voice proclaiming " Fear not ; I am the first and the last, and the Living One ; and I was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore ; and I have the keys of death and of Hades." He then, as Sovereign Lord of the Church, dictates to the

Apostle a letter of warning to each of the seven Churches of proconsular Asia, in which He arrays Himself in a number of Divine attributes, suited to produce a solemn impression on the minds of those to whom they are addressed, and which conveys the assurance that He is intimately acquainted with their spiritual condition, both as Churches and as individuals; and that He is prepared to execute judgment and mercy according to their deeds. The whole of this introduction therefore is eminently practical, and although it enunciates most important truths respecting our Lord's person and work, is wholly free from every kind of ontological speculation or attempt at definition.

Next He is represented in vision as the revealer of the Divine counsels. A sealed book containing them is seen on the right hand of the Father. A proclamation is made in heaven, challenging some one to come forth and to claim in right of inherent worthiness to open the book and to unloose its seals; but no being either in heaven, or on earth, or in the under world ventures to assert his worthiness to do so. Whereupon the seer beholds a Lamb standing before the throne, fresh with the marks of recent sacrifice, yet having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. He comes and takes the book out of the right hand of the Father; whereupon the representatives of the universal Church fall down before the Lamb and proclaim His worthiness, because through His sacrificial death He has purchased to God by His blood men of every tribe and tongue, and people and nation, and made them unto God a kingdom and priests, with a promise that they should reign on the earth. On this the whole heavenly world of angels and saints, and even every created thing, is represented as joining in a solemn act of worship to Him that sits on the throne and to the Lamb, declaring Him worthy to receive the power and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing. On this the Lamb, as the meditator between God and all created intelli-

gences, proceeds to unseal the book and to reveal the Divine decrees.

Such is the general aspect of the Christology of the Apocalypse. Throughout this mysterious book our Lord, in virtue of His great act of self-sacrifice, is depicted as the Sovereign Lord of the Church, holding in His hands the government of all things, carrying on the work of redemption and executing judgements on the enemies of His cause. At last he appears as a triumphant conqueror, the Word of God, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, seated on the throne of judgment. Finally, in describing his vision of the heavenly world, the Apostolic writer says, "I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it, for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb" (Rev. xxi. 22, 23).

I must again ask the reader's attention to the fact that, exalted as are the attributes ascribed to our Lord in this book, involving as they do profound mysteries as to the relation in which He stands to the Godhead, and as to the union of the Divine and human in His person, yet nowhere do we find the smallest attempt to define either the one or the other; nor is one word of explanation offered as to the mode of their co-existence. The work of redemption is attributed to Him in language which it is impossible to mistake; but complete silence is observed as to the mode in which it has been effected, with the single exception that it has been accomplished "in the blood of the Lamb," who forms the bond of union between God and the members of the Church, and between them and one another. Every attribute which is ascribed to our Lord in this book is one which is calculated to act powerfully on the heart of the believer, either as exhibiting the greatness of His love in the work of redemption, and thereby inspiring him with a spirit of self-sacrifice corresponding to the love of Christ for him, or as setting Him forth as the worthy object of adoration, the



Lord of the conscience, the omniscient Judge of the human heart, and the King of the kingdom of God, to whom the Christian's highest allegiance is due; and under whose government the ultimate triumph of good over evil is secured.

Such then is the Christ of the Apostolic writers; a living Christ who energizes in the heart, and dominates over the life; not a Christ, addressed to the intellect, whose attributes are defined in rigid logical formulas. Let the student place side by side the Christ of controversial theology—as may easily be done, by taking any of the elaborate confessions of faith on this subject—and the Christ of the New Testament, and mark the difference. He will find the one to consist of a mass of metaphysical subtleties; and the other, a mighty spiritual power. The one declares that unless a man believe rightly this mass of abstract metaphysics—which is incapable of even suggesting an idea to nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of mankind—he shall without doubt perish everlastingly; the other says: “The word is very nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” To attempt to point out the greatness of the contrast thus presented, would be almost to offer an insult to the understanding.

It may doubtless be urged, that the absence of this form of Christology from the pages of the New Testament is no proof that it was not held by the sacred writers. I am well aware that the silence of writers on certain subjects is no proof that certain facts were unknown to them, or that certain truths were not accepted by them; but this is true only in cases where there is nothing in the subject on which they are writing to bring such facts or such truths under their notice. Thus for example, it is no proof that Justin Martyr

was ignorant of the existence of St. Paul's Epistles, because he has not quoted them in writings in which he had no occasion to refer to them. But it is absurd to urge this with respect to men whose minds are stirred with certain truths to their inmost depths, as was the case with the Apostolic writers; truths in fact which formed, as it were, a portion of their inmost being, and which regulated their daily lives. When such persons are writing letters to their friends we may be certain that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Silence in such a case can only imply ignorance or indifference. It is simply incredible that any one who was persuaded that he who did not hold the Catholic faith as it is set forth in the Athanasian Creed, whole and undefiled, would without doubt perish everlastingly, could have written to the Church of Rome: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." The two systems of thought are mutually exclusive of each other.

Let us now briefly sum up the Christology of the Epistles.

The Christ of which they are full, is no mere reminiscence of one once fondly loved, who had departed into the resting-place of departed saints, but of a living Christ, mightily energizing in the spiritual world. From Him, equally with the Father, come grace, mercy, and peace to the Church. He is the image of the invisible God, the source of all revelation; and being at the same time Divine and human, the mediator between God and man; who by the one sacrifice of Himself has reconciled God to man, and man to God. In Him, and in union with Him, the individual believer has wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. He is the head of the Church, the source of all authority therein, and the supreme Lord of every one of its members. To Him Christians live, and die; and He lives in them. Regard for Him, His will and pleasure, is to regulate every department of their private life and their

dealings with one another. To every duty He is to be the impelling motive, and He constitutes that spiritual power which enables it to become a reality in practice. He is the one sole foundation of the Church, and the centre of its unity. The Spirit which dwells within it, and in the individual believer, is His Spirit; and the law of the Spirit of life which animates the Christian is His law, setting him free from the law of sin and death. By His love Christians are constrained no longer to live to themselves—but to Him who died for them, and rose again; and from His love no earthly power can separate them. To holiness He is the most powerful of all impelling motives, and He is the one example by which all holy practice is to be measured. Service rendered to Him as Lord is an acceptable offering to God; and through Him prayer ascends up acceptably to the Father. He is the foundation on which are based all the believer's hopes, and the certain pledge to him of life and immortality. Finally, the believer is in Him complete; and finds in Him the realization of all his aspirations and the satisfaction of all his wants.

If one of these primitive believers had been asked to define his Christianity in terms of abstract thought, or had had propounded to him one of those systems of metaphysical theology which have been elaborated in subsequent ages of the Church, he would certainly have replied with surprise, What know I, or what care I about your fine distinctions and your impalpable metaphysics? This only do I know: Christ is my life and my Lord. He dwells within me as an energizing power, mighty to rescue me from the dominion of sin and death. To Him I live; I yield to Him love, worship, and adoration. He is the rule of my life. In every trial of mine (and they are many), He is my support and strength. He is the Church's sole foundation; I yield myself to Him; and in the Church He reigns as Lord. What would you have more? Your abstract questions will only acquire an interest in proportion

as the love of Christ grows cold. What know I about your questions of ontology? Through Christ I approach the Father; in Him His perfections shine forth; His Spirit dwells within me, as a spirit of sanctification. To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

The Christianity of the Apostolic Church therefore was a Christianity addressed to the heart, and adapted to its requirements; not one formulated in terms of logical thought, adapted to the demands of the intellect, and attempting to penetrate into and define the secrets of the ontology of the Godhead, or of the nature of man. In one word, Christ in His Divine and human person constituted its essence; Christ the revealer of the Father; Christ the voluntary sacrificer of Himself for man; Christ crucified, Christ risen from the dead; Christ our example; Christ the centre of the believer's life; Christ in whom he trusted, that when He who was his life should appear, he likewise would appear with Him in glory. The following utterance of St. Paul is a summary of the Christology of the Apostolic Church:—

“For none of us liveth unto himself, and none dieth unto himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died, and lived again, that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living” (Rom. xiv. 7-9).

One point more demands our consideration. It may be justly asked, On what grounds are we called on to accept our Lord's lofty claims? This demand is a legitimate one; for unless our belief in them rests on a rational foundation, they would have no better claim for our acceptance than the superstitions of the past. To this I answer:—

First: We accept them because it is evident to the most ordinary understanding that, assuming the character which is delineated in the Gospels to be an historical one, it contains in it elements which are unquestionably superhuman. I mean that a superhuman element palpably runs

throughout it. The only possible question is, Is this character the delineation of one who was an historical reality, or is it an ideal creation? That it is not the latter, the evidence is overwhelming. The proof of this I have adduced in another work, to which I must refer the reader. Assuming therefore that the Christ of the Gospels is the delineation of an historical reality, it can leave no doubt to any rational mind that He must have been a manifestation of the Divine in the sphere of the human.

Secondly: On the same assumption, our Lord's affirmations respecting Himself must be worthy of all acceptance. Respecting their truth, He could not but know. He was either conscious of the Divine within Him, or He was not. If the latter was the case, I shrink from using the word which would be a correct designation of Him. The reader of the Gospels instinctively feels that, assuming the historical reality of the character therein delineated, all the suppositions to which I allude are simply incredible. But if He spoke from His own self-consciousness, He must have spoken that which He knew, and testified of that which He had seen. Assuming therefore the Jesus of the Gospels to be an historical character, none will venture to deny that His affirmations respecting Himself must be worthy of all acceptance. The student will at once scout the idea that the grand character therein delineated could have been the prey of a set of mental hallucinations.

Thirdly: We accept the statements of the writers of the New Testament on this subject, because of our Lord's promise that He would impart to them the Spirit of truth, whose office it would be to guide them into the full comprehension of the truth respecting His own person and work, and into the meaning of His teaching.

We are therefore fully justified in accepting our Lord's affirmations respecting Himself, and the statements of the Apostolic writers, as truths vouched for on an adequate testimony. But further than these facts we cannot penetrate; for the limitation of our faculties compels us to leave the

mode of their existence unexplained. Our entire knowledge on this subject must therefore be limited exclusively to the facts as they are recorded in the Gospels, and to the affirmations of our Lord, and of those who were enlightened by His Spirit respecting His person and work. All deductive reasonings will be as powerless to unfold to us additional truths on these subjects, as they have been to guide mankind into a knowledge of the facts and phenomena of the universe ; and inductive ones on subjects which transcend our experience are impossible. "I am he," says our Lord, "who bear witness of myself;" but the realities which underlie the facts to which He testifies are beyond the ken of reason, in the same manner as the realities which underlie the physical universe are impenetrable by the intellect of man. Yet it is rational to accept both the one and the other on their own proper evidence.

## CHAPTER XIX.

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### THE SIMPLICITY OF APOSTOLICAL CHRISTIANITY.

WE have seen that the sacred writings contain no "creed," confession of faith, or scheme of salvation which professes to set forth in a systematic form what constitutes the essence of Christianity; nor do they anywhere propound a body of dogmas to be accepted under penalty of exclusion from the Church. The only anathema which can be found in the Apostolic writings is pronounced against those who love not the Lord Jesus Christ, and those corrupters of the Gospel who endeavour to impose on Christians the burden of the Mosaic law; and their sharpest denunciations are levelled, not against those who held erroneous opinions, but against those who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. If these primitive believers had been asked to state briefly in what the essence of their Christianity consisted, it is certain, from the foregoing examination of the Apostolic Epistles, that they would unanimously have replied:—It consists in the acceptance, with the whole heart, of the Divine person, teaching and example of Jesus Christ our Lord, as they are set forth in the oral teaching of Apostolic men, and embodied in the traditions of the different Churches. If in these modern times we are asked where we shall find this Christianity,

the answer is, in the Gospels, which set before us a perfect image of that Divine life. If then the Gospels contain the essence of Apostolical Christianity, it is evident that it must have been a system of extreme simplicity.

To the teaching of our Lord, as there recorded, I have already sufficiently drawn attention. Its simplicity is obvious. It is addressed, not to the gifted few, but to the multitudes; and it is couched in such terms as to be readily appreciated by them—in one word, it is essentially *popular*. In the Synoptics, with the exception of the passage in which our Lord affirms the closeness of the union between the Father and Himself, it is impossible to find anything resembling an abstract dogma. The fourth Gospel deals with subjects which have the appearance of being more abstruse; but when they are closely examined, they are found to consist exclusively of utterances of our Lord respecting His own person and work. The description which I have elsewhere given of their contents will be found to be strictly true, namely, that they consist of a proclamation of the kingdom of God, and of the person of its King; an exposition of its nature and its laws; and an invitation to all men to enrol themselves as its voluntary subjects.

The same simplicity of statement was continued by the Apostles. Their preaching, as it is recorded in the Acts, consists of little more than a proclamation of the setting up of the kingdom of heaven, of Jesus as its King, and of the necessity of repentance as a qualification for membership in it. When addressing Jews, their preaching was directed to the proof of one single fact, viz., that Jesus was the Messiah of Old Testament prediction. When they addressed themselves to heathens, their first duty was to draw them away from their gods many and lords many to a belief in the unity of God; and the remainder of their preaching seemed to their Gentile hearers to be capable of being briefly summed up as a proclamation of Jesus and the resurrection. As far as can be gathered from this book, their baptismal



creed consisted of little else than, "I believe that Jesus is the Christ."

The creed which the Apostles considered to be all that was essential for baptism, is strikingly illustrated by what occurred at Philippi. I allude to the history of the conversion of the Philippian jailor. It is thus given by St. Luke :—

"But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying, and singing hymns unto God, and the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened; and every one's bands were loosed. And the jailor, being roused out of sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword, and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. And he called for lights, and sprang in, and trembling for fear, fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, thou, and thy house. And they spake the word of the Lord unto him, with all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he, and all his, *immediately*. And he brought them into his house, and set meat before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God. But when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go" (Acts xvi. 25-35).

The point to be noted here is the shortness of the time which was devoted to the instruction of the jailor and his household before they were admitted to baptism. The historian tells us that the earthquake took place at midnight; and that as soon as it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go. We do not know at what period of the year the visit of the missionaries to Philippi took place; but even assuming that it took place when the days were shortest, the interval between the

earthquake and the message directing the liberation of the missionaries could not have exceeded eight hours. In these had to be crowded the following events:—The conducting of the missionaries out of the dungeon into the jailor's house; the exposition of the essential truths of Christianity to him and his household; the washing; the preparation of food; and their participation in a social meal. To this must be added, the administration of the rite of baptism to all that were in the house, and the subsequent return of the missionaries to the prison, before the order for their liberation arrived. All this had to be crowded into a space of eight hours at the utmost; and if it was at any other time of the year than the depth of winter, considerably less. Most modern missionaries would consider a period of eight hours, which were partly occupied with other engagements, far too short for the instruction of a heathen household in the principles of Christianity before admitting them to baptism. But so thought not Paul and Silas. It is evident therefore that the Christianity, the principles of which they unfolded, must have been extremely simple.

But it may be urged that although the baptismal creed was thus simple, great pains were subsequently bestowed on the instruction of the converts in one far more elaborate.

I fully admit that the converts in the Apostolic Church subsequently received a careful course of instruction in the fundamental principles of Christianity. This is distinctly affirmed in the preface of St. Luke's Gospel, but the burden of proof rests on those who affirm that this course of instruction consisted of a complicated and dogmatic Gospel. On the contrary, the affirmation of the Evangelist is express, that he intended his work to be an embodiment of the ordinary course of catechetical instruction which was provided by the Church for converts; for he informs Theophilus that his object in writing it was *that he might know the certainty concerning the things wherein he had been instructed*. The subsequent instruction of the convert must therefore have consisted of a more elaborate form of the simple baptismal

creed, or, in other words, an enlarged account of our Lord's person, work, and teaching. Let it also be carefully noted that the profession of belief in this baptismal creed entitled the convert to be admitted a member of the Church by baptism; and it must therefore have contained all that was necessary for entitling a man to the designation of a Christian. This is precisely St. Paul's view, as set forth in a passage to which I have already referred:—

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

I have proved in the last chapter that a living Christ, a Christ who reigns in the heart, and who dominates over the life, not a mere abstract dogmatic Christ, forms the central thought which underlies the Apostolical Epistles. Around Him their entire contents revolve; and no small portion of them is occupied in expressing the feelings of their writers, and of those whom they were addressing, respecting Him, and in unfolding His relation to the Church and to the individual believer. So far their Christianity is extremely simple. It is true that their statements respecting Him may be made to involve profound questions of abstract thought; but such questions are invariably avoided; nor do they favour us with a single definition which can be called scientifically exact. They contain neither creed, confession of faith, nor systematized theology. Such things may be inferred from them, but they cannot be found in them. Those portions of them which to the modern reader seem involved and intricate have a direct bearing on the controversies then agitating the Church, especially on that respecting the relation in which Judaism stood to Christianity in the kingdom of God. That controversy had an interest to these primitive believers which it has ceased to have for us, now that for all practical purposes it has been settled for eighteen centuries; and it is this absence of

interest in it which makes certain portions of the Apostolic writings difficult of comprehension to the modern reader. Such abstract questions as enter into the subject-matter of the Epistles are, as I have already observed, discussed only as far as they bear on this controversy, and can only be understood when viewed in relation to it. Taking the essence of their Christianity, and viewing it apart from this particular controversy, it must be pronounced to be a system of the greatest simplicity, centring around a personal Christ.

Anything resembling a summary of Christian doctrine can scarcely be found in them. A few passages however which bear the closest resemblance to such a summary may be quoted. It will at once be recognized that their simplicity is only equalled by their brevity. St. Paul thus writes to the Ephesians :—

“There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all” (Eph. iv. 4-6).

This passage bears a nearer resemblance to a summary of Christian doctrine than any other which can be found in the New Testament. At any rate it sets forth those aspects of it which the Apostle considered most effective to induce Christians “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” It contains seven points only. There is, says the Apostle, one body, the Church’s, and one Spirit which animates it. Christians are called to a common hope; they have a common Lord, in whom they have a common faith; they are baptized with a common baptism. They have also one common God and Father, who is over all, through all, and in all. Surely here we are in the presence of a faith of the greatest simplicity. The reader should observe that although the one Spirit, one Lord, and one Father of all are referred to, nothing tempts the Apostle into the regions of abstract dogma.

But it frequently happens that what is uppermost in a man’s thoughts appears in his prayers. Let us hear there-

fore the Apostle's prayer for the members of this very Church :—

“For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and which ye show toward all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers ; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of him ; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints ; and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead ” (Eph. i. 15-20).

What then were the predominant ideas which filled the Apostle's mind when he offered this prayer? Evidently the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory ; the spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of Him ; the enlightening the eyes (not of the intellect but) of the heart ; the knowledge of the hope of the Christian calling ; and the other great points already referred to as constituting his revelations. Such a Christianity is equally simple with that which is contained in the preceding more formal summary of it.

The Apostle thus writes to his friends Timothy and Titus :—

“And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory ” (1 Tim. iii. 16).

“The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God

and Saviour Jesus Christ ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works " (Titus ii. 11-14).

According to the first of these passages the great mystery of godliness (mystery, according to the usage of the writers of the New Testament, means a truth which once was hidden but is now revealed) is the incarnate Christ. According to the second the grace of God, which brings salvation unto all men, is a very simple Gospel.

Let us now hear the Epistle to the Corinthians.

"Seeing that Jews ask for signs and Greeks seek after wisdom : but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling-block, and unto Gentiles foolishness ; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God " (Cor. i. 22-24).

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption : that according as it is written, He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord. And I, brethren, when I come unto you come not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the mystery of God. For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified " (1 Cor. i. 30, and ii. 2).

"Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ " (1 Cor. iii. 11).

"Now I make known unto you, brethren, the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved ; I make known, I say, in what words I preached it unto you, if ye hold it fast, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures ; and that he was buried ; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures " (1 Cor. xv. 1-4).

"Wherefore, if any man is in Christ he is a new creature ; the old things are passed away ; behold they are become

new. But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. v. 19-21).

The Apostle's Gospel therefore which he proclaimed at Corinth consisted of the following simple factors: A proclamation of Christ crucified, but at the same time of Christ as the power of God, and the wisdom of God; Christ made to the believer wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; Christ, the mystery of God and the one foundation of the Church. It was also a Gospel of fact, its most distinguishing feature being the death and resurrection of our Lord. It also announced that the believer in Christ had become a new creature; the passing away of his old habits and customs, whether pagan or Jewish, and that all things had become new. Further, it proclaimed that a reconciliation had taken place between God and man; and that Christ, who knew no sin, had been made sin on our behalf, that the believer might become the righteousness of God in him.

I invite the reader's attention to this last point, because of the endless controversies which have taken place in the Church as to the nature of the Atonement. A few words of exact definition on the Apostle's part might have prevented these controversies from arising; but instead of exactly defining the terms which he employed he contents himself with affirming the fact without any attempt to explain the mode by which it was effected. Great disputes have arisen as to whether the atonement has been the means of reconciling God to man, or man to God. As far as the

letter of this passage is concerned it favours the latter view ; but there are passages in the Apostle's writings which imply the former. Volumes also have been written in attempting to explain how Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin on our behalf ; and how we in consequence have become the righteousness of God in Him ; involving the profound questions of imputed and inherent righteousness, and a whole array of abstract problems standing in the closest connection with them. All these and similar subjects however he passes over in absolute silence.

In a similar manner the Apostle writes to the Galatians :—

“Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. vi. 14).

“In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love” (Gal. v. 6).

A Christ crucified, yet at the same time a Christ mightily energetic on the heart and conduct, and a faith in Him, producing love, constituted according to the Apostle the essence of Christianity.

To the Colossians he writes :—

“For I would have you know how greatly I strive for you . . . that their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden” (Col. ii. 1-3).

“Take heed, lest there be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ . . . and in Him ye are made full” (Col. ii. 8-10).

The first of these passages speaks of a personal Christ as the essence of the Apostolic Gospel ; through whom he strove in prayer to God that their hearts might be comforted ; earnestly desiring that they might attain a full



comprehension of the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden. (Here again, the reader should bear in mind that in the language of the Apostle, the word "mystery" means truths once hidden in the Divine counsels, but which in Christ are now revealed to the Church.) The second is an emphatic warning against those philosophizing speculators who were seeking to metamorphose Christianity into a system explanatory of the ontology of the Godhead, the nature of His relation to the material creation, and the mode in which redemption was accomplished.

There is a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews which seems to imply that the author recognized a twofold form of instruction, somewhat analogous to that of the philosophic schools which had their exoteric and their esoteric doctrines, the one for the uneducated and the other for their more fully enlightened disciples. Speaking of Melchisedek, he thus writes :—

"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing. For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for full-grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil. Wherefore let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do if God permit" (Heb. v. 11-14; and vi. 1-3).

A somewhat similar passage is found in St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians :—

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with meat ; for ye were not able to bear it ; nay, not even now are ye able ; for ye are yet carnal ; for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and walk after the manner of men ? For when one saith, I am of Paul ; and another, I am of Apollos ; are ye not men ? What then is Apollos ? and what is Paul ? Ministers through whom ye believed ; and each as the Lord gave to him ” (1 Cor. iii. 1-5).

Whatever may be the distinction here referred to between the “milk” and the “meat” of the Apostle’s teaching, he would never have allowed that his “milk” did not contain all that was essential to Christianity. That he had set this forth during his first visit to Corinth, he affirms again and again in this Epistle. What then is the distinction intended ? He tells them that he fed them with milk (which can only mean Christianity in its most simple form), because they were “carnal.” This word therefore forms the key to the meaning of the passage. Now the words “carnal,” “in the flesh,” and other similar expressions, are used by St. Paul to denote the state of mind which has no higher motive to obedience than the principles of legalism (*see* Romans vii. and viii.). The existence of this condition of thought therefore had been the obstacle which had hindered him from feeding them with the meat, that is, the strong food of his teaching. What that was we learn from his other Epistles, viz., the announcement of the utter abolition of Jewish legalism, ritualism, and ceremonialism and exclusive privilege in the kingdom of God. This the Jewish section of the Church were unable to bear ; and the prevalence of this feeling produced that party spirit which the Apostle denounces in the passage before us.

But in the passage cited from the Epistle to the Hebrews a distinction is laid down between the first principles of Christianity, and what its author designates “perfection.” The former he briefly summarizes as consisting of “repen-

tance from dead works" (*i.e.*, from the works of legalism), "faith towards God, the teachings about baptism, laying on of hands, the resurrection from the dead, and eternal judgment. This list however can hardly be viewed as complete, since he has omitted "Faith in Jesus as the Messiah," which must on all hands be admitted to constitute a fundamental principle of Christianity; but he apparently takes this for granted. What then were those principles which he designates "perfection?" Obviously those set forth in the remainder of the Epistle, *viz.*, the superiority of a priesthood after the order of Melchisedek to one after the order of Aaron. The subject-matter of the teaching which St. Paul designates "meat" and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews "perfection" is the same, though they contemplate it from a different standpoint, and commend it to the acceptance of their readers by a different line of reasoning.

Further: the author of the Epistle admits that his argument was a recondite one, just as the author of the second Epistle of St. Peter found some things in the writings of St. Paul "hard to be understood." He tells them however that they ought to have accepted the truths which he was undertaking to prove, long ago:—"For when *by reason of the time* ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God," the "oracles" here referred to being the Scriptures of the Old Testament; and their "first principles" the true characteristics of the Messianic kingdom. On the contrary he feared that they were not advancing towards the acceptance of Catholic Christianity, but were actually retrograding towards Judaism; and therefore needing to have the milk of Christianity set before them instead of its solid food. The distinction therefore is precisely the same as that in St. Paul's Epistles, *viz.*, that between Jewish and Catholic Christianity. But while the writer tells us that it was his purpose to bring his readers to the recognition of those aspects of Christianity

which he calls "perfection," he would by no means have admitted that "the milk" of Apostolic teaching did not contain all that was essential to Christianity. He himself admits, as we have seen, that his exegesis is "hard of interpretation," and this is abundantly proved by the voluminous commentaries in which different schools of theologians have endeavoured to explain the reasoning of the Epistle, and by the different conclusions at which they have arrived as to the real nature of its argument. A very numerous section of the Church deduces from it the inference that the Christian ministry is a veritable priesthood; and another that neither priesthood nor sacrifice in the genuine sense of these terms exists under the Christian dispensation. Its reasonings would have been intelligible enough to persons bred in the Alexandrine school of Jewish thought; but they would have been unintelligible to one recently converted from paganism—just as they are at the present day to the great majority of ordinary Christians.

Such are the chief passages in the Epistles which present the appearance of being summaries of the Christian faith. Their brevity and simplicity become the more strikingly apparent when they are placed side by side with any creed or confession of faith, or scheme of salvation which is accepted by the modern Church, with the single exception of the Apostles' creed. The foregoing investigation however has proved that the truths which the Apostolic Church considered as constituting the essence of Christianity were as simple as this creed.

It has been often urged that a simple Christianity, such as has been described in the preceding pages, is too indefinite to constitute a religion; and that it consequently needs to be set forth in a more complicated dogmatic form. The reasons however which I have given in a former chapter are conclusive on this subject; I will only further observe that they are corroborated by the all-important consideration that not only do we find in the New Testament no trace of such a system, but it is equally wanting in all

the earlier extant Christian writings which are not included in the canon. Indications of the existence of such a Gospel are only to be found in writers of a later date; and in anything approaching to a systematic form, only in those who lived centuries after the close of the Apostolic age. These facts would have been exactly the reverse if such a Gospel had formed a portion of the genuine Apostolic traditions. In that case the earlier writings would have been full on the subject, while the later, having been composed after traditionary reminiscences had become faint, would have contained only allusions to, and comments on, the statements of the earlier ones. But the fact is, that the testimony to the existence of such a Gospel is weakest precisely where it ought to be strongest, and strongest where viewed as testimony it is valueless.

It has also been urged that a system of dogmatic theology is a necessity of the human mind; moreover that to leave Christianity in the form in which it is set forth in the pages of the New Testament is to open wide the door to all kinds of heresies and errors; and that the only mode of guarding against their intrusion is to adopt a number of rigid definitions of Christian truth in opposition to them. A simple form of Christianity such as was enunciated by our Lord and His Apostles may have been all that was required before heresies existed; but since holders of erroneous opinions have sprung up, and have eagerly sought to propagate them, it is become necessary for the purpose of guarding against this danger that Christian truth should be rigidly defined.

With respect to the first of these objections, I observe that although it may be perfectly true, that there is a natural tendency in the human mind to attempt to penetrate into the ontology of the facts and statements of revelation, the all-important question is, whether it possesses any faculties adequate to accomplish it. This I have proved in a previous chapter that it has not. All such attempts therefore are vain; and nothing remains for us but to rest

satisfied with such knowledge as is attainable by man. If such a necessity existed, a revelation would surely have supplied us with the requisite information. Otherwise it would fail to realize its end.

With respect to the second objection I observe,

If this mode of statement is necessary for preserving the purity of the Christian faith, its absence from the pages of the New Testament is inexplicable. Its writers must have been unconscious of the alleged danger; otherwise it is incredible that this defective form of stating Christian truth should be the one which they have actually adopted. Variations of opinion on points of the greatest importance unquestionably existed in the Apostolic Church, and the writers of the Epistles were far from being unconscious of the dangers arising from impending heresies; yet it never occurred to them to guard against the intrusion of error by setting forth the essentials of Christianity in a "creed," confession of faith, or scheme of salvation, or by giving greater precision to their statements by the use of formal definitions. The objection therefore that it is necessary for the preservation of the purity of the Christian faith to set forth its truths in the forms above referred to, is neither more nor less than to call in question the soundness of the judgment of the Apostolic writers. In other words, it is to charge them with a lax mode of stating Christian truth; and to affirm that they have left behind them so imperfect a record of Christianity that it has become the duty of the Church in subsequent ages to supplement its defects.

St. Paul's mode of dealing with the Jewish controversy forms a striking illustration of these principles. We know from his own statements in the Epistle to the Galatians that in his opinion erroneous views on this subject endangered the very existence of Christianity. So important did he esteem it, that the greater part of two of his Epistles is devoted to its discussion; and it is repeatedly referred to in the remainder. Nevertheless his only mode of dealing

with the subject is by enunciating the simple truths which had been revealed to him, and by exhortations to the various parties in the Churches to promote peace and union by mutual forbearance, without once attempting to define the exact relation in which Judaism stood to Christianity, or to determine in a formal statement the extent to which a Jewish Christian could continue to observe the legal rites without compromising his Christianity. Still more remarkable is it that although the Apostle was in the habit of practising those rites when living among Jews, and not only tolerated the offering of sacrifices by Jewish Christians, but even contributed to defraying the expenses of them, we cannot find in his writings a definition, or even a hint as to the relation in which he considered such sacrifices to stand to the great sacrifice of Christ on the cross offered once for all for sin. Yet although there was unquestionably no little danger that the Jewish Christians would attach to these sacrifices an importance and an efficacy which would greatly militate against the Apostle's doctrine of the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, he made no attempt to propound a formal definition of orthodoxy on the subject for the guidance of the Churches. On the contrary he trusted that the simple principles which he had laid down would in due time under the guidance of God in providence settle the entire question.

Similar observations apply to many other highly controversial questions which enter into the subject-matter of these Epistles. Great discussions have arisen in the Church respecting them, and they readily admitted of perversion into the most dangerous errors. Yet nothing tempts the Apostle to define with logical precision the bounds which separate orthodoxy from heresy.

Moreover: the remedy invoked has been utterly inadequate to counteract the alleged danger. The allegation is that the outbreak of heresiés has compelled the Church to have recourse to rigid definitions for the purpose of guarding her children against erroneous opinions. But were

not erroneous opinions abundant in the Apostolic age? Did not a huge crop of them spring up in the second and third centuries (the Gnostic heresies, for example, in forms almost numberless), and were they suppressed by rigid definitions of the ontology of the Godhead? On the contrary Christianity not only existed, but triumphed without their aid. Again: when recourse was had to this method of securing unanimity of opinion, did the remedy prove a cure for the disease? On the contrary the wider the field which has been covered by definitions, the greater has been the necessity of multiplying them; and the process has had to be continued until under their influence Christianity has been almost metamorphosed from a mighty moral and spiritual power into an abstract and barren metaphysical philosophy. To the truth of this, all the great controversies which have agitated the Church during the last fifteen centuries bear witness. Rigid definition has been impotent to stop the progress of speculation in religion; and will continue to be so even to the end. As the circle continually widens, fresh walls for the defence of orthodoxy have to be erected; outside them fresh errors and heresies arise, and this process of defence has to be repeated on an ever-widening circumference.

I fully recognize the truth that it is our duty to employ our reason in studying the facts and phenomena of revelation in the same way as we employ it in studying the facts and phenomena of the universe. These constitute a revelation of one aspect of the Divine character; those of Christianity constitute a revelation of another. Both therefore must form legitimate subjects on which to exercise our rational powers. The all-important point in either case is, to confine their exercise within those boundaries which the limitations of our rational faculties impose; and not to attempt to grapple with subjects which our intellectual powers are inadequate to investigate. Numerous questions connected with theology, as we have shown, transcend those limits; and others are attended with extreme difficulty in the



investigation. Consequently the theological student, when he announces the conclusions to which his investigations have conducted him, ought to propound them with a modesty proportionate to the difficulties of the subject-matter and the limitation of his faculties. The reverse of this has been but too often the case.

Above all we must be careful to observe, that when we have employed our best faculties and our most accurate methods of investigation, and exercised the greatest caution in the study of the data given us in revelation, the conclusions at which we have arrived are not in themselves revealed truths, but rational deductions from those truths, and founded on our own interpretations of them. Consequently we have no right to impose them on the consciences of others as truths resting on a direct Divine attestation, and to affirm that to question them is to reject the testimony of God. The data may be Divine; but our deductions from them are none other than conclusions arrived at by the use of our imperfect faculties; and only differ from other kinds of reasoned truths in the fact that their data are given to us in revelation. Consequently their validity as truths is entirely dependent on the validity of the processes which have been employed in their investigation. The neglect of this obvious distinction has rendered possible the enunciation of a mass of matter as essential to Christianity, which we shall in vain seek for in the primitive simplicity of the Apostolic Gospel.

## CHAPTER XX.

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### THE COMPREHENSIVENESS OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH.

THE data which prove the simplicity of Apostolical Christianity prove at the same time the comprehensiveness of the Apostolic Church. A body whose creed is simple cannot fail to be tolerant of diversities of opinion on all points which do not affect its fundamental principles. Consequently the simpler the creed the more comprehensive must be the body which adopts it. But the comprehensiveness of Apostolical Christianity need not rest on general principles. The facts of the New Testament proclaim it. These therefore we will now consider.

The great question respecting the relation of Judaism to Christianity—a question which, as we have seen, was so earnestly debated in these primitive societies—may be taken as a measure of its tolerance of diversity of opinion, even on matters of the deepest importance. Let us therefore take measure of its extent. The controversy itself involved positions which were highly dangerous; for St. Paul lays down that there was a form of Jewish Christianity, the acceptance of which was subversive of the fundamental principles of the Gospel; and on which he pronounced an anathema. Still his tolerance of Jewish Christianity was large; and one which violent partisans at the present day

would pronounce extremely dangerous. The following are the facts:—

The first members of the Church were all circumcised Israelites, and zealous observers of the Mosaic institutions. Their creed may be described as strict Judaism *plus* the acceptance of the Messiahship of Jesus. Thus we learn from the historian that day by day they continued with one accord in the temple; attended its various rites, and were present at the regular hours of prayer. They evidently did this not as mere spectators, but for the purpose of taking part in the various acts of worship and the ritual observances, in the same manner as the ordinary Jew. Consequently they must have assisted at the sacrifices, and would have felt no scruple in offering a sacrifice themselves. The historian also informs us that a great company of the priests were obedient unto the faith; but not one word is said as to any necessity thereby laid on them of abandoning their priestly functions. Such being the facts, it follows that neither the Apostles nor the other members of the Church could have had any idea at the time we are now considering that the Jewish ceremonial law was abrogated by the death of Christ; or that it was not intended to form an essential portion of Christianity.

Such continued to be the state of things until the martyrdom of St. Stephen. From him we get the first hint of the impending change. Shortly after another of the Seven opened the doors of the Church to Samaritans, and subsequently to an Ethiopian Eunuch, who, by the letter of the law, was excluded from entering the congregation of the Lord. The next step was taken by St. Peter, in the admission of uncircumcised Gentiles into the Church. On his return to Jerusalem his act was strongly called in question by persons who are designated by the historian "Those of the circumcision," which strictly speaking included the entire Church, although by this term the sacred writer probably meant to denote the strict Pharisaic party in it. Although Peter's act was acquiesced in by the

Church, the Jewish party continued zealously to adhere to the observance of the Mosaic ordinances. Their doing so must not only have involved regular attendance at the temple worship, but the observance of what the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews designates distinctions about meats and drinks and divers washings; carnal ordinances which formed so essential a portion of the daily life of a strict Jew. Thus Ananias, who baptized St. Paul, is spoken of by him as "a devout man according to the law, and well reported of by all the Jews that dwelt at Damascus." He must therefore have been a strict observer of the legal rites, as far as they were capable of being observed by Jews who resided out of Palestine. I need scarcely draw attention to the fact that dangerous doctrinal errors were readily deducible from these practices; yet the historian records not one word of warning against them.

With the conversion of St. Paul begins a new era in the history of Apostolical Christianity. After the doors of the Church had been thrown freely open to uncircumcised Gentiles through his ministry and that of his companions, two distinct parties make their appearance, viz., the Jewish Christian party and that which consisted of the Gentile converts and the more liberal-minded Jews. The former not only adhered to the Mosaic ritual as an essential portion of their Christianity, but strained every effort to impose it on their Gentile brethren. On the other hand, while the latter claimed exemption from the observance of the legal ordinances, they conceded to the Jewish Christian the right to observe them as a portion of his ancestral religion. This compromise was accepted by the great Apostle of Catholic Christianity, on condition that the Jewish Christian should abstain from attempting to impose them on his Gentile brother. But this state of things did not last long. The Jewish Christian maintained that the observance of the legal institutions was a matter of Divine obligation, and urged that the duty to practise them had never been abrogated. Hence large numbers of them denied the

right of uncircumcised Gentile converts to stand on an equal footing with themselves in the kingdom of God. In fact they looked with horror on the idea of the repeal in the kingdom of their own Messiah, of that which they considered to be the special inheritance of their race. This led them to become zealous propagators of their own peculiar views. But further : as the strict observance of the legal rites encompassed the daily life of the conscientious Jew, this could not fail to bring him into unpleasant collision with the Gentile Christian who disregarded them. Hence arose angry disputes between these two sections of the Church, followed by continuous attempts on the part of the Judaizing party to bring over to their own views the Gentile Churches which had been planted by St. Paul. Let us now consider the mode in which he dealt with this great controversy.

The Apostle, as we have seen, laid it down as an essential principle of the Gospel which had been revealed to him that the legal ordinances, having had whatever reality they once contained fully realized in the person of our Lord, were no longer binding in the kingdom of God, and were in fact abrogated. Nay, further : he declared that those who taught that they still ought to be imposed on the consciences of Christians as matters of Divine obligation were subverters of Christian liberty, and propagators of a different Gospel from that which he had received from Christ. But while this was his general position, he modified it by a succession of compromises designed for the purpose of conciliating the great body of Jewish believers, who still constituted the most numerous section in the Church. To these he freely conceded the right to continue to practise those ceremonies in the observance of which they had been educated, without any rigid inquiry into the precise nature of their views respecting them.

The following are some of the chief compromises in connection with this controversy which we find recorded by the historian, or incidentally referred to by the Apostle himself.

1. His circumcising of Timothy in deference to the prejudices of the Jews ; and his not improbable assent to the circumcision of Titus. His language on this latter point is ambiguous ; but on the whole the evidence preponderates in favour of his circumcision.

2. His adoption of the compromise agreed to by the council at Jerusalem, which required Gentile Christians to abstain from certain kinds of food.

3. His taking on himself a vow prior to his arrival at Cenchrea, and his shaving his head in consequence. Of the precise nature of this vow the historian does not inform us ; but the shaving of the head implies that it was a Nazarite vow, involving the duty of offering certain sacrifices.

4. His assenting to the advice of James and the elders of the Church at Jerusalem, that he should associate himself with four Christian Nazarites, and pay the expenses attending the discharge of their vow, in order to dissipate the report that when in foreign countries he was in the habit of exhorting the Jews to forsake Moses. This was esteemed by Jews a great act of piety ; but it involved those engaged in it not only in the performance of a number of "*carnal ordinances*," but in the offering of some costly sacrifices. Whether the Apostle offered these sacrifices himself, or defrayed the expenses of others who did so, matters little in reference to the point we are considering.

5. His general practice of conforming to the Jewish customs when ministering among Jews. In doing so he must have performed no small number of ceremonial acts, which according to the general principles set forth in his Epistles, he must have held to have been in themselves valueless and unmeaning. To this was contrasted his practice of disregarding them when ministering among Gentiles. His testimony on this point is explicit :—

"For though I was free from all men, I brought myself under bondage to all, that I might gain the more. And to the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might gain Jews ;

to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak; I am become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some" (1 Cor. ix. 19-22).

6. His directions as to the conduct of Christians respecting the partaking of various kinds of food, and the observance of certain sacred days and seasons. As this is a point of considerable importance, and branches off into several subordinate questions, it must be reserved for a separate consideration.

When we consider the various positions laid down by the Apostle in his different Epistles, respecting the relation of Judaism to Christianity,—but especially in that to the Galatians, in which he designates the legal ordinances as "weak and beggarly elements," and denounces the system of his Judaizing opponents as subversive of the Gospel,—it is evident that his practice, as above stated, must have laid him open to the charge of inconsistency. But for the purpose of the present argument I am not called on to vindicate his conduct, but to accept it as illustrative of the wide comprehensiveness of Apostolical Christianity. I have therefore simply to ask the reader's attention to the fact, that notwithstanding the objections which might have been urged against it by opponents, or the erroneous inferences drawn from it, yet such was his uniform practice throughout the whole of his Apostolical labours. I infer therefore that his conduct in this respect was in conformity with the mind of Christ; and ought consequently to be imitated by the Church under similar circumstances in every age. This being so, I must draw the reader's attention to the importance of the questions involved: and first with respect to the offering of sacrifice.

The Apostle believed and taught that our Lord by His

one great sacrifice of Himself had once for all atoned for the sins of the whole world; and that since He had offered it all the old legal sacrifices had become nugatory; and that the only sacrifice which under the Christian dispensation was really acceptable to God was the living sacrifice of a man's entire self. What then must have been the views with which he contemplated the sacrifices of slaughtered animals, when he consented to pay the expenses of those who offered them, and to be present at their celebration? On this point both the Apostle and the historian are silent; but I think that we can hardly err in assuming that while he utterly denied their efficacy to atone for sin, he must have viewed them as commemorative of the one great sacrifice offered on the cross. Be this however as it may, it is evident that among Christians with Jewish proclivities—and, as we have seen, these were very numerous in the Church—there was no little danger that the position taken by him would be misunderstood; and that his performance of them was an admission that they possessed some degree of inherent efficacy, and that they were to be continued as permanent institutions in the Christian Church. It is obvious that Judaizing Christians must have drawn this inference, and urged that the sanction given to them by the Apostle's taking part in their celebration was equivalent to an admission that there was something wanting in the one great sacrifice, which these were intended to supplement; or at any rate, that they were intended to be for the future commemorative renewals of that sacrifice presented before God, somewhat similar to the idea which is implied in the sacrifice of the Mass. Such inferences were obvious enough; and it is therefore evident that there was no little danger of erroneous doctrines being founded on his conduct in these matters. Still the Apostle's writings do not contain a single definition, or even a caution on the subject. He contented himself with laying down certain great truths respecting Christ crucified, and trusted to them alone to guard the Church against the dangers in



question. Subsequent ages would have propounded a confession of faith defining the points at issue; but so did not St. Paul. On this subject therefore, it is evident that the Apostolic Church must have comprehended a wide divergency of opinion.

Secondly, with respect to his toleration of the observance of the other Jewish rites by others, and his not unfrequent observance of them himself.

St. Paul unquestionably held, in conformity with the teaching of our Lord, that no outward act, rite or ceremony can of itself constitute an act of worship acceptable to Him who, being a Spirit, can only be truly worshipped in spirit and in truth; nor that it is capable by itself of producing a moral result which is beneficial to him that performs it; in a word, that moral and spiritual results can only be produced by moral and spiritual means. It is hardly possible to over-estimate the importance of this truth; for its proclamation by our Lord may be truly said to have opened a new religious era in the history of mankind. The belief in the efficacy of such rites and ceremonies is a principle deeply seated in the human mind, and underlies every religion except the Christian. This belief was also entertained by a vast majority of the Jewish people during the Apostolic age; and was one from which our Lord with the utmost difficulty succeeded in freeing the minds of the Apostles. In fact, they were not freed from it until their subsequent enlightenment by the Divine Spirit. Yet notwithstanding the deep-seatedness of this principle in human nature, it is unquestionably one which it is the purpose of Christianity ultimately to subvert. But as we have seen, not only did the Apostle tolerate the practice of these rites and ceremonies, washings and carnal ordinances, by those who had been educated in their observance, but when he was ministering among such persons for the purpose of conciliation, he observed them himself.

Among other questions warmly discussed at this period was the duty of abstaining from the use of those kinds of

food which had been either offered in sacrifice to idols or pronounced unclean by the Mosaic ordinances, and of observing certain days and seasons which they had pronounced sacred. The first of these involved a question which bore on the daily life of the believer; for at certain seasons of the year, nearly all the meat sold in the markets had been previously offered in sacrifice to the pagan gods, who for the most part were contented with the inferior portions and the offal of the animal. The eating of such food raised two points of difficulty to these primitive believers; first, whether it did not involve a pollution; and secondly, whether it was not equivalent to a participation in an act of idolatry. So important was this question that the Corinthian Church had sent a letter to the Apostle, in which among other things they requested his opinion and decision on this very subject. The same point is also considered in his Epistle to the Romans. The following are the principles which he lays down respecting them.

1. The partaking of a particular kind of food, or the abstaining from it, is a matter of perfect indifference in the sight of God.

2. No kind of food is unclean in itself; but all food is sanctified by the Word of God, and by prayer.

3. The participation or abstinence from any particular kind of food exercises no moral or spiritual influence whatever.

4. An idol is nothing in the world; and therefore the eating of food which has been offered in sacrifice to an idol, is in itself a matter of indifference.

5. Every day to the Christian is alike sacred, for he is the Lord's property; and consequently every day of his life is the Lord's day.

Such are St. Paul's Apostolical decisions on these subjects. I need hardly observe that they include principles of the greatest importance. But the point to which I am desirous of drawing the reader's attention is, that while he lays down these decisions, in virtue of his Apostolical autho-

rity, as flowing from the essential principles of Christianity, he nowhere enjoins their acceptance as necessary conditions of Church communion. On the contrary he admits that many of those whom he is addressing will be unable to accept them. St. Paul's qualifications of his own decrees on these subjects are very remarkable, and may be briefly stated as follows :—

As every Christian had not the same amount of knowledge as the Apostle, he was not to be required as a condition of Church membership to regulate either his belief or his practice by the principles above enumerated; but simply in accordance with his own conscientious convictions. Thus Christian Jews might be unable to accept the truth that distinctions of food had no longer any religious value. Accordingly they were to be left unmolested in their belief and practice. In a similar manner, other members of the Church would not be able to acknowledge that a Gentile idol was an absolute nothing; and could not get over the idea that to eat food which had been offered to an idol was an act of idolatry. They too were to be left unmolested in their opinions and their practice. In like manner with respect to the sacredness of particular days, times and seasons. Jewish Christians could not free themselves from the idea that the observance of these was still obligatory, as matters of Divine institution. Their belief and practice were to be tolerated by their Gentile brethren, who were free from such scruples; only in the observance or the non-observance of such days they were to “do it unto the Lord.” Each individual Christian was to act on his own conscientious convictions on these subjects; and having this liberty was not to interfere with the liberty of others. Thus the Apostle lays down as a fundamental principle :—

“Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that eateth, eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, unto the Lord he eateth not, and

giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died, and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? or thou again, why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God" (Rom. xiv. 5-10).

Such was the toleration to be extended to those who were in the Apostle's view weak Christians. On the one hand the weak Christian was to abstain from attempting to impose his own beliefs and practices on his stronger brother, who would usually be a Gentile Christian, to whom, owing to his mode of education, all these practices would be matters of indifference, or perhaps of repugnance. On the other hand the Gentile Christian was to abstain from doing any act in the presence of his Jewish brother which might either grieve him or tempt him to violate his conscientious convictions, even when those convictions militated against the Apostle's own decisions. On this point he lays down the following wide principle of comprehension founded on the great duty of self-sacrifice rendered to Christ:—

"But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to the weak. For if a man see thee which hast knowledge sitting at meat in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be emboldened to eat things sacrificed to idols? For through thy knowledge he that is weak perisheth, the brother for whose sake Christ died. And thus, sinning against the brethren, and wounding their conscience when it is weak, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat maketh my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I make not my brother to stumble" (1 Cor. viii. 9-13).

Probably all history will not furnish us with another example of a teacher who while claiming to lay down a number

of important principles in virtue of a supernatural illumination which had been imparted to him, yet directed that they should not be enforced on those who from conscientious motives were unable to accept and act on his decisions.

It may perhaps be objected that these decisions relate to practical matters only, and not to doctrines. To this I reply :—

First: That even if the objection is valid, the Apostle's conduct in this respect is worthy of imitation in all subsequent ages of the Church; and is a sufficient answer to those who at the present day oppose all compromises which make for peace, on the ground that such compromises involve a sacrifice of principle, and are liable to have dangerous inferences deduced from them. St. Paul's concessions were all open to this very objection.

Secondly: Although the special points on which his decisions were given were practical questions, yet in delivering them he lays down several very important principles. At the same time, while he enunciates these, in virtue of his Apostolical authority, as deducible from the great principles of Christianity, he declines to allow them to be imposed on the consciences of those whose imperfect knowledge or educational prejudices rendered them unable to accept them. But according to views which have been widely current in the Church in subsequent ages, it might have been expected that he would have required his declarations that the participation of, or abstaining from, different kinds of food was a matter of absolute indifference to a Christian, and that all days were to him alike holy, to be accepted as Divine verities by every member of the Church. His mode of dealing with such questions however was exactly the reverse; and although he is now no longer present, he still says to every Christian community, and to each individual Christian, Go and do likewise; and leave the results to God.

Thirdly: The Apostle's decisions were exposed to the danger of having erroneous doctrines deduced from them. Thus, large numbers of the converts of those days could

with difficulty be weaned from the belief that the eating of unclean foods was morally polluting; or that the performance of certain rites and ceremonies had in itself a real efficacy in the way of spiritual and moral purification. This we know was the case with the Apostles themselves until they received supernatural enlightenment on the subject; and there is no reason to suppose that their prejudices were deeper than those of ordinary converts. Persons holding such opinions might not unnaturally draw inferences from St. Paul's concessions that outward rites and ceremonies were efficacious to produce moral and spiritual results. Yet he does not guard against so obvious a danger by propounding creeds, confessions of faith, canon, or rubric on this subject, but simply states what he considered to be the great principles of Christianity in reference to these controversies, and leaves the results to God.

Several chapters of the first Epistle to the Corinthians deal with what may be called some of the other burning questions of the day on precisely similar principles. I think that it is impossible to study them as a whole without arriving at the conclusion that the Apostolic Church must have been a society widely comprehensive, both in doctrine and in practice, far beyond the comprehensiveness of any society of Christians which has existed since the Apostolic age.

These Epistles also furnish us with a proof of the wide toleration afforded by the Apostolic Church, even in matters which are not merely inferential, but directly doctrinal. It is a remarkable fact that there were members of the Corinthian Church who, while they professed belief in the resurrection of Christ, yet denied the reality of a bodily resurrection from the dead. We have no data for determining the precise views which they entertained on this subject. But probably they held, in common with most systems of ancient philosophy, that matter was inherently evil; and therefore inferred that the resurrection which was

promised by Christianity was only a spiritual one. However this may be, St. Paul's assertion is express, that there were members of this Church who said that there would be no resurrection of the dead. How then does he deal with these persons? Does he rigidly define the true doctrine, and command them to receive it on pain of excommunication? No; he calmly reasons with them; and to the difficulty which they felt we are indebted for the fifteenth chapter of this Epistle, in which he sets forth the truths which had been revealed to him respecting it. In marked contrast to this is his mode of dealing with a case of open profligacy in one of the members of this Church. He directs that a meeting should be forthwith held, and the offending member separated from the Christian society, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Too often in the history of the Church in subsequent ages has a precisely opposite course been pursued. While the profligate has been spared (witness even Popes of almost superhuman wickedness), the holder of opinions which have been decreed erroneous has been consigned to the burning stake.

St. Paul's writings contain numerous other illustrations of the comprehensiveness of the Apostolic Church, to which it will be sufficient to make only a brief allusion here, for the principles adopted by him in relation to the greatest of all controversies which have ever agitated the Church—viz., the relation of Judaism to Christianity, establish the fact beyond the possibility of reasonable doubt. Thus while the question of predestination and election is frequently referred to in the course of his reasonings, his references, as has been already pointed out, are limited to its bearing on the great controversy above mentioned, which rendered it necessary for him to vindicate the right of God to bestow special privileges on particular races and nations, or to withdraw them according to His own good pleasure. But into the abstract question, the solution of which has exercised so many minds in subsequent ages, he does not

enter, although the discussion of it was directly suggested by the subjects which he was considering. Yet not only is this subject surrounded with the greatest difficulties, but it is one in which there is danger of falling into the gravest errors, as may be seen from certain positions which have been adopted by different schools of theologians in deference to certain abstract theories, by means of which He, who in love to man sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world, has been portrayed as devoid of every attribute which is either lovely or holy. Yet the Apostle has passed over in silence all the difficulties connected with this question; nor has he once attempted by a single definition to guard against the dangers connected with it. The only legitimate inference from this silence must be that in the Apostolic Church the whole subject was regarded as what in the present day is designated "an open question."

On another abstract question, in the discussion of which whole libraries of metaphysical theology have been written and all the resources of exact logical definition exhausted, and the attempts to formulate definite confessions of faith in connection with it have occasioned the bitterest controversies in the Church, the Apostle's silence is equally unbroken. It need scarcely be added that I allude to the relation of Divine grace to human freedom. It cannot be denied that in St. Paul's writings there is much to engender this controversy in minds which are addicted to abstract speculation, or require to have every truth given in revelation mapped out in a systematic form which shall be definitely cognizable by the logical intellect. Now what I ask the reader carefully to observe is, that while he has affirmed *the fact* of the Divine action on the human mind, and the *no less certain fact* of human freedom, he has left the whole of those questions which have excited such angry discussions, and caused such bitter divisions in the Church, untouched and undefined. The facts and truths which are capable of exerting a powerful influence on the heart and the



conduct, he has affirmed; but the metaphysical difficulties connected with them he has left to take care of themselves. From this the natural inference is, that they also were open questions in the Apostolic Church.

What, I ask, has been the result of the attempts to penetrate into these secrets? This and no other, that after centuries of wrangling and contention we are no nearer their solution than we were at the commencement of the discussion. One inference they urge strongly on all thoughtful minds—and this is the only advantage which has flowed from them—namely, that they belong to that class of subjects which transcend the limits of the human understanding, and into which our reason is unable to penetrate. With respect to them the Apostle's caution, though uttered in reference to another subject, is distinctly applicable:—"Beware, lest any one should make a spoil of you, through his philosophy and vain conceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." In other words, all definitions on such subjects are merely human superadditions to the simplicity of Apostolical Christianity.

Another remarkable silence of the Apostle must be noticed here. He has referred to our Lord's Supper in his Epistle to the Corinthian Church, and sternly rebukes its members on account of their disorders in its celebration. Yet he propounds no abstract statements about it or definitions as to its nature. All that he does is to give a simple account of the institution of this sacred rite, followed by certain directions and practical exhortations. Yet surely the occasion of such a profanation was pre-eminently fitted to call forth some reference to those dogmas,—such as that of Transubstantiation, Consubstantiation, or of the Real Presence,—which metaphysical subtlety has engrafted on the sacred ordinance. If the Apostle or the Church had held either of these doctrines as essential to Christianity, it is obvious that the most powerful rebuke which he could have administered to these disorderly Corinthians would have

been to urge on them the profanity of indulging in the excesses of an ordinary meal in the presence of the glorified Christ then and there present on the altar. Yet the Apostle gives no definition, nor offers one word of explanation as to the mode of the Divine presence. Here again the necessary inference must be that all such subjects were open questions in the Apostolic Church; in other words it must have been widely comprehensive. Yet in subsequent ages the refusal to accept these dogmas as Divine verities has been made the occasion of shedding torrents of Christian blood. Surely the time has come when men's eyes should be opened to the fact that such metaphysical subtleties are wholly foreign to Christianity as it was taught by our Lord and His Apostles.

One more remarkable example of the absence of abstract statements and definitions in reference to a subject which holds an important place in modern systems of theology will be sufficient, as a final illustration of the wide comprehensiveness of the Apostolic Church. I allude to the place which the history of the fall of man, as recorded in the book of Genesis, holds in the New Testament Scriptures. Numerous confessions of faith, schemes of salvation and systems of theology, not only treat it as an essential portion of Christianity, but I may almost say that they are founded on it. It is a remarkable fact that the fall of man as recorded in Genesis is not once subsequently alluded to in the Old Testament, except in a passage of doubtful interpretation in the book of Job. In the New Testament it is referred to only on the following occasions.

“And he answered, and said: Have ye not read that he which made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the twain shall become one flesh? So that they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not man put asunder” (Matt. xix. 4-6).

This is an unquestionable reference to the second chapter

of Genesis; but it says nothing about the fall of man or its consequences, which is nowhere referred to in our Lord's teaching.

St. Paul is the only writer in the New Testament who directly refers to it. His references are as follows:—

“Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned:—for until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come. But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many. And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment came of one unto condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses unto justification. For if, by the trespass of the one death reigned through the one, much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ. So then, as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous. And the law came in beside, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly; that as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. v. 12-21).

“Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness. For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not beguiled, but the

woman being beguiled hath fallen into transgression" (1 Tim. ii. 11-14).

"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 22); and—"So also it is written, the first man Adam became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (1 Cor. xv. 45).

The following also may be considered an allusion: "And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil, and Satan" (Rev. xii. 9).

Such then are the only references in the New Testament to what is designated the doctrine of the fall of man. Of course I am fully aware that these Scriptures refer again and again to the fact of human sinfulness, and to the consequent need of redemption; but this is quite a different question from what is meant by the doctrine of the fall. This doctrine, as propounded in popular theology, and as set forth in many systems of scientific theology, lays down a vast array of dogmas respecting the nature of Adam's transgression, its consequences on his posterity, the nature and extent of human depravity as consequent upon it, and other questions too numerous to mention; and erects on them a multitude of theories respecting the Divine counsels in devising the plan of redemption, the nature of the atonement, and the manner in which it has been effected. The whole constitute a vast pyramid which rests on the apex of these five texts.

The fact that our Lord has not once alluded to the fall of man, and the remaining writings of the New Testament only three times at most, affords an overwhelming proof that the mass of dogma above referred to must rest on an utterly insecure foundation; and could have formed no essential portion of Apostolic Christianity. I have said that the fall of man is referred to in only three passages; because the first and third cited passages have in reality nothing to do with it, but are simply references to the creation of man; and although it is alluded to in the passage quoted from the Epistle to Timothy, the reference is so vague that

it is impossible to draw any doctrinal inferences from it. This mass of dogma therefore really rests on the first and second of the above cited passages alone, the third being expressly limited by the context to the resurrection, "For as in Adam, all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," and affirms as a fact that as death is inherited by all men in consequence of their relation to the original progenitor of the human race, so by their relation to Christ, as a second Adam, all men will be made alive. Those therefore who have elaborated the mass of abstract dogma above alluded to are compelled, as far as Scriptural authority is concerned, to rest it on the second of the above cited passages, and on inferential reasoning deduced from other statements of the sacred writers.

The passage in which reference is made to it in the Epistle to the Romans is perhaps the most involved in the whole New Testament. Its general drift is however obvious enough; and this will render it unnecessary to discuss its details. The object of the Apostle evidently was to run a parallel between Christ and Adam, and to affirm that whatever mischief had been wrought by Adam had been done away by Christ. Nay more, he goes to the extent of declaring that the evil wrought by Adam had been far more than compensated by the good wrought by Christ. "Where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly, that as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. v. 20, 21).

This consideration, together with the remarkable fact already mentioned, that the subject of the fall is not once referred to by our Lord, and nowhere in the New Testament except in the above quotations, constitutes a proof that the mass of dogma which theologians have propounded on this subject can have formed no essential portion of Apostolical Christianity; in fact, that the primitive Church held no definite theory on the subject.

The above considerations therefore prove beyond all reasonable doubt that the Apostolic Church embraced a great diversity of opinion on some of the most important questions.

Nor can this comprehensiveness be attributed to want of zeal, or to the absence of definite opinion on the part of the great vindicator of Christian liberty, where the essentials of Christianity were concerned. He thus writes :—

“If any man preacheth unto you any Gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. For am I now persuading men or God? or am I seeking to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ” (Gal. i. 9, 10).

Again : “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision ; for we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. iii. 2, 3).

Yet the same Apostle wrote as follows respecting the conduct of some Judaizing members of the Church of Rome :—

“Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife ; and some also of good will : the one do it of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the Gospel ; but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds. What then ? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed ; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice” (Phil. i. 15-18).

The above principles may be difficult to formulate with logical precision in an abstract creed or confession of faith ; they may even be illogical ; but, blessed be God, Christianity does not consist of a system of correct logical reasoning, or of certain opinions on points of abstract thought, expressed with the precision which the strict requirements of the logical intellect demand ; but its essence is expressed by the Apostle, when he affirms that “the kingdom of God is

righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; for he that herein serveth Christ is well pleasing to God and approved of men" (Rom. xiv. 17, 18).

Finally: as the simplicity of Apostolical Christianity proves its comprehensiveness, so its comprehensiveness proves that it must have been a system of very simple truths. The one is the correlative of the other.

## CHAPTER XXI.

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### THEOLOGY—ITS FUNCTION IN REFERENCE TO REVELATION.

WE have proved in former chapters that theology is a human science. This being so, its function is to deal with the facts and phenomena of revelation precisely in the same manner as the physical sciences deal with the facts and phenomena of the universe, and the mental sciences with the facts and phenomena of man. But all sciences ultimately involve a philosophy; the function of which is to reduce their facts and phenomena to general laws, and to refer them to principles which are adequate to account for their existence. To this rule theology, as a science, forms no exception; and consequently it is both a science and a philosophy. Theology therefore as a philosophy must rest on the same rational basis as the philosophy of science. But both science and philosophy are dependent for the certitude of their conclusions on the nature of the subject-matter under consideration, the degree in which the finite intellect of man is competent to deal with it, and the validity of the logical processes employed in its investigation. This remark therefore is true of theology whether we view it as a science or as a philosophy.

Such then being the nature of theology, we have no right to demand for its conclusions a greater degree of certitude



than that which belongs to other sciences and philosophies which deal with similar subject-matter. I make this remark because there has been, and still is, a very prevalent tendency to claim for its conclusions a higher authority and a greater degree of certitude than justly appertains to those of other sciences and philosophies. This claim is urged on its behalf because it deals with the truths, facts, and phenomena of revelation ; and these form matters of interest to man in comparison with which all other scientific truths are unimportant. But the degree in which man is interested in a truth adds nothing to its certitude, which depends wholly on the nature of the subject-matter and the validity of the processes employed in its investigation. Consequently the certitudes of theology and the certitudes of science and philosophy rest on precisely the same rational basis ; and the idea that the conclusions of the former possess a special certitude, because it is the science which deals with the facts and phenomena of revelation, is groundless.

This being so, the certainty of the conclusions of the theologian must depend on the nature of the subject-matter with which he attempts to deal, and the validity of the processes which he employs in its investigation. When therefore that subject-matter is definite and simple, they possess precisely the same degree of certainty as the conclusions of those sciences which deal with subject-matter which is equally definite and simple ; but when he undertakes to grapple with highly complicated and abstract subjects, his conclusions are uncertain, precisely in the degree of the abstractedness and the complexity of the subject-matter which he is seeking to explore. In this respect however theology has laboured under a disadvantage, compared with the physical sciences ; for no small number of the questions which it has undertaken to investigate are unfortunately of this abstract and complicated character. Consequently as far as it attempts to deal with such subjects, it can claim no higher certainty for its conclusions than can be justly demanded on behalf of those human sciences which undertake to grapple

with similarly abstract and complicated questions. In this respect it bears a closer analogy to the mental sciences than to the physical, because the conceptions involved in these latter are of a far simpler character than those of the former ; and the conclusions deduced from them admit of being brought to that test of definitely observed fact which in scientific language is designated verification. But with respect to the mental sciences, the conceptions involved are both abstract and complicated ; and in most instances it is very difficult, if not impossible, to submit their conclusions to the test of verification. The difference in point of certitude between the two is proved by the fact that while there is a general agreement among scientific men respecting the great truths of the physical universe, such an agreement is wholly wanting among those who have undertaken to study the science of mind, as is proved by the fact that hardly any two of its investigators have arrived at precisely the same conclusions from the same data. I need hardly say that even a greater diversity of conclusion has been arrived at by theologians whenever they have attempted to deal with subject-matter equally abstract and complicated.

But the theologian labours under another disadvantage, which exposes him to danger against which he can never be too careful to guard. Theology is the region in which prepossession and *à priori* assumption abound more than in any other department of thought. I need hardly say that when this is the case, our conclusions are wholly vitiated. In this disadvantage the mental sciences, though in a less degree, share with theology ; and to this is due, to a certain extent, the wide divergency of conclusion at which their students have arrived. The result is that a great degree of incertitude is thrown on the conclusions of both, whenever they deal with abstract and complicated questions.

Such being the difficulties and the dangers which attend the study of theology, especially in its more abstract forms, we may lay it down as a general principle, that its conclusions vary from a very high degree of moral certainty to a very

low degree of probability ; this variation being in exact proportion to the nature of the subject-matter under investigation, the prepossessions of the student, and the validity of the logical processes which he employs. The certitude of its conclusions is further weakened by our inability to apply to them any such test of verification as is capable of being applied to those of physical science. Here however theology has an advantage over some of the more abstract mental sciences, though, strange to say, it is one of which its students have almost invariably neglected to avail themselves. As I have observed in a former chapter, it possesses the means of verifying the truth of its abstract reasonings by comparing their results with the revelation of the Divine character made in the person of Jesus Christ. Whenever its abstract reasonings have led to results which militate against this character, the conclusions deduced from them ought to have been rejected as unsound ; and together with the conclusions, the principles on which they were founded. Had this principle of verification been adopted, whole systems of theology—of which Calvinism and Romanism may be cited as striking examples—would have crumbled into ruin.

Having laid down these principles, let us now proceed to consider what are the legitimate functions of theology with respect to revelation.

1. Its first duty is to set forth the evidences on which a professed revelation claims to be accepted as Divine. The importance of this portion of its functions is greatly overlooked and undervalued. Professed Christians, as a body, are strangely indifferent to the fact that more than two thirds of the human race still stand outside the fold of Jesus Christ, not to speak of the large numbers of those who, although nominally Christians, are nevertheless practical, if not theoretical unbelievers. Yet our Lord claims the world as His own. How then are these hundreds of millions of human beings to be persuaded to acknowledge Jesus Christ as their spiritual King? This is a profoundly important

question ; and it is one of the primary functions of theology to solve it.

But theology also owes it as a duty to believers to set forth in a simple and intelligible form the grounds on which Christianity claims to be accepted by them as a Divine revelation. I am aware that the idea is widely prevalent that this is wholly unnecessary in respect of those who already profess the Christian faith. "They believe already: why trouble them with an inquiry into the grounds of their belief? To do so would have the simple effect of raising doubts in their minds." But the answer is obvious: Christianity claims our assent on rational grounds. "Every one," says our Lord, "who is of the truth hears my voice." Christianity therefore claims to be accepted, not because it is a religion which has been handed down to us by tradition from our fathers, nor because it suits what we think to be our moral and spiritual requirements, but *because it is true*. If a Christian is to be a Christian merely because his ancestors were so before him, his faith rests on a foundation no more substantial than that of the most degraded fetish worshipper. Full well may a heathen reply to the Christian missionary, "Why do you trouble us in our beliefs? We believe in our religion for precisely the same reasons as you do in yours, *i.e.*, because our ancestors did so before us; and we find it suitable to our respective wants and aspirations." A religion which rests on any higher grounds than this, involves rational investigation into its claims. So thought St. Paul when he wrote to men who were already Christians, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." So also thought St. Peter when he wrote, "Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord, being ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you; a reason concerning the hope that is in you; yet with meekness and fear." To vindicate the claims of Christianity to acceptance, and to dispute those of ancestral religions was one of the primary duties of the members of the primitive Christian societies. The inference therefore which I deduce

from the above considerations is, that it is one of the functions of the theologian to set forth the claims of Christianity to acceptance on the part of all men, whether heathen, Mahometan, unbeliever, or Christian, in terms plain, distinct, and suited to every variety of the human intellect, from the sage to the savage; and adapted to the ever-changing conditions of human thought. I am fully aware that men are more easily won to Christ by witnessing the regenerating influences of Christianity displayed in the lives of its professors than by reasonings addressed to the intellect; but whatever may be the grounds on which our Lord claims the allegiance of the human heart or the influences which win it to Him, it must be one of the primary functions of the theologian to set them forth in terms which will commend themselves to every variety of the human understanding.

2. As it is the function of the physical and mental sciences to ascertain the facts of the Universe and of man by means of careful and accurate observation, so also it is the function of theology as a science to ascertain the facts and phenomena of revelation. The reason of this is obvious; for until these facts are ascertained, no adequate basis exists for any reasonings on the subject. As therefore it is the primary duty of the scientist to investigate the actual facts and phenomena of nature, as distinguished from mere deceptive appearances and prepossessions, so in like manner is it the primary duty of the theologian to ascertain what are the actual facts and phenomena of revelation. Nor does the instrumentality employed by the theologian differ from that made use of by the scientist. In either case it is careful investigation.

This opens a wide field of inquiry, which may full well tax the utmost powers of the theologian. I have shown in former chapters that the New Testament constitutes our sole record of the Christian revelation. In a similar manner the Old Testament constitutes the sole record of those various imperfect revelations made through the

medium of the prophets, which were introductory to, and intended to prepare the way for the Christian dispensation. It follows therefore that the facts and phenomena of the Christian revelation can only be ascertained by a careful study of the New Testament ; and the facts and phenomena of former revelation by a similar study of the Old. In other words, the entire Bible must be made the subject of careful critical investigation to enable the theologian to separate the actual revelations which it contains from the mass of extraneous matter with which they are incorporated.

If theological inquiry could be limited to the facts of Christianity as a revelation, our investigation might be confined to the New Testament alone ; for, as I have shown above, its writers profess to set forth everything, the acceptance of which is necessary to make a man a Christian. But as Christianity not only recognizes the validity of former revelations, but has grown out of them, their nature and character becomes a subject of legitimate inquiry to the Christian theologian, in order that he may be able to understand the manner in which revelation in its progressive state during the ages of the past has gradually prepared the way for its latest and final development in the person of our Lord. In fact the two Testaments are so closely connected together that a careful study of the contents of the Old Testament is necessary for a full appreciation of that revelation of which the pages of the New constitute the record.

While thus pointing out the vast extent of the field of inquiry over which it is the duty of the scientific and philosophical theologian to prosecute his investigations, I would carefully guard the reader against the supposition that such an extended investigation is necessary to enable him to ascertain those simple truths of Apostolical Christianity which are powerful to regenerate the heart, and to sanctify the life. St. Luke, as we have seen, affirms that all the essential truths of the Christian faith may be found within the limits

of his single Gospel. But theology, whether viewed as a science or as a philosophy, deals with revelation in its intellectual aspects. It is therefore its function to investigate revelation as a whole; and to do this, it is necessary to contemplate it in its historical character, which can only be done by the investigation of the contents of the Old Testament, and of the nature of the revelations of which it is the record. It is in fact the function of theology as a science, not only to set forth Christianity in all its simplicity, as it was intended to operate as a sanctifying power on the masses of mankind, but also as it addresses itself to the cultivated intellect; for it is intended to supply food to both classes of minds; and it is one of its special glories, that it is adapted to the requirements both of the wise and the unwise, the revelation made in Jesus Christ being not only "the power of God unto salvation," but "the wisdom of God." This wisdom it is the duty of those who possess the requisite endowments to explore; but while this is the function of the theologian, it is no less his plain duty to abstain from proclaiming conclusions which are the simple deductions of human reason, as oracles from heaven.

The field of investigation therefore which lies open to the theologian is sufficiently extensive; for as the Bible constitutes the sole record both of the Christian revelation and of those which preceded it, it is obvious that our investigation of the nature and meaning of the various documents of which it is composed is an indispensable preliminary to a clear understanding of the revelations of which it is the record. When we consider what is the real nature of the Bible, viz., that it is a book, the composition of which has extended over more than fourteen centuries; that it consists of a number of treatises, some of which are poetical, others historical, others contain a body of legislation, others a body of moral aphorisms, others prophecies and prophetic exhortations, and others are letters addressed to different Churches and individuals; and that these

various writings were composed by men who occupied the most diverse positions in society, from the prince to the herdsman and fisherman; and that its different parts have the most intimate bearing on the ever-varying conditions of human thought, it is evident that the investigation of its meaning must be a work of no inconsiderable difficulty; a difficulty so great as to tax the powers of the investigator to the utmost.

It has been often asserted that the Bible is a book which presents little difficulty to the ordinary reader if he studies it with a hearty desire to ascertain its meaning. This is true with respect to some portions of it, as for instance, the Gospels, but to say that it is true of the entire Bible is simply misleading. How is it possible that a work of such antiquity, whose contents extend over a period of more than fourteen hundred years, composed under conditions of thought utterly different from those of the present day, consisting of a mass of literature so varied, and written by persons of the utmost variety of mental endowment, should be easily intelligible at the present day, when the conditions of thought are changed, and the remembrance of the circumstances which called forth its various utterances has passed into oblivion? Let us take an extreme case. Will any one affirm that the book of the prophet Ezekiel, or the Apocalypses of Daniel and St. John, or the Song of Solomon, or the book of Ecclesiastes, or the reasonings in the Epistles to the Romans and to the Hebrews, or the instructions which are based on the incidental references to the circumstances of the Corinthian Church, are easily intelligible to a reader whose sole information respecting them is derived from no other source than the pages of the Bible? The Bible therefore, viewed as a whole, is not easily intelligible to the ordinary reader, though portions of it contain matter which is able to make all earnest inquirers wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. One of the most important functions of the



theologian therefore is to collect such information as will enable the student to read it with intelligence.

To effect this his first duty is to do his utmost to ascertain the meaning which its utterances must have conveyed to the persons to whom they were originally addressed. An utterance which is more than two thousand years old may convey a very different meaning to us from that which it conveyed to those to whom it was originally spoken. This is a necessary result of the change of circumstances and of the conditions of thought. But it is obvious that its true meaning must have been that which the persons originally addressed could not help attaching to it, unless it was intended to be an ambiguous oracle. It will doubtless be urged that it was intended by its Divine author to convey other meanings to subsequent generations. But to this it is a sufficient reply, that it gives us no key wherewith to unlock this secret treasure ; and in default of such key we are left to the mercy of conjecture. This being so, it is one of the primary duties of the theologian to provide the means of setting its primary and natural meaning before the reader as a preliminary to all successful study of the sacred page.

Further : the entire Old Testament is addressed to one particular nation, living under very unique circumstances, or to particular individuals of that nation ; and some portions of it to nations with whom the Jews came into immediate contact. The Apostolic Epistles also are every one of them addressed to particular Churches ; and deal with the circumstances of those Churches, their controversies, and points of deep interest to their authors, and to those to whom they are writing. But the ordinary reader of the Bible studies it as though it were a book composed at the present day, addressed to mankind at large, or to the Church generally, or to himself as an individual. This being so we can hardly wonder at the great diversity of opinion which prevails as to its meaning ; or that by a skilful citation of passages divorced from their context it may be made to

prove almost any doctrine we please. How then is the true meaning of a book which has been composed under such conditions to be made intelligible? Surely not by assigning to it any meaning which his imagination may suggest to the reader—nor that which it would have borne if it had been written in relation to the conditions of thought which prevail in the nineteenth century—but that which the author knew that those whom he was addressing would understand by it. This, on all principles of common sense, must be the primary meaning of the Bible; and until this meaning has been ascertained it is impossible to determine how far the instruction which it was intended to convey to those to whom it was immediately addressed is applicable to persons differently situated, and to future and altered times. It is therefore the function of the theologian to ascertain this meaning by the use of the best critical apparatus which can be applied to the sacred pages; and having done this, to set forth its meaning so as to make it intelligible to the ordinary reader.

For this purpose a critical examination of the various utterances of Scripture, both in their text and their context, is absolutely necessary; for their only true meaning is that which they bear in their context, precisely as is the case with any other book, and not that which the words may be made to bear when separated from it. The pernicious habit of quoting texts from all parts of Scripture, with no regard to the context in which they stand, is common among all classes of theologians, and has made large portions of theology a mass of hopeless confusion. Thus it was an old saying, "*Bonus Textarius, bonus Theologus*," than which assertion nothing can be more untrue, for by an ingenious manipulation of texts separated from their context, almost anything may be proved out of them.

This critical examination involves the consideration of a vast number of questions, among which may be mentioned the determination of the class of writings to which each utterance belongs; whether it is a simple one or one clothed

in metaphor; what were the habits of thought of the utterer, and of those whom he was addressing; and a careful collection of every incident handed down by history which can throw light on the times and the circumstances under which the writing in question was composed. One thing is certain: the writers of the Bible intended their utterances to be understood by those to whom they were addressed. Before therefore the theologian is entitled to draw inferences from them, his first duty is to ascertain their original and primary meaning; and having done this, to determine how far the primary meaning of Scripture is applicable to the altered circumstances and conditions of thought of modern times.

To theology therefore, as a science, belongs the function of investigating the nature of the sacred books; their history, character, and the circumstances under which they were composed. When this has been accomplished, another most important duty devolves on the theologian, viz., the determination of the relation in which the various writings stand to one another; and how far the contents of those earlier revelations of which the Old Testament is the record, are qualified by the final revelation of the Gospel. In other words, it becomes his duty to study revelation in its various historical developments. This more especially belongs to theology as a philosophy.

Another important function of theology is to discriminate between those portions of Scripture which are the records of Divine revelations, and those human elements with which they are so closely united in the sacred pages.

No one, I think, who reads the Bible free from the bias of *à priori* assumptions as to what ought to be the character of its contents, can fail to arrive at the conclusion that a human element is intimately blended in it with that Divine one which properly constitutes revelation. Diverse views have been, and perhaps ever will be taken—in the absence of all definition to be found in the Bible itself—as to the precise limits of these two factors; but the co-existence of

a human and a Divine factor in the sacred volume is undeniable. With any one who will maintain that such passages as "The Salutation of me Paul with my own hand; Remember my bonds," or, "That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also," or, "I speak as one beside myself," or, to take a passage already quoted from the Old Testament, "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed, happy shall he be who rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh thy little ones, and dasheth them against the stones," are utterances of the Holy Spirit, it would be useless to argue; for all reasonings are thrown away on those who come to the study of a book under the influence of *à priori* conclusions, which blind them to the most obvious facts. Yet passages of this description are very numerous in the sacred pages. But the existence in them of a human element, be it greater or less, being once admitted, it becomes the duty of the theologian to endeavour to ascertain what portions of it are records of Divine revelations and what are due to, or have been coloured by the human element present in the minds of its writers; or, if it is impossible in all cases to lay down the precise line which separates the one from the other, at any rate to point out the general principles on which the separation can be effected. Unless this is done, it is impossible to attain a clear comprehension of revelation. Having reached this stage of its investigations, it then becomes the function of theology to point out the relation in which this human element in the record stands to that which is Divine.

I am not called upon here to discuss the question whether the human element in the Bible has been recorded there by the express direction of the Divine Spirit for our edification and instruction. I fully admit its highly edifying and instructive character; and that the want of it would be a serious loss to the Christian student, presenting us, as it does,

with a delineation, taken from the life, of the manner in which the truths of revelation have acted on men of widely different temperaments and modes of thought. All that I am here concerned with is the fact that a purely human element cannot be a Divine one; and consequently, as far as it is a human one, that it cannot constitute what can be properly designated revelation.

Further: when the theologian has ascertained what constitute the facts and phenomena of revelation as distinct from the human element with which they are united, it then becomes his duty to deal with them in precisely the same manner as the physical and mental sciences deal with the facts and phenomena of the universe and of man, *i.e.*, to arrange, group, and generalize them. With this the work of strictly scientific theology ends, and that of philosophical theology begins. As then it is the function of philosophy in dealing with the results of the physical and mental sciences to propound theories which will explain the facts and phenomena of the universe and of man, and to arrange them under general laws, so it is the function of the philosophical theologian to propound theories which will explain the facts and phenomena of revelation.

In entering on this portion of his labours however, it behoves him to tread with the greatest wariness, owing to his inability to test the truth of his theories by submitting them to such a verification as that which physical science admits of. His only means of submitting them to any test of verification at all is, as I have already observed, the greatly neglected one of measuring them by the character of God as it is revealed in the person of our Lord, and at once rejecting as unsound all theories which contradict it. Still, as compared with the physical sciences, any verifying test which is at the disposal of the philosophical theologian is an imperfect one. The consequence of this is, that however elaborate may be his theories, they are unable to vindicate for themselves the rank of certainties, and can only claim that of probabilities. This uncertainty is also

greatly aggravated by the various infirmities of the human intellect when it attempts to deal with such abstract and complicated questions as those to which reference has been repeatedly made in previous chapters.

Such then, speaking generally, is the nature of the field which lies open to the legitimate investigations of the theologian. Surely its extent is so great as to render it unnecessary for him to attempt to enlarge his domains by trespassing on the forbidden and airy regions of ontology.

In conclusion a few remarks will be necessary for the purpose of guarding the foregoing observations respecting the functions of theology from the danger of misapprehension.

The positions here taken by no means interfere with those laid down in the previous chapters respecting the simplicity of Christianity as a revelation. The wide sphere of investigation which I have conceded to theology as a philosophy and a science may perhaps be supposed by some to be inconsistent with this simplicity. It is therefore necessary that the widely different functions of revelation and theology should be kept steadily in view by the student of both. Christianity is intended to be addressed to men of every variety of intellect, circumstance, and condition, and to satisfy their various wants and aspirations. The first want of human nature is regeneration and sanctification. Of this the civilized man and the savage, the man of cultivated and uncultivated intellect, the philosopher, the scientist, and the man whose whole time is absorbed in the daily avocations of life, alike stand in need. For this therefore provision is made in the simplicity of the fundamental truths of the Christian revelation, all of which, as we have seen above, may be found within the compass of a single Gospel. A simple Christianity of this kind is level to the comprehension of ninety-nine out of every hundred of mankind; and according to the affirmations of the third and fourth Evangelists, constitutes all that is necessary for the rege-

neration and sanctification of men. Such was the Gospel which our Lord and His Apostles proclaimed to the masses of mankind as the necessary food of their daily spiritual life, namely, a body of simple truths, which if a man so believe in that they regulate the course of his daily life, to adopt the language of Scripture, "*he shall be saved.*" But if the acceptance of these simple truths constitute all that is requisite for salvation, surely it must also constitute all that is essential to the Christian faith. Truths of this kind are in fact all that an overwhelming majority of mankind are capable of appreciating and intelligently embracing. Such truths may be not inaptly described as constituting the necessities of religious life: those of a more complicated character as its intellectual luxuries.

This being so, it is one of the most important duties of the theologian to set forth these truths in their utmost simplicity. In truth, as I have already proved, they are so exhibited in the pages of the New Testament. All therefore which he has to do is to separate them from the extraneous matter with which they are united.

But Christianity not only addresses itself to the masses of mankind, but also to its intellectual aristocracy. Cultivated minds are not satisfied with accepting it simply as a regenerating power; they demand that it should also meet all the reasonable requirements of their intellectual nature. In this there is nothing unreasonable; for God has made the intellect as well as the heart of man. This is strictly in accordance with His operations in nature. He has not only provided the food which is necessary to sustain the life of His creatures, but He has provided other kinds of food (it may be of a higher order), the attainment of which, from the nature of the case, can only be the privilege of the few. So it is with Christianity; there are its simple truths—the truths which constitute its essence—which, if cordially embraced, are sufficient for the spiritual sustenance of every condition of mankind; and other truths—higher truths they may be—but yet not pertaining to its essence, which

are addressed to the cultivated intellect. But as it is the fate of ninety-nine hundredths of mankind to grapple with the facts of human life without studying the truths of either science or philosophy—and with the provision which God has made for them in providence they thus succeed in grappling with them—so the ordinary Christian will find ample provision made for his spiritual well-being in the simple fundamental truths of revelation, without its being necessary that he should be initiated into the secrets of theology, whether viewed as a science or as a philosophy.

But with the reasonable requirements of the intellect it is the special function of theology to grapple. I say emphatically "*its reasonable requirements*," because many of its requirements are not reasonable, but are demands for solutions, explanations, and definitions on questions which wholly transcend the limits of our finite understandings, or which are of so abstract and complicated a nature as to deprive our most elaborate reasonings on them of the character of certainties, and to render their conclusions capable of claiming only the rank of lower degrees of probability. It is a lamentable fact that on points of this description no small amount of the labours of theologians has been expended, and that the barrenness of the results with which they have been attended has heaped such discredit on theology, both as a science and as a philosophy, as to have produced in a number of thoughtful minds the most serious doubts whether it has any just claims to be regarded as either. Yet religion unquestionably constitutes a department of human thought; and as every department of human thought admits both of a science and a philosophy, Christianity can form no exception to this general rule; and as I have already pointed out, the legitimate field for the investigations of the theologian is sufficiently ample. Only it is his duty to enunciate his conclusions with that degree of modesty which is demanded by the imperfections of the logical intellect in dealing with the more abstract and complicated portions of his investiga-



tion, and by the imperfections of its data, instead—as has been too frequently the case in the ages of the past—of demanding their acceptance as essential Christian verities under penalty of anathema.

Let the reader however carefully note that I have no intention of charging the conclusions of theology with a greater degree of uncertainty than that which appertains to any other department of human thought on similar subject-matter. When it deals with subject-matter which is equally simple, and with data as certain as those of the physical sciences, its conclusions will possess a similar validity. Again, when it deals with historical questions, its conclusions will possess precisely the same validity as any other historical conclusions of which the data are similar. So likewise with respect to questions which involve abstract and complicated thought. Here its conclusions possess the same degree of certainty as those of the mental sciences which deal with similar abstract and complicated questions. On all these different classes of subjects the conclusions of theology possess precisely the same degree of validity as the conclusions of those sciences and philosophies which deal with similar subject-matter—neither more nor less. The habit however has extensively prevailed of claiming for them a greater degree of validity because theology deals with questions which are of the profoundest interest to man; but the question which we are now considering is not one of interest or importance, but of evidence and of proof; and it is evident that the supremely interesting character of a question can add nothing to its evidence; nay rather, in all the ordinary affairs of life the importance of any affirmation about any matter which vitally affects our own interest is a sufficient reason for submitting the evidence on which it rests to a more rigid scrutiny. Consequently the importance of the bearing of Christianity on the most vital interests of man is so far from affording a reason for accepting the conclusions of theologians with open-mouthed credulity, that it constitutes the strongest

argument for subjecting them to the closest investigation, and only accepting them on such evidence as is adequate to command our assent in dealing with the practical questions of life.

In the preceding course of reasoning, it has been far from my wish to say one word in deprecation of applying the whole apparatus with which our reason furnishes us for the investigation of truth, to the study of the facts and phenomena of Christianity as a revelation. On the contrary, I would strongly urge that it is the duty of all those on whom God has bestowed the requisite faculties and opportunities for doing so, to prosecute these studies, in the firm belief that both revelation and nature, when studied on sound principles of investigation, will furnish ever-increasing disclosures, both of the power of God and of the wisdom of God. Let the reader ever bear in mind the words of the Apostle, "The unsearchable riches of Christ." My object has been to aid him in distinguishing between that class of truths which it is the function of theology as a science and as a philosophy to investigate and explore, and those simple truths of revelation which form the daily spiritual sustenance of the Christian, whether he be a philosopher, scientist, or one to whom nothing more than the discharge of the duties of ordinary life has been allotted. Too often has the one been confounded with the other; and that order of truths which are only attainable by the few—truths which in the present state of things I may not inaptly designate religious luxuries—have been substituted for that simple form of spiritual food which is absolutely necessary to sustain the spiritual life of man, of whatever order of intellect or condition he may be. We may earnestly desire with Moses, that all the Lord's people were prophets; but this is not destined to be during the present dispensation. While it lasts, the overwhelming majority of Christian men will be incapable of being either profound theologians, philosophers, or scientists; but this constitutes no reason why those who are specially gifted for the pursuit of such studies should

not prosecute them within those limits which are open to the finite intellect of man, and give to others the benefit of their investigations. Only let it be remembered, that it is a special duty incumbent on the theologian—for all history testifies that there is a special danger—to be ever watchful and on his guard against the temptation to proclaim what are after all the conclusions of his own fallible reason, as infallible truths, the calling which in question involves a rejection of the testimony of God, such as may be justly visited with anathema. While I would ever remember that it is the ultimate purpose of the Christian revelation “to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God, who created all things, to the intent that unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the Church the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord,” I would at the same time remind the reader that we shall not attain to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places while the present form of the Christian dispensation lasts; and that until then, the vast majority of Christians must be content to feed upon the pure milk of that simple Gospel which our Lord declared in the synagogue of Nazareth that it was the purpose of His mission to proclaim; a Gospel of good tidings to the poor, of release to the captives, of recovery of sight to the blind, of liberation to those bruised with the weight of the chains of sin and misery—in a word, the proclamation of the acceptable year of the Lord, to which announcement the Divine Speaker even forbore to add the words which follow in the immediate context of the prophet, “The day of vengeance of our God;”—such a Gospel as the great Apostle proclaimed when at Corinth he preached Christ crucified, “to Jews a stumbling-block, and to Greeks foolishness; but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God;” and which he summarized to the Romans, when he declared

that his long and intricate course of reasoning virtually ended in the establishment of this simple truth, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and if thou shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved ; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

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