

ARTICLE IV.

THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE OF GOD.

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THE doctrine of God held and taught by the Christian church is a doctrine peculiar to the Christian religion. It differs from the notion and idea respecting the being and character of the Divine prevailing in every other religion, whether Pagan, Mohammedan, or Jewish. But this difference is relative only, not absolute. When contemplated in the light of Christology we may discern some elements of truth in the mythological conceptions found in the sacred books of every nation. These elements of truth the Christian revelation recognizes and reasserts. Great as is the difference, there is yet no impassable gulf between the natural intuition of the Divine Being and that positive belief concerning God which revelation teaches. Revelation, on the contrary, presupposes the validity of natural intuition, assuming and acknowledging it as the starting-point in the universal human consciousness of a better faith and sounder knowledge. Yet for this reason the difference is neither incidental nor unimportant. Indeed, the elements which the Christian faith has in common with any pagan notion of God, are so few that a superficial comparison might pronounce Christian theism and pagan myths utterly contradictory.

As there is such broad difference between the Christian idea and every non-Christian conception of God, and as at the same time every non-Christian conception is in some important particulars identical with the Christian idea, the theology of the Christian church has always been exposed to the danger of being controlled by one of two false tendencies. Emphasizing mainly the broad difference between Christianity and world-religions, and repelled by the monstrous errors

taught by pagan myths and pagan philosophy, theology has at times overlooked the profound truths latent in mythology, and ignored the vantage ground which these truths native to the universal consciousness of mankind afford for the vindication of the superiority and glory of the Christian idea. Developed exclusively from the Christian consciousness, and studied only under the tuition of Holy Scripture, the doctrine of God thus enunciated is indeed true, and must ever commend itself as superior to every pagan conception ; yet, when theology fails to make due account of the vital connection between divine revelation and the truths of natural religion, the accepted doctrine becomes more or less external and arbitrary. It is falsely related to the universal consciousness. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ appears as a being whose character is foreign, rather than congenial, to the religious sympathies of our race ; and the native intuition of God is predisposed rather to assail than to support the Christian doctrine.

Sooner or later a reaction ensues. The violence done to our religious nature is felt. The neglect of precious truth living in paganism is seen. Then theological science is liable to be led captive by the opposite and more pernicious tendency of thought. It emphasizes not the contrast, but the harmony between natural religion and Christianity ; and in consequence ignores or denies the essential difference. Closing its eyes to the distinctive glories of divine revelation, and fascinated by the splendors of truth discovered in the mines of natural religion, theology now seeks to construct a true doctrine of God from the resources of human intuition. Neglecting the cardinal features of Christian revelation, and observing only those elements of truth common to Christianity and world-religions, the doctrine of God does not transcend the limitations of philosophy. The Christian element is overlooked and lost. The doctrine comes to be, in substance, identical with some form of pagan error.

I. INTUITIVE PERCEPTION OF DIVINE BEING.

That the doctrine of God may be truly Christian and also truly scientific, it must bear a relation to every non-Christian conception analogous to the relation which Christian revelation itself bears to the natural religious life of mankind. Whilst it ought to include the elements of truth given by human intuition, and exclude every anti-Christian feature prevalent in natural religion, it must contain the characteristic principle of Christianity as distinguished from every non-Christian religion.

The religious, no less than the intellectual and moral, is an element in the life of man as man. As every man is capable of rational reflection, and has a sense of right and wrong, so has every man also a sense of a superhuman presence, or a sense of the existence of a supreme power. The earth confronts the sense of sight and hearing; the nature and connection of things visible attract his attention and challenge his understanding; so, likewise, does the Divine present and active in the external natural world confront the human spirit. The endowments of human nature correspond to the manifold agencies addressing body and soul from without. The bodily eye sees the natural light; the understanding recognizes things in their interior relations and connections; the conscience perceives the moral order of the world, asserting the distinction of right and wrong; so does man's spirit discern the presence and the reality of the supernatural and the Divine. These two, the manifold capacities of man and the objects confronting these capacities, are correlative; as truly correlative in the higher as in the lower relations of our life. As light to the eye, as right and wrong to the conscience, so is God correlative to the human spirit and to faith, the organ of the human spirit, for perceiving and communing with the spiritual world.

There is also a presence of the Divine other than that mediated by the visible material world. The Divine is manifested in the constitution of man, and manifested to man.

Both the rational and the moral attest to consciousness the fact of a power other and higher than either nature or reason. We do not mean merely that intellectual and ethical philosophy postulate the reality of the Divine. This is undoubtedly true. But there is a manifestation also in reason and will anterior to the conscious recognition of the postulate of philosophy. God makes himself felt in the spontaneous processes of thought and in the determinations of the will. When children begin to think, their rational activity presupposes and involves the Divine; and they assert the fact of a divine power before they reflect upon the character of their mental activity. God at the same time makes himself felt in every moral act. So soon as children begin to will the right and do the right, or to will and do the wrong, they evince the dim perception of an ideal of right. This invisible ideal becomes without reflection the standard of moral judgment according to which the conscience passes upon every purpose and every action.

Phenomena like these appearing in the dawning light of personality proclaim the close proximity of a transcendent world; nay more, they indicate the touch of the Divine, or the spiritual contact of God with man. The finite spirit of man allied to the infinite Spirit of God, the prototype of himself, responds instinctively to the impression of his sustaining and governing love. This response is universal. All nations and all classes of men perceive this mysterious presence, and have some sense of a sublime transcendent world. From these constant manifestations of God to the spiritual nature of mankind come the religious sentiments, the religious ideas, and the various religious institutions which distinguish every race and every nation.

The idea fundamental to all other religious ideas is that of the existence of Deity. There is a God. This is the intuitive perception of mankind. The fact addresses the individual through the natural world and in his personal history, authenticating itself with so much power that he ever affirms it, and must affirm it, as the most certain of all truths.

This necessary truth Christianity recognizes. It is not only the foundation of every world-religion, but the natural basis and the occasion of supernatural revelation. The sense and the idea of the Divine, and the religious life of man growing out of his essential relation to the Divine, constitutes the spiritual aptitude for the approach of God in a supernatural economy of revelation and redemption. Sinful and depraved as our race is; imperfect, false, and degrading as are ethnic religions, yet the natural religious life is the congenial soil for the new seed of Christian truth. The instincts and aspirations of the natural religious life make men of all nations receptive towards the absolute truth manifested in Jesus Christ. The idea of Deity living in the universal consciousness is met by the manifestation of the true God in the person of his Son. The universal instinct of worship, of prayer, and of sacrifice, is complemented by the worship of the one only God in Christ the Mediator between God and man, by prayer to our Father in heaven in the name of Jesus the Redeemer, and by the faith of one all-sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world. Were faith in the existence of a divine and transcendent world not an internal necessity of the human spirit; were the religious not an essential constituent of our personal life; were worship and prayer not the deepest instincts of the heart; were the sense of sin and guilt, and the demand for an atoning sacrifice, not radical forces in human experience,— then there would be no fit moral subject capable of receiving a divine revelation, and no correlation between mankind and the economy of redemption. All the distinctive features of Christianity would be foreign to our natural consciousness and our natural experiences.

That there is something positively true and good in the natural religious life of our fallen race, and that there is a manifestation of God in the natural economy to the heart of man,— a manifestation anterior to that given in the two dispensations of divine revelation,— is taught explicitly by Paul. Pagan nations "hold the truth," but they hold it in

unrighteousness. What they believe to be true is the truth, not unmixed with error. "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. i. 19, 20). Here we have the living foundation of Christianity in the spiritual life and religious consciousness of the natural man.

The true and the good prevailing in the religious life of our fallen race is, however, not recognized by the word of God in single passages only. The Sacred Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament proceed on this assumption. Their aim is not to teach that there is a God. That would put man in a false attitude; for it would presuppose the absence both of faith in God and of all correct knowledge concerning the reciprocal relation existing between God and man. Assuming two things, — namely, that God exists and that the universal belief among men of this truth is valid, — it is the aim of the Scriptures to teach that the Divine, in whose existence all men must believe, is one God, not many. They teach not chiefly that men are sinful and guilty, but the true nature of their sinfulness, and the degree of their guilt; not so much the fact of spiritual ignorance and moral evil blighting our whole life, as that God has provided for men a Saviour, and what the salvation is which this Saviour bestows; they teach not so much the duty of man to worship, as the only true object of worship, and the kind of worship worthy of God and worthy of man; not so much that there is a future state of existence where men will reap as they have sown, but in what that future state of joy and sorrow consists. They teach that eternal life and that immortality which have been brought to light by the resurrection of the Son of Man from the dead.

Now, the universal belief which God in the Old Testament economy, but especially in the absolute revelation of himself made in his Son Jesus Christ, recognizes as true and valid,

the science of God, or a sound Christian theology, must acknowledge and assume as undoubted truth. A system of theology claiming to be governed in its spirit and character by the authority of Christian revelation may not question the validity of that universal belief which, on the human side, is the presupposition and living foundation of both the Mosaic and the Christian economy.

This essential element in all theological science, *that God exists*, the Christian doctrine of God must, in common with every species of natural religion, affirm as an axiomatic truth. It is the primary and fundamental axiom, being the most certain of all certain truths. All beliefs in matters pertaining to our religious and moral life presuppose this belief as the *sine qua non*. Every question arising in the sphere of theological inquiry presupposes the existence of God as unquestionable. Every logical argument in support of any Christian dogma derives its propriety and force from this unquestionable premise, held to be not only true, but also absolutely true—a premise, therefore, which on the one hand supersedes the possibility of logical proof, and on the other resolves every attempt at positive demonstration into a self-contradiction. To question this unquestionable premise is to relinquish the only true scientific vantage-ground of positive theology.

Contemplated from the stand-point of this general principle, the history of Christian theology discloses a singular inconsistency. Whilst revelation recognizes the validity of the universal intuition as the living and immovable foundation in the life of man whereon the colossal structure of Christianity is reared, theological science, as cultivated both in the Roman Catholic and in the Protestant church, has, on the contrary, handled the doctrine of God as if this living foundation were insufficient and weak. Misled by the sceptical tendency of the natural understanding, it has allowed the truth, than which none other possesses equal self-evidencing force for faith and reason, to be transferred to the category of probability, and even of doubt. The existence

of God is its fundamental principle; yet when this fundamental principle is challenged, whether by unbelief or by a false demand of reason, theology respects the challenge, and has recourse to arguments drawn from the natural world and from the moral and rational phenomena of human life. These arguments, which though multiform are reducible to three,—the cosmological, the moral, and the ontological,—however forcible they may be in showing the presence of superhuman and supernatural agency in the formation of the cosmos, and in the domain both of the human will and the human reason, nevertheless all fail of their ultimate end. Every argument is inconclusive. It is inconclusive not because of any flaw in the process of reasoning, nor because the truth of the proposition in question contravenes the human reason; but the fallacy is in the underlying assumption on which all reasoning designed to prove the existence of God proceeds. The fallacy consists in assuming that this self-evident truth may be a logical conclusion; or that from premises which in the nature of the case are valid only in a relative sense an argument may be constructed to establish a proposition which in the nature of the case must be absolutely true.

The argument fails, whether the reasoning be accepted as conclusive or inconclusive. If the argument be inconclusive, theology certainly ministers to the progress of scepticism. On the one hand, it by implication justifies the right of the human reason to question the divine existence so long as this foundation truth has not been established satisfactorily by a process of logical proof, and thus surrenders the principle that the existence of God is a self-evident and necessary fact. On the other hand, if after transferring the idea of God from the domain of certainty into that of probability, it fails to meet the legitimate demands of thought, theology not only accords to reason the right to doubt, but it goes a step further, and justifies the reason in denying the reasonableness of the divine existence. Making the belief in God a matter properly contingent upon logical argument, and

then failing to demonstrate its truth, this method of maintaining the doctrine of God has had the tendency to undermine the solid foundation of theism as found in the domain of logical thought no less than in that of intuition.

If the argument be conclusive, the result is no better. Belief in the existence of a Divine Being then ceases to be the primary and fundamental belief of the human spirit. It becomes an inference or a conclusion deduced from premises, and these premises are derived from the domain of the finite. Such an inference or conclusion destroys the intuitive idea. The God whose existence a valid process of reasoning, whatever be the kind of argument pursued, may establish, is neither the Jehovah of the Abrahamic people nor the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but only a finite metaphysical conception, which has no counterpart in the objective world either of the natural or the supernatural.

We have called this inconsistency *singular*, because—account for it as we may—it is characteristic of theology. If the term be taken in the broad sense, as denoting the science of the Divine, whether cultivated by speculative philosophy or in the Christian church, the inconsistency is characteristic of theology exclusively. No other science begins by questioning the certain existence of the object with which it deals. Anthropology does not inquire whether man exists; nor does it engage in laborious argument either to stop the mouth of a fool or to demonstrate that self-consciousness is trustworthy. No branch of natural science allows metaphysical speculation to challenge the belief of the naturalist in the reality of the existence of the natural world. Herschel does not stop to establish by logical argument that the sun, moon, and stars are veritable objects in the canopy of heaven. Hugh Miller does not speculate about the reality of the old red sandstone; nor does Tyndall raise the question whether there is natural light. The naturalist confides in the veracity of his senses, and begins scientific inquiry by postulating the reality of the physical world as a whole, and

no less also the particular department in the physical world which he is subjecting to close investigation.

It cannot be said in reply to this contrast between the method pursued by the science of theology and that adopted by the science of astronomy, geology, or optics, that it would be absurd to question the reality of objects confronting the natural senses, and that therefore the comparison is irrelevant. Considered from the stand-point of philosophy, the metaphysical question respecting the veracity of the senses is a valid question. It is legitimate to ask on what ground men believe the testimony of their senses, or whether the report of the senses is trustworthy. Philosophy has discussed the question, and maintained opposite theories. Berkeley and Ried furnish contrary answers. The difference between theology and geology is not that the former involves a metaphysical principle while the latter does not; but that, whilst geology waives the abstract metaphysical inquiry, and, guided by the spontaneous operation of intuitive perception, reposes unwavering confidence in the organs of sensation, theology, on the contrary, deems it a part of valid science to ignore the force of intuitive perception in the higher region of our spiritual being, and then, instead, to look for help amid the uncertain resources of the logical understanding. The science which deals not with matters of faith, not with invisible and intangible realities, but with the external, visible, tangible world of matter, — this science proceeds calmly, relying on the validity of spontaneous belief in the truth of our bodily organization, assuming without logical proof that the senses and the external objects of sense are correlative factors in experience and knowledge. However adverse the theoretic inferences drawn from researches amid the rocky strata of the earth may be to metaphysics, or even to religion, geology nevertheless, like her sister sciences of nature, reposes implicit faith in a profound metaphysical truth, and on this metaphysical truth builds her grand superstructures. But the science which deals not with the external, visible world of matter, but with the

immaterial, transcendent, invisible world of spirit, — the world which is the proper, legitimate province not of the logical understanding, but of faith, — this science, instead of confiding, like geology, in the validity of the most fundamental and necessary of all primary beliefs, distrusts the intuitive perception of our spiritual and moral constitution, or at least does not acknowledge the intuitions of our spiritual being as a firm and adequate foundation.

Theology, in order to be true to her own vocation, cannot perpetrate this singular contradiction. If any science is warranted in putting implicit confidence in the validity of natural intuition and in the undoubted truth of the immediate perceptions of man; if any science is justified in accepting as valid the testimony of our psychological economy to the reality of the object which it investigates, that science is theology. For as it deals with the Spirit of every spirit, with the Author of all things visible and invisible, with Him whose being is absolute and infinite, and from whom the true light proceeds which illumines both man and nature, theology, to be self-consistent, must fix her eye with implicit faith directly on God, as he manifests himself as well in the religious consciousness of mankind as in the revelation of his only-begotten Son.

II. OLD TESTAMENT MONOTHEISM.

Holding the existence of Divine Being as a certain and unquestionable truth, the doctrine of God is, indeed, so far forth scriptural, but not for this reason distinctively Christian. It maintains ground common to all religions. The Christian element is an element peculiar to Christianity, and distinguishes it from all pagan mythology, from Mohammedan monotheism, and also truly, though in different measure, from the Jehovah conception of the Old Testament.

Between pagan notions of Divine Being and the Jehovah conception of the Old Testament there is, indeed, a broad difference. Though there is a remarkable resemblance in many of their features, so that the intuitive belief of the

pagan mind is to be regarded as the genial soil in which pre-Christian revelation can grow, yet Jehovah cannot be put into the same class with Jupiter, or Osiris, or Ormuzd, or any heathen god, neither by faith nor science. Still, the conception of Jehovah falls short of that idea of God revealed in Christ. And the Christian doctrine must recognize this real difference between the idea of the New and that of the Old Testament.

The sense of some difference between the Christian and the pre-Christian economies of supernatural revelation has ever prevailed in the Christian consciousness. But the endeavor to ascertain and settle this difference has always been in danger of one of two opposite errors. The sense of a close internal connection between Christian and pre-Christian revelation, between the new and the old dispensation, has been as definite and prevalent as the sense of their difference. As these two opposite forces, *unity* and *difference*, have been operative in the mind of the church, theology has been disposed most commonly not to emphasize both in due proportion, but to give the one undue prominence, and neglect or exclude the other.

The one error looks chiefly, if not exclusively, at the difference and contrast between the two economies, and may intensify the contrast into contrariety and antagonism. Hence the new not only supersedes and abolishes the old, but contradicts it. The Old Testament economy is then not a real historical preparation for the advent of Christ, but rather a perversion of the truth which he reveals, and a hindrance to its reception and progress. This was the heresy of the ancient Gnostic sects. As they denied the real humanity of our Lord, so they rejected the belief in any necessary and historical connection of our Lord with the ceremonial law and the institutions of the Old Testament. Between the Jehovah of Moses and of the prophets and the God manifested by Christ they saw neither correspondence nor resemblance, but only difference and opposition.

The principle of this error has perpetuated itself in some

form through every succeeding period of history. In modern times it shows itself in a false undervaluation of the books of the Old Testament. The importance given to the books of the New Testament is magnified to such a degree that the unity of divine revelation and the unity of the Sacred Scriptures is violated. When this one-sided principle influences theological science, the doctrine of God acknowledges no affinity of the Christian conception of Deity either with the Jehovah of the Mosaic economy or with the monotheistic and polytheistic beliefs of paganism. And the doctrine of God, cut off violently from the religious history of the world, becomes abrupt and abstract. God becomes a Monarch, instead of a Father; he deals with man not agreeably to the conditions and laws of his nature, but arbitrarily; and does not sympathize tenderly with our infirmities and wants, whether natural or spiritual, but dwells far above and beyond the world in his own heaven, concerned only for his honor and glory.

The opposite error looks not at the difference, but at the internal connection and close resemblance between Christian and pre-Christian revelation. Overlooking the difference and contrast between the two economies, the connection and resemblance are intensified into identity. The character and purpose of the Mosaic economy does not differ from the character and purpose of the Christian church. The truth taught in the Old Testament is the same as the truth taught in the New.

Proceeding on the hypothesis that the idea of God developed in the history of the Abrahamic people is commensurate with the idea coming to view in the Christian economy, the science of theology seeks instinctively to elevate the doctrine of God presented by the old dispensation to the lofty plane of the new, or to depress and reduce the unique idea of the new dispensation to the level of the old. In the former case, interpretation, planting itself firmly on the rock of Christian truth, seeks and finds throughout the books of the Old Testament not only an intimation, but also a distinct

enunciation of trinity in unity. Approaching Moses and the prophets on the assumption that revelation to be self-consistent must exhibit the same form of eternal truth in every stage of its progress, violence is done to many single passages, as well as to the tenor and scope of the entire Old Testament. As inconclusive reasoning in support of a proposition serves to awaken doubt, although the proposition is true, and directly authenticates itself as truth, so does the argument drawn directly from the Scriptures of the Old Testament serve in the end rather to weaken than to strengthen confidence in the truth of the Christian idea. For, sooner or later, the untenable character of such interpretation will appear; and as one prop after another falls to the ground, the superstructure begins to totter. Error appears in the garb of truth when it succeeds in exposing an unwarranted exegesis, and sound doctrine, divested of its armor, is driven to the wall.

When the truth of the New Testament is reduced to the level of the Old, the Christian doctrine of God disappears altogether. Then God as revealed in Christ is not only held to be the one true and living God, but the hypostatical distinctions in the constitution of the Godhead are totally eliminated. The same narrow exegesis is repeated; but now it is the books of the New Testament that suffer violence. The most direct teaching of Christ and his apostles is perverted. The Christian economy, robbed of its glory, is changed into a monotheism so cold and poor that compared with it the true Jehovah conception of Moses and the prophets is far richer and more consoling.

The principle that the Christian and the pre-Christian economies are identical, teaching the same truth throughout, and revealing the one true God under the same form, has to a large extent ruled both in unitarian and in trinitarian theology, strengthening the one and weakening the other. In many cases the trinitarian theologian has doubtless done as much violence to the spirit and teaching of the Old Testament as the Unitarian has done to the entire scope of the

New; the one seeking to defend Christian doctrine with weapons taken from the armory of Judaism, whilst the other demolishes the Christian citadel in order to rebuild the temple of Solomon or garnish the mosque of Omar.

The central idea respecting the being of God unfolded in pre-Christian revelation is related in two directions. It is related to the mythological dreaming prevalent in ethnic religions, and to the full truth brought to light by the manifestation of God in the person and life of Christ. In the one relation the Jehovah conception, whilst including every valid element distorted by the spiritual dreaming of the pagan mind, asserts the pure truth in broad contrast with the grotesque imagery of pagan dreaming. In the other relation the Jehovah conception is the immediate forerunner of the Christian idea of God, gradually educating religious life and religious thought to a plane of strength and purity on which the revelation of God may reach its final stage of perfection.

In pre-Christian revelation we may discern distinct epochs and stages in the development of the Jehovah conception. The fullest revelation of the being and character of God appears in the period of prophetism, beginning with the age of Samuel. Yet the Jehovah conception, though less definitely and less completely asserted in the earlier than the later stages of its manifestation, is nevertheless perfectly self-consistent throughout. No element or characteristic appearing in an earlier stage of history is subsequently superseded or eliminated; and no element or characteristic appearing in the more complete manifestation of the later stages is contradicted by any antecedent representation. Hence, notwithstanding the fact that there are variations of doctrine, we may nevertheless, with entire propriety, assert the essential characteristics of the Jehovah conception in their unity as being the distinguishing doctrine of God taught in the books of the Old Testament.

Jehovah is the one true God; the personal One; holy and righteous, loving and merciful; the author, upholder, and

governor of heaven and earth, who, enthroned beyond all heavens in unapproachable majesty, nevertheless lives in covenant fellowship with his chosen people on earth as a father lives among his children. As contrasted with the mythologies of heathendom, this doctrine of Divine Being is new and peculiar.

In contrast with all grades and forms of polytheism, Jehovah is the one God, the true and only God; the notion of many deities, some more and others less powerful, some reigning in one domain of the world and others in another, some primary and others secondary, being repudiated and condemned as utterly false and unworthy.

In contrast with pantheism and all pantheistic tendencies, Jehovah is the personal One. "I am that I am." As personal he is also transcendent — living his life distinct and separate from the cosmos, and in a domain generically other than that of the natural and human. The cosmos is not an efflux from his essence, neither necessary nor spontaneous, but an existence constituted by his creative word, and by the same word upheld and governed with reference to an end set by divine wisdom.

In contrast with dualistic notions respecting good and evil, mind and matter, Jehovah, the personal One, is the absolute God. The good is eternal, but not the evil. Evil is relative and temporal; it begins in time, is referable to the will of the personal creature, and prevails in the domain of the finite and relative. Jehovah is the author of the good, and of good only; but reigns over the kingdom of evil, subordinating its opposition to the operation of a teleological law which will issue ultimately in the fulfilment of his purpose. The notion of contradiction between matter and spirit, body and soul, the natural and the supernatural, the finite and the infinite, gives place to the idea of unity; the notion of the necessary antagonism of forces, perpetual disorganization, and perpetual conflict, to the idea of profound harmony; and the sense of insufficiency, of failure and disappointment, is changed into the prospect of final perfection and glory.

In contrast with every species of deism, Jehovah is not only transcendent, but also immanent. Above all and over all things, he is likewise present and active in all. Far off, dwelling in light unapproachable by men, he is likewise very nigh to men, supplying their needs, and sympathizing with them in their conflicts and sorrows. Existing independently of the will of men and the powers of nature; ruling over all, as also in all, according to his infinite wisdom; and ever unsearchable to the human understanding, Jehovah manifests himself to men, provides for them, and watches over them with parental tenderness, and is accessible to the prayers of all who approach him with a contrite spirit. The notion that man is so puny, his wishes so foolish, that the errors of society are so absurd and the faults of men so vile and execrable, and that the minute details of every-day life are so trivial that the Divine Being can have no concern about them, is utterly incompatible with that new idea of Deity and of his transcendent majesty which is brought to light by the Jehovah of pre-Christian revelation.

In contrast with the notion of fate, Jehovah is not blind, arbitrary, and inflexible necessity; but he is free and rational, wise and intelligent, self-consistent and just. All physical and moral laws and all original relations being the determinations of his righteous will, he does violence to none of them. His will active in the dispensations of his providence does not contravene his will embodied in the order of nature and the constitution of man. He violates neither the true freedom of the individual nor any normal relation of the social economy. As for the entire race, so neither for any particular class of men, nor for any individual, does he ordain arbitrarily a destiny, either here or hereafter,— a destiny in conflict with the design fixed and revealed by forming man after his own image.

In contrast with the cruel, immoral, and vicious character of all pagan deities, judging them in the light of the natural conscience only, Jehovah is pure and spotless, true and good, kind and merciful. Not only is his will holy, his law just,

his commandment good, but all his dealings with men — with the wicked as with the righteous, with the poor and lowly as with the rich and exalted — correspond with the utterance of his will and with the intent of every commandment imposed upon men. His conduct ever illustrates the nature of his precepts. To all men as to his chosen people, he is the exemplar of every human virtue, the object of reverence and adoration, of confidence as well as of fear, and as of awe so also of affection. This moral and spiritual ideal of God in one respect lofty, transcendent, and unapproachable, and in another so accessible to man, so condescending and loving, so sweetly adjusted to all the needs of mind and heart, of social life and of the individual, whether man or woman — has no counterpart in the mythology of any nation, and can scarcely find there even a dim prophecy. Indeed, it has no counterpart in the religious intuitions of the Semitic race, nor even in the natural life and social customs of the Abrahamic people. The ideal has not gradually evolved itself in the process of time from the bosom of human life; it has not come from below upward; but, whilst adapted to the natural condition and the natural relations of men, its unique character indicates a different origin. It is begotten in a domain other than the merely human and other than the purely historical. The ideal comes from above, from God himself to man.

All these distinctive attributes of the Jehovah conception presuppose a new relation established between God and man — a relation other than that prevailing between man and God by virtue simply of creation and providence. The Jehovah conception belongs to the covenant; not, however, to a mere compact or external agreement, but to a veritable spiritual economy, not less substantial yet generically other than the natural. The Abrahamic people are the chosen and consecrated nation among whom Jehovah abides. Not only does he, dwelling in heaven, command and teach them, lead and protect them, give them meat and drink, and destroy their enemies; but Jehovah lives in the nation and

communes with the people as the centre and head of a household, where every tribe and every family and every man may come to him, speak to him, worship him acceptably, and receive his benediction; because Jehovah is himself present with them in his own temple, in the services of the sanctuary, speaking to them through his prophets, dispensing grace through his priests, and thus present among them in a living fellowship which, though few or none may explain and understand, yet all may feel and discern and rejoice in.

Jehovah is not the god of the natural heaven, like Jupiter; not the god of the sea, like Neptune; nor the god of light, like Ormuzd; but Jehovah is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and their seed after them. His relation to the world is not merely the relation of God to nature, not to any art or trade of men, not merely to an attribute or condition of mankind, but to the personal man himself. And the relation is reciprocal. Jehovah is the God of Abraham, and Abraham is the man of God; Jehovah is the God of the children of Israel, and the children of Israel are the peculiar people of God. Jehovah lives in direct and positive communion with man, and man lives in direct and positive communion with Jehovah. God on the one side and man on the other, the reciprocal fellowship as established and taught by pre-Christian revelation is *divine-human*. From this God-man relationship, this new divine-human economy, grows forth the Jehovah conception, that positive idea of God which, whilst evincing kinship with the native intuition of every race and nation on the face of the globe, distinguishes it from and raises it immeasurably above every notion of God appearing in the history of ethnic religions or of pagan philosophy.

The divine-human relationship as constituted by the Old Testament economy is the living seed of a new revelation then in process of development. Planted in the genial soil of the Abrahamic people, it germinates and grows in their religious life and religious consciousness, and in progress of time

foreshadows and predicts a relation between God and man different from itself and far more mysterious. This divine-human economy, from the time of Abraham onward through all the epochs of the history of the Abrahamic people, educates them in the belief and hope of the primeval promise. Their faith, cultivated by the Mosaic ritual, disciplined by trial, and enlightened by the word of the Lord, reposes confidently in One to come, the Seed of Abraham, a Prophet like unto Moses, the royal Son of David, who, nevertheless, was to be older than Abraham, greater than Moses, mightier than David, "whose name shall be called Wonderful, Counseller, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

During the latter ages of pre-Christian revelation we observe, accordingly, some important modifications in the Jehovah conception. What may be called its evangelical features become more prominent. Unity and majesty, authority and power, are, indeed, still as emphatic as in any previous stage of manifestation, but not so exclusive. Love and compassion, grace and mercy had always appeared in the manifestation of Jehovah to his people; but in the age of prophetism these attributes become as prominent as the majesty and authority of Jehovah. Indeed, these features in the character of Jehovah, when contrasted with the judgments of Divine wrath, are as conspicuous in this age as were ever the divine unity and majesty in contrast with the impotence and vanity of pagan deities. Jehovah comes to view more and more under the aspect of a man and a friend, a benefactor and a father, and less exclusively under the aspect of a monarch, a governor, and a judge; and he awakens in the hearts of the people the hope of a blessing to come greater than any conferred in the past ages of their history. Hence the people not only confide in the ceremonial economy as from God, but confide in Jehovah as about to bestow upon them a still greater and richer gift — the Messiah.

III. CHRISTIAN THEISM.

The idea of Jehovah, developed and matured in the history of the Old Testament economy of grace, becomes the historical basis of the Christian doctrine of God. The Christian supposes the pre-Christian conception, and rests upon it. Just as a virgin Jewess became the mother of the Saviour, and the Mosaic economy became the religious communion wherein the Son of the virgin was educated and trained and fitted for the baptism of John and for his subsequent ministry, whilst neither this religious communion nor the virgin Mary — neither one nor both together — were properly the Saviour of the world; so does the Christian doctrine of God grow forth from the mature fulness of the Jehovah conception, whilst nevertheless the Jehovah conception itself is not the Christian conception, and would never by any process have developed itself into the Christian conception had there been no new revelation of Jehovah in the person and life of Jesus Christ.

Whether we consider our Lord as the head of a new community, or as a lawgiver, or as a teacher and prophet, or as a priest and a king, or as the founder of a religion, he exhibits a striking contrast with Abraham, the patriarchal head of the elect nation; with Moses, the author of the ceremonial law; with David, the divinely chosen king who delivered his nation from the hand of their enemies, and united them into one powerful kingdom; with Aaron and his successors, who ministered in presence of the Shekinah; and with all the prophets who spake in the name of the Lord, from Moses to John the Baptist. Typified by the life of the patriarchs, by Moses and the Mosaic economy, and anticipated by the prophets, Christ is nevertheless in his person and acts, in his teaching and in the events of his life, a new fact in revelation. Jesus Christ becomes the head of a holy nation, not like Abraham according to the law of natural generation, but according to the new law by which he was himself conceived by the Holy Ghost. He

institutes a religion not like that of Moses bound to a worldly sanctuary made after a pattern shown in the mount, but a religious communion growing forth from his person and life, from his death and resurrection, and from the power of his own word and Spirit — a communion fashioned after the pattern of himself, designed for and adapted not to a single nation and one particular country, but to all nations and countries and ages of the world. As a lawgiver he does not utter the divine will in words simply ; but he asserts in his life and illustrates in his deeds the first principle of all commandments, the principle of love to God and love to man ; and this law of all laws he does not engrave on tables of stone to be kept and honored and read, but by his Spirit he writes it in the heart of every man begotten in his image. His priesthood he fulfils not by slaughtering goats and calves, and consuming their bodies on the brazen altar, but by laying down his own life and taking it again ; and then enters not into the holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. As a prophet and teacher he speaks not only in the name of Jehovah, but also in his own name. The common formula, “ Thus saith the Lord,” is displaced by another, peculiarly his own : “ Verily, verily, *I say unto you.*”

Jesus, the Christ, being so different in personal character from the great patriarch, the great lawgiver, the great king, and the great prophets of the first dispensation, and so different in the leading features of his ministry and work, he exhibits a similar contrast in the revelation given by his life and his teachings concerning the law and transgression ; concerning the way of salvation and the world to come, but especially in the revelation respecting the nature and constitution of the Godhead. The economy of redemption centring in Christ the only-begotten Son, reveals the Divine not only as one God in distinction from many gods, not only as personal and absolute in distinction from the metaphysical idea of pure being, but reveals the Divine as one God, who is in himself Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

That Jesus of Nazareth, born of the virgin Mary, is the Son of God, truly and properly, is the marrow of the gospel as distinguished from the law and prophecies of the Old Testament, the central mystery of the Christian faith, and the chief corner-stone of the edifice in which Gentiles and Jews are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. Holding firmly this central characteristic of the New Testament, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, and that he who offered himself an atoning sacrifice for sin on the cross is God no less than man, the Christian idea that God is one in three appears both as a postulate and a consequence.

It is no part of our purpose to maintain or defend any trinitarian formula in which theological science has, as the result of profound and acute thought, embodied the truth of Christian revelation respecting the Divine Being. Nor do we wish directly to maintain the technical terms which theology has found it necessary to adopt; though these terms established by long usage, when rightly understood, are, in our judgment, more appropriate than any suggested in modern times. All we are aiming at is to assert, in the light of Scripture, the manifestation of God in Christ as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be a *new* revelation. As related to the Old Testament and to the mythology of pagan nations, this manifestation of God is new in a sense analogous to that in which the person and life of our Lord are new as contrasted with all the great men of pre-Christian history.

That Christ taught respecting himself that he was the Son of God and the Son of man is a truth so patent to all intelligent readers of the New Testament that there is no room to raise a question concerning it; and it is therefore not necessary for our purpose to cite any particular passages. The only legitimate question that can arise pertains to the force or meaning of the title, "Son of God." But the precise point at which we are aiming does not require us first to weigh the different interpretations of this title. We are dealing primarily with what is relatively new and distinctive in the Christian conception of God, or in the being of the Divine as manifested by Christ.

Son and Father being correlative, Christ in asserting himself to be the Son of God postulates the fact that God is his Father. The relation of God to Jesus Christ is the relation of Father to Son; the relation of Jesus Christ to God is the relation of Son to Father. This correlation is so real and so intimate that God and Christ are inseparable. Father and Son occupy the same plane of being. All things are delivered unto the Son by the Father. No man knows the Son but the Father; and no man knows the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. The Father loves the Son; and as the Father loves the Son, so the Son loves the Father. The Father has life in himself; his life is underived and original. This same life the Son likewise possesses. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself. All men are to honor the Father and the Son; not the Father only, but the Son also; and to honor the Son as the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him.

The same principle holds in the relation of Father and Son, whatever attribute or characteristic of the Son we may contemplate. Whether we contemplate the authority and power, the dignity and wisdom, or the work and dominion, of the Son, he represents himself, his resources, and his activity as in every particular commensurate with the Father. The Son, accordingly, is the Father's image. Says Christ: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." What the original, underived life of the Father is shines forth in the life of the Son.

Father and Son, however, are not the same. They are not two names simply of one person. The Father is truly Father. Neither Christ nor any apostle ever speaks of God the Father as having been begotten, or as proceeding or coming forth from God. Whilst there is, indeed, nowhere throughout the New Testament a passage in which the theological term "unbegotten" is predicated of the Father, yet the negation expressed by this term is the silent negation of

the New Testament. For whilst according to the explicit teaching of the New Testament the Father is he from whom the Son came forth and by whom the Holy Ghost is sent, every writer abstains rigidly from asserting either one of these predicates, or any predicate akin to them, of the Father. The direct teaching respecting the Son and the relation of the Son to the Father implies necessarily that the Son is begotten of the Father; but no implication, either necessary or incidental, represents the Father as begotten.

So, on the other hand, is the Son truly Son. The Son is begotten of the Father; the terms "begotten" and "only-begotten" being terms frequently applied to Christ both by himself and the apostles. This position and relation of Christ as the Son of God is consistently and rigidly maintained by every writer. In no instance is the relative position of Son and Father reversed. Among the manifold modes and forms in which the love of the Father and the grace of Jesus Christ are taught, there is not a clause nor a word nor any intimation which assumes or implies that Christ in his relation to God is not begotten. Just as the New Testament writers abstain absolutely from teaching that the Father is begotten, so do they abstain absolutely from teaching, either explicitly or by remote implication, that the Son is unbegotten. In other words, the true idea of fatherhood as revealing the life and character of God, and the true idea of sonship as affirming the life and character of Christ, are asserted and maintained with most perfect consistency in all the words and all the acts of our Lord, and no less also in all the teachings of the apostles. There is no confusion of speech, and no confusion of thought. So far from teaching the notion that Father and Son are but two names of one divine Ego, or only two modes of the manifestation of one divine life, the New Testament might more easily, if but one class of its representations were emphasized, be forced to support the contrary hypothesis, that God the Father and Christ the Son were different beings; the one divine, the other only human.

The paternal relation of the Father and the filial relation of the Son are complemented by the doctrine of the Holy Ghost. The relation between Son and Father is not abstract, but concrete. It is not physical, using the word in a sense germane to the natural world; nor is the relation merely ethical, that is, it is not determined by the arbitrary act of the divine will; the relation is spiritual— not spiritual as asserting only the antithesis to the natural and physical, but spiritual as affirming a positive relation, a life relation in the Holy Spirit. The relation between Father and Son is a communion, and this communion is the communion of the Holy Ghost.

By the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost our Lord was conceived. By the same grace the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom. At his baptism the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him. Then Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Through the Eternal Spirit Jesus offered himself without spot unto God; and was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

Conceived by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, living in the Spirit, offering himself on the cross, and rising from the dead by the Spirit, Jesus is likewise by the same Spirit glorified. The Father glorifies the incarnate Son in himself with the glory which the Son had with the Father before the world was. Being thus glorified in God, Jesus the Son of God, possessing all power in heaven and on earth, sheds forth the Holy Ghost, in fulfilment of his promise, upon his waiting disciples. Proceeding from the Father, the Spirit is sent by the Son. The Spirit sent by the Son is he by whom the Son became incarnate, he by whom the Son maintained himself in his sacrificial death on the cross, and by whom the Son in surmounting the power of death brought eternal life to light. The Spirit who is thus the communion of the Father and the incarnate Son in

the work of redemption, becomes, when the incarnate Son is enthroned in glory, the communion of the Redeemer in heaven with his believing people on earth.

That God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is not revealed primarily by teaching. Written or spoken words teach the mystery, but do not in a real way exhibit it. The mystery confronts our faith primarily in the historical facts of our redemption. The fatherhood of the Father is manifested by the sonship of the Son. The sonship of the Son is manifested by the fact that Jesus was conceived and born, and lived a veritable human life on earth. This Jesus thus born was the Son. Said the angel to the virgin: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." According to Scripture, the new truth that one who is a veritable man is likewise the Son of God is revealed by this, that the Son of God appears among men by a human birth in the person of Jesus. This real person is the new manifestation of God as being the Father; and this living personal manifestation conditions all inspired teaching respecting the sonship of the Son.

Of the Holy Ghost as the communion of Father and Son, the perception and knowledge arises in the same real way. During the ministry of our Lord the presence of his Holy Spirit among men was not a fact, but a promise. "When the Comforter is come," says Christ, "whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." Like this are all other representations of our Lord respecting the advent of the Spirit. As the prophets of the Old Testament spake of the Messiah as one to come, so Christ always speaks of the Holy Spirit as one who was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified, but who would be given after he had ascended to the Father. What this promised advent of the Spirit signified, and how much his advent involved for those who believed in Jesus as the Messiah, and for the kingdom he

came to establish, the disciples could not understand. Notwithstanding the explicit teaching of our Lord, and notwithstanding his resurrection from the dead, the Jewish notion of a supreme earthly kingdom in which the ceremonial law would be perpetuated, seems to have been predominant in the minds of the disciples up to the day on which they were assembled with him on Mount Olivet, and he was taken up into heaven. They had no conception of the kingdom of Christ as being a spiritual kingdom, that is, a new form of God's kingdom on earth to be established by the coming of the Holy Spirit, and thereafter to prevail in the communion of the same Spirit of the Lord Jesus glorified.

Not until the promise of Christ was actually fulfilled on the day of pentecost was this ignorance of the apostles respecting the mission of the Holy Spirit removed. Then when the pentecostal gift was in reality bestowed, when the Holy Spirit became a veritable presence among the expectant apostles and disciples, quickening in them the new life of Christ, lifting them up into a spiritual fellowship with God never before realized, and opening their minds to the perception of the transcendent dignity of the Lord Jesus as the head of a new kingdom totally different from any conceivable earthly kingdom; then, when the Spirit became a reality among them, and they, possessing the Spirit, lived their life in the new communion of love with God,—then it was that the first disciples discerned the fact that there was a Holy Ghost. They knew the Spirit, for the Spirit had come to dwell with them, and was in them. And they came to the perception of the Spirit as the Holy Spirit by the anointing which they received, whereby they were enlightened and sanctified to be members and servants of the Lord Jesus glorified, thoroughly furnished unto every good and holy work.

In the same real way, afterwards, did the whole body of believers come to the knowledge of the truth that there is a Holy Ghost. Like Stephen, believers baptized into Christ were filled with the Spirit. They knew the Holy Ghost by his presence and by his uplifting and transforming unction

— a presence and an unction felt and known by the personal consciousness of having forgiveness of sins and of living a new life of faith in the communion of the saints. The world, on the contrary, did not receive the Spirit of truth; and for this reason the world did not see the Spirit nor know the Spirit. As Paul teaches, the natural or merely psychic man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; and spiritual discernment does not come by mental exercises or persistent moral activity; but it is begotten by the Holy Spirit, who reveals in believers the things of the Spirit.

The Divine faintly discerned as superhuman being by the intuitive perception of our whole fallen race, and the I am that I am of pre-Christian revelation, — the one true personal Jehovah, absolute and eternal, holy and righteous, loving and merciful, — thus comes to view in the complemental revelation made by our Lord Jesus Christ as Father and Son and Holy Ghost. As such God manifests himself in actual historical events; the Son of God incarnate being the dynamic centre which irradiates the whole economy of new truth. The sonship of the Son conditions the apprehension of the proper fatherhood of the Father; and the living communion of the Holy Ghost conditions the clear, full apprehension of God as being Father and Son and Spirit. This trinal distinction is unique both in point of fact and of character.

No pagan religion, and no stage in the history of pre-Christian revelation, possesses such a trinity in the conception of the Divine Being. Nor does any system of philosophic or theosophic speculation postulate a trinal hypothesis. Metaphysical thinking, on the contrary, oscillates between multiplicity and simplicity, between the idea of two or many divinities and the idea of a single Divinity; the latter being the point towards which the more profound tendencies of thought gravitate. The abstract notion of the Divine as simple, pure being, of which no contents can be predicated, the doctrine taught by Plotinus, is the hypothesis common to all the better schools of speculative philosophy.

The trinal distinction is peculiar to the Christian economy. A dim prophecy may, it is true, be discerned among the mythologies of many pagan nations. The name father is, for example, frequently applied to Ormuzd, the god of light, in the Zend-Avesta; and the ancient poets call Jupiter the father of the gods and of men. And the element of pater-nity analogous to the paternal relation of father to son among men, may even be faintly discerned in these representations. But the representation, whether in myth or thought, is totally dissimilar to the manifestations of God as Father by Jesus Christ as the only-begotten Son of God. There is nowhere a sense of the Christian truth that God the Father communicates the absolute fulness of his life to the Son, and that the Son is equal to and commensurate with the Father in the infinitude of his being and the divine perfection of his attributes, or that in the idea of God Father and Son are absolutely correlative.

The name Father is applied to Jehovah in the books of the Old Testament; and the earthly relation of father and child is employed to set forth the sympathy, kindness, and love of God to his chosen people. But Father and Son do not appear on the same plane of existence, and do not share the same prerogatives. Moses was commanded to say unto Pharaoh: "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first-born: And I say unto thee, Let my son go" (Ex. iv. 22). The titles "son" and "first-born" are plainly not used in the proper sense. They represent Israel as the nation chosen by Jehovah, the nation which he loves and protects with a peculiar love, and has consecrated to his own service. The same terminology occurs in setting forth the peculiar relation between Jehovah and the son of Jesse. The word of the Lord came to David respecting David's son Solomon, saying: "He shall build a house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his Father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever" (1 Chron. xxii. 10). Here Father and son express the relation between Jehovah and David's family as the elect

royal house of the Abrahamic people — a relation which would not be dissolved, like that established in the person of Saul, but which should continue unbroken from age to age.

The same form of conception respecting the peculiar fellowship between Jehovah and the chosen people prevails during subsequent periods of their history. Isaiah says, in a song of thanksgiving: "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; thou, O Lord, art our Father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting" (lxiii. 16). Jeremiah also applies the name "son" to Ephraim, the representative tribe in the kingdom of Israel: "I am a Father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born" (xxxi. 9). These passages may suffice to exhibit Old Testament usage. The chosen people were familiar with the titles Father and son. Jehovah was their Father; chosen individuals, like the chosen nation, were called the son, the first-born, of Jehovah. Yet this people, chosen and consecrated, loved and protected by Jehovah, never lost the sense of the infinite difference between *Father* and *son*. The chosen son was human, erring, dependent, guilty, needing mercy and forgiveness. The Father who had chosen them for his people was Jehovah, God Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, who dispensed goodness and mercy to those who approached him according to his word.

A closer approximation to the Christian conception of God is developed in some prophecies of the Old Testament, such as in Ps. ii. 7: "I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Historically considered, this poem relates immediately to David, who as the king chosen by the Lord to rule over the twelve tribes, was entitled, like some other kings, the son of God. But as David evidently typifies the Messiah, and the kingdom of David, like the entire history of the Abrahamic people, typifies the kingdom of the Messiah, there is undoubtedly a deeper mystery underlying and filling the image of the Psalmist. In this, as in some other symbolical

utterances, the force of the great mystery, still hidden, but in a process of development, asserts itself. Hence the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes this and cognate passages in setting forth the transcendent dignity and glory of Jesus the author and head of the new economy.

Yet, although there is Messianic significance not only in some particular passages, but also in the general structure of the Old Testament, and in all its parts (for the mystery was ordained before the foundation of the world, and operated as well from the beginning as in all successive stages of pre-Christian revelation), nevertheless, we look in vain for that fatherhood of God and that correlative sonship of the Redeemer and Deliverer which the person and life of Christ unveil to our faith. Moreover, it is only after the distinctively Christian conception of God has been gained, that either faith can discern, or theological science is qualified to assert, the profound Messianic significance pervading Old Testament history, or the more definite Messianic prophecies recorded in particular passages. When the dawn of the morning disappears in the glory of the day,—when the Jehovah of the Old Testament becomes the Son of Mary in the New, and the Son of God lives in the life of the sinless Man,—then a blaze of light is shed back upon pre-Christian history and pre-Christian prophecy, and we see in all the historic events of the Abrahamic people, and no less in the Noachian and Sethic line of the patriarchs, the coming of him who in the fulness of time became the Son of Man.

New in point of fact, the manifestation of God as Father by the Son in the person of Jesus Christ is likewise unique in point of character. That the relation of God to Christ is truly paternal, and the relation of Christ to God is truly filial, and that in the Christian conception of God the relation of the Spirit is truly the communion of the Father and the Son, does not assert the whole of the Christian doctrine of God. The whole is necessarily implied, but not expressed.

In the Christian doctrine the relation of Father, Son, and Spirit is a relation expressed by the personal pronouns

I, thou, he. Waiving, for the time, the technical terms developed in the history of the science of theology, and thus superseding every philosophical objection which has been urged against the dogmatic formula which crystallizes the New Testament doctrine, we shall contemplate Father, Son, and Spirit in the light of New Testament language exclusively. The relation of Father to Son, and of Son to Father, comes to view distinctly and definitely. So likewise the relation of the Spirit to the Son, and of the Spirit to the Father, and the relation of the Spirit to both Father and Son simultaneously. The nature of these interior relations is explicitly stated. The word "Son" is not merely the title of dignity or affection. Nor does the name designate simply the mediatorial office of Christ. Its import is more specific. The Son is *thou*, in contradistinction from the Father, who is *I*; as appears in the manifestation of God to Christ given by Mark in the record of his baptism: "And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark i. 11). Or, the Son is *I*, in contradistinction from the Father, who is *thou*. Says Christ, in the prayer offered at the grave of Lazarus: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me" (John xi. 41, 42). Passages like this are numerous in the Gospels, and equivalent expressions occur frequently in the Epistles. But it is not necessary to cite them. One of them brings clearly to view the character of all the rest. As represented in the New Testament, Father and Son are antithetic, as well as correlative. The Son addresses the Father, and the Father addresses the Son. In either case, antithesis is both implied and asserted; and the antithesis is one which finds expression by the use of the concrete terms *I* and *thou*.

The order of self-assertion and address is interchangeable absolutely. As the Father in addressing the Son names himself by the use of the first person, *I*, and names the Son

by the use of the second person, *thou*; so the Son in addressing the Father names the Father by the use of the second person, *thou*, and names himself by the use of the first person, *I*. The self-assertion is personal, and the address is personal. In Father and Son we have thus a personal correlation, and a personal antithesis. Whilst not taught in general terms, the personal and the personal antithesis confront our faith in the form of direct and positive utterance.

We have not forgotten, in pursuing this line of argument, that the antithesis expressed by the use of the personal pronouns may prevail, and does prevail, very commonly both in the Old and in the New Testament, between God and man. God directly addresses man, and man directly addresses God. But the relation which Jesus as the Son sustains to God as his Father is altogether different and peculiar. Jesus as the Son asserts a dignity equal to that of his Father in heaven. The Son, like the Father, possesses all things. The Son knows as the Father knows. Like the Father, the Son has life in himself. As the Father is in heaven, so is the Son in heaven (John i. 18; iii. 13). As the Father reigns and judges, so the Son hath authority to execute judgment. Such a self-consciousness as Jesus Christ asserts relatively to Almighty God and the heavenly world so far transcends the consciousness of every man represented in the Old or the New Testament, — whether patriarch or law-giver, whether prophet, priest, or king, evangelist or apostle, — that there is no room for comparison. So great is the difference, so broad the contrast, that to judge Moses or Aaron, David or Samuel, John or Paul or Peter, by comparison with the self-consciousness and exalted dignity of Christ can have no other effect than to wrong these great men, one and all. Undoubtedly, the personal antithesis of Father and Son revealed by Christ is incomparable and unique. We have to do here with a relation never before affirmed, or even imagined by any man respecting himself.

But the personal antithesis of Father and Son is only

a part of the Christian conception of God. The self-consciousness of Christ includes another personal antithesis — that between himself and the Holy Ghost. Christ relates the Spirit to himself, and relates the Spirit to the Father, under the same character in which Father and Son are related. That is to say, whilst our Lord names himself *I*, in distinction from the Father whom he addresses as *thou*, he speaks of the Spirit in the use of the third person, *he*. And whenever the Father is represented as speaking to the Son and of the Spirit, the same form of designation is employed. The Spirit is always spoken of by the use of the personal pronoun in the third person. As an example of the common formula of expression, we quote John xiv. 26 : “ But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” The Spirit knows the Son as the Son knows himself ; and he, the Spirit of truth, will be sent from the Father to teach the disciples ; and this teaching will be commensurate with the infinite fulness of the Son. As no one knows the Father save the Son, so no one can reveal the Son but the Holy Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God.

As the Greek word for Spirit, τὸ πνεῦμα, is neuter, and the grammatical construction in consequence requires that the pronoun stand in the neuter gender, the original is not capable of expressing directly a personal antithesis of the Spirit to the Son. The frequent use of the pronoun in the neuter gender may therefore seem to a superficial eye to indicate that the Spirit is impersonal. As may be readily seen, however, there is no valid ground for such an inference, if we consider all the forms of speech employed concerning the Spirit, and observe how the grammatical obstruction which hinders the direct assertion of a personal antithesis to Father and Son is partially superseded.

The Spirit is represented as the Paraclete or Comforter, ὁ παράκλητος. Whenever this title is applied, frequently in

apposition with τὸ πνεῦμα, the grammatical construction naturally changes. Then the pronoun ἐκεῖνος stands for the Spirit. And this pronoun in the masculine gender is used even when it refers directly to πνεῦμα, standing in apposition with ὁ παράκλητος. Such is the case in the passage just quoted. Teaching is there predicated directly of the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who is represented by the pronoun in the masculine, ἐκεῖνος. Evidently, then, our Lord in this, as in some other utterances, distinguishes the Spirit from himself and from the Father under the form of personal antithesis, that is, by the word *he*.

But the language of our Lord is in a few instances still more peculiar. There is at least one passage, if not two, in which the law of grammar is violated. The pronoun in the masculine, ἐκεῖνος, is construed with the neuter noun, τὸ πνεῦμα; or rather, the neuter τὸ πνεῦμα is put in apposition with the masculine ἐκεῖνος. This singular construction occurs in John xvi. 13: "Ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ἐκεῖνος, τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, ὀδηγήσει ὑμᾶς εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν. The masculine ἐκεῖνος cannot be construed grammatically with ὁ παράκλητος occurring in verse 7; that is too remote; and the regimen of grammatical expression is completely broken by intervening forms of speech. For this solecism we can account only by acknowledging that the sense of the Holy Spirit as personal is so distinct and strong that in this instance John, in recording the teaching of our Lord, breaks through the embarrassing restraints of a strictly grammatical construction.

Generally, in the Gospels as in the Epistles, the Holy Ghost is spoken of in the third person. Indeed, such is the case in every instance where the Spirit is spoken of in personal antithesis to the Son and the Father. But when the Spirit is related to believers and the church, he is in several passages represented as himself teaching and speaking. In this respect there is perhaps none more remarkable than the one occurring in Acts xiii. 2: "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me (Ἀφορίσατε

δὴ μοι) Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them (προσκέκλημαι αὐτούς).” Here the Holy Spirit appears not only as speaking and commanding, but the Spirit is represented as speaking in the first person, “I have called them.” As exhibiting the egoity of the Holy Ghost, this utterance is equivalent to any one of those in which our Lord says, “Verily, verily, I say unto you.”

A subject which is consciously self-asserting, as in the formula “I have called them,” and which may be addressed by the personal pronoun *thou*, and which is spoken of in the third person, *he*, — a subject, accordingly, of which *I*, *thou*, *he* are the proper forms of assertion and recognition, demonstrates and authenticates the central characteristics of personality positively and unequivocally. No form of human speech can convey a more forcible demonstration of the personal as contradistinguished from every kind and grade of the impersonal.

The Christian doctrine of God, or the idea of the Divine Being as taught by Jesus Christ, thus includes the Holy Ghost as self-asserting on the same plane of existence with the Father and the Son. The sonship of the Son and the fatherhood of the Father postulate the communion of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, like the sonship of the Son, the communion of the Spirit is not only something distinct and different, but the difference prevails in the form of personal antithesis. As the Son is *I* antithetically to the Father and the Spirit, so does the Spirit reveal himself antithetically to the Son and the Father. And this trinal antithesis as prevailing on the same plane of existence is explicitly taught by our Lord — taught not in an abstract way, but in a concrete and living form.

The passages are numerous in which this concrete antithetical relation of Father, Son, and Spirit comes to view. Indeed, the trinal antithesis which we are emphasizing underlies and pervades all the discourses of our Lord, as recorded by John in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of his Gospel. And though the Spirit is not explicitly

named, yet the same idea of the personal fellowship between Father, Son, and Spirit breathes in the sacerdotal prayer recorded in the chapter following. We shall confine ourselves to a few representative passages.

Says our Lord to his disciples: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John xiv. 16, 17). The Son, the Father, and the Spirit are divinely one in this utterance, and are at the same time distinguished the one from the other in the form of personal antithesis. Says Christ: "I will pray the *Father*." The Son, communing with the Father, affirms himself in distinction from the Father. Of Christ's prayer the end is that the Father will send the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who shall abide with the disciples forever. *Him* the world does not know, because it sees *him* not; but the disciples know *him*, because *he* dwells with them. The Spirit is distinguished after a personal manner from the Father and the Son, whilst yet the Spirit coming and abiding with the disciples is the will of the Father and the prayer of the Son.

The trinal antithesis immanent in the communion of Father, Son, and Spirit comes to view still more definitely in John xiv. 26: "But the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." There is here a personal communion and a personal distinction of the Spirit and the Father and the Son. We say personal, because the Son speaks of himself in the first person, and speaks of the Holy Ghost in the third person. The Father will send the Comforter *in my name* (*ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου*). The Comforter is the Holy Ghost. *He*, *ἐκεῖνος*, the Holy Ghost, shall teach you all things. Whatsoever *I* have taught you, *he*, the Holy Ghost, sent by the Father in my name, shall bring to your

remembrance. Words cannot express more directly and definitely the personal immanent in the fellowship and unity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Equally definite and forcible, but more comprehensive, are the words of our Lord recorded by John xvi. 13-15: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I that he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." In this passage, as in those already considered, our Lord asserts in concrete, living form, the Holy Spirit in personal antithesis to himself, and asserts both himself and the Spirit in personal antithesis to the Father; and yet the Spirit, the Son, and the Father are one in dignity, in substance, in will.

Our Lord names the Spirit by the use of the pronoun in the masculine, *ἐκεῖνος*. *He*, the Spirit, shall come. He will guide you into all truth. He shall not speak of himself. Whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak. He will show you things to come. *He* shall glorify *me* (*ἐκεῖνος ἐμὲ δοξάσει*). *He* shall receive of *mine*, and shall show it unto you.

The import of our Lord's teaching in this passage respecting the Spirit of truth reaches its climax in verse 15: "All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore, said I that he (the Spirit of truth) shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." The formula, *all things* (*πάντα*) comprehends the Father in an absolute sense, denoting the immeasurable fulness of his life and truth, his love and wisdom. This immeasurable fulness is the proper possession of the Son. The same doctrine is taught in similar words by our Lord in a passage recorded by Matthew. "*All things* (*πάντα*) are delivered unto me of my Father" (xi. 27). Corresponding to these declarations of our Lord is the profound expression of Paul: "In him (Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead

bodily." Now, of this absolute fulness of the Father dwelling in the Son, the Holy Spirit takes and reveals to the disciples. The knowledge and power of the Spirit is commensurate with the fulness of the Father dwelling in the Son. In other words, the manifestation of the Father by the Son is complete in the Holy Spirit. What the Son is the Spirit shares and proclaims. The Spirit is one with the Son in the possession of the absolute fulness of the Father; yet the Spirit, distinguished after a personal manner from the Son, as the Son distinguishes himself from the Father, performs a function in divine revelation which is peculiar to himself as the Paraclete, or Spirit of Truth.

Whether it is scriptural to designate Father, Son, and Spirit by the general term *person*, is not now the question. Although the term has been introduced into the liturgies and catechisms of the church, yet the question respecting its propriety and validity belongs rather to the sphere of science than to the domain of faith. There is room among theologians for difference of judgment. Important as this scientific question is, it is nevertheless not the one with which we are now dealing. We are concerned with that new idea of God which is revealed by Christ, in his person, his word, and his work.

Nor are we concerned respecting the propriety of any numerical designation. Whether it is legitimate to say that Father, Son, and Spirit are three, or that God, is one in three and three in one, is not the point on which we are laying emphasis. As regards our particular purpose, the question whether the numerical element enters properly into a statement of the Christian doctrine of God, may be an open one. At present we do not join issue with any who deny, scientifically, either that the terms *person* or *three* are legitimately applicable. That issue belongs to the sphere of theological science. There it must necessarily arise. In our present inquiry we hold it in abeyance.

What we are emphasizing is the unique fact of Christian revelation. God as manifested and taught by Christ, is

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Although the Old and the New Testaments are integral parts of one revelation, in no sense contradictory, but complementary throughout, yet it is Jesus Christ, not Moses nor David nor Isaiah, and Jesus Christ only, who in his life and work has declared the being of God in this character. The Father is distinguished from the Son by proper fatherhood. The Son is distinguished from the Father by proper sonship. And the Spirit is distinguished from the Father and the Son by proper procession and living communion. These distinctions involve self-conscious antithesis, and this antithesis is manifested in the concrete forms of utterance: *I, thou, he*. *I* and *thou* express the distinction between the Son and the Father. *I* and *he* express the distinction between the Son and the Holy Ghost. *I, thou, he*, express both the absolute unity and the relative difference of the Son and the Father and the Spirit.

CONCLUSION.

The unity of God is not pure being in the Neo-Platonic sense. Nor is unity the cold monism of the Koran. Nor is it merely the fulness of personal life affirmed by the rich and exalted monotheism of the Old Testament. But the being of God, as revealed by Christ, is a unity which involves community; not a union of individuals, but the actual fellowship of God with himself eternally in the life of reciprocal love. God is the absolute one, but not the mathematical one. God is no more one God in the abstract numerical sense, than he is in the numerical sense three gods. As the Christian doctrine excludes tritheism, so also does it exclude abstract henotheism. God is the absolute One living in the eternal communion of love, the communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and this communion of love postulates a relative difference of Father, Son, and Spirit, affirmed directly and interchangeably in *I, THOU, HE*.

Whether the objection raised against the general terms, *hypostasis*, *person*, and *subsistence*, by which theological science has for many centuries designated these objective

distinctions in the Godhead be legitimate and valid or not, touches neither the facts of Christian revelation nor the words in which these facts are uttered and embodied, and thus address our faith and intelligence. So much, however, must be asserted and maintained in the interest of Christian faith and Christian doctrine, that the terms which science may find it necessary to employ must be adequate. If they ought not to express more, so neither should they express less than revelation proclaims and involves. Scientific terms must be adequate to the facts of revelation and no less adequate also to the inspired words in which these facts are taught. Hence whatever terms are the best equivalent for the living truth affirmed by the personal pronouns I, thou, and he, are valid in the sphere of theological science; and can be maintained successfully against every kind of negative criticism.

So far from endangering true monotheism, it is the Christian doctrine of God which effectually sustains and perfects it. Faith in God as Father and Son and Holy Ghost conserves the divine unity; whilst every theory of God which denies these trinal distinctions in his being issues, in the end, in a denial likewise of that kind of divine unity which the Scriptures plainly teach. Indeed, no species of monotheism other than the distinctively Christian has been able to maintain itself either theoretically or practically.

As is well known and conceded, the original monotheism of mankind, whether the result purely of intuitive perception or due to a primeval revelation, was not able to perpetuate itself in any pagan nation. Everywhere men have fallen into some form of gross polytheism; and when the pagan mind begins to react against the absurdities of polytheistic superstition, the reaction has rarely if ever been towards a better faith, but commonly if not universally in the direction of theoretic atheism. The idea of one God pervading the Old Testament lived fresh and pure among the chosen people only in connection with the hope of the Messiah. When faith in the coming Messiah languished, or was perverted and falsi-

fied, the rich monotheism of Moses and of the prophets changed into the deism of the Pharisees, or sank into the rationalistic unbelief of the Sadducees and Herodians, or into the Platonic dualism of Philo.

Since the Christian era the idea of God has passed through a similar process of deterioration whenever and wherever the Christian doctrine has not been held in its integrity. The monarchian theory of Artemon and his school failed to develop itself in harmony with its own unitarian principle. The Unitarianism of modern times, in the old as in the new world, has met with the same fate. Starting with the belief that God is the one living God, but eliminating from this belief the trinal distinctions affirmed by the Christian church, Unitarianism has in its leading representatives either returned to the orthodox conception of Father and Son and Holy Ghost, or declined into some form of pantheism or humanitarianism or even of naturalism.

Only the distinctively Christian doctrine, firmly held and legitimately developed, inspires and perpetuates a pure and ennobling monotheism, that is, the idea of one God who lives in the fellowship of love and grace with fallen men, and at the same time exists a personal Being in heaven, the transcendent domain of his own essential glory. No other doctrine is a satisfying and effectual remedy for those false tendencies of philosophic speculation, all of which issue ultimately either in separating God from the world by an impassable chasm, or in evaporating the Divine into nonentity, or in resolving God's personality into the ever-varying processes of nature and the rational life of man.