

THE BEING OF GOD

ARTICLE I

Of Faith in the Holy Trinity

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

One of the original Articles of 1553. Its language is very close to that of the Confession of Augsburg.

It was called forth by the teaching of the Anabaptists, who were reviving all the ancient heresies. It deals with:

1. The Unity of God.
2. The attributes of God.
3. God's relation to the universe.
4. The manner of God's existence—the doctrine of the Trinity.

§ 1. *There is but one living and true God.*—The Articles, like the Bible itself, assume and do not attempt to prove the existence of God. By God we mean the one self-existent Being, the Author and Sustainer of all that is, upon whom all things depend and in whom they find their goal. All thinkers agree that God is one. The ancient Greek philosophers attained to this truth primarily by the road of reason. Every attempt to understand the world assumes that the world is intelligible, and therefore one. All philosophy presupposes that behind phenomena is a single ultimate reality. A world that is capable of being explained must be a single and coherent system. It must be one in origin and in purpose. Philosophy and science rest ultimately upon the same assumption. They presuppose the ultimate unity of all existence. This 'Absolute' or ultimate reality whose existence behind the world of change and appearance philosophy and science are compelled implicitly to assume, need not be a very interesting God. He need not be, as far as their requirements go, a God who loves men and can be loved by them. We could not sing hymns to the 'Absolute'. But He must be one. The very idea of God excludes the

De fide in sacro-sanctam Trinitatem

Unus est vivus et verus Deus, aeternus, incorporeus, imparibilis, impassibilis, immensae potentiae, sapientiae ac bonitatis, creator et conservator omnium, tum visibilium, tum invisibilium. Et in unitate hujus divinae naturae tres sunt personae, ejusdem essentiae, potentiae, ac aeternitatis, Pater, Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus.

possibility of more than one God. All the so-called arguments for the existence of God are arguments for the existence of one God. Thus the unity of God is a truth of reason, though reason by itself can tell us little or nothing about His character. (See note on p. 52.)†

The nation of Israel attained to the truth of the unity of God, not by speculation and abstract thought, but through historical revelation and prophetic insight. We can trace out in the history of Israel a growth in the knowledge of the one true God. At first Jehovah was a tribal God, the God of the Jewish nation. To use technical language the Jews were 'monolatrous' rather than 'monotheists'. They worshipped one God, but were not concerned to deny the existence of others. Even the First Commandment allows the possibility of the existence of other Gods. Slowly, through the religious insight and experience of the prophets, the spiritual leaders of the nation, at least, came to grasp the truth that Jehovah was the one and only God of the whole world.¹ Through the exile Israel was purged of idolatry. By suffering and persecution the conviction of the Unity of God was branded for ever upon the consciousness of the nation. The Creed of the Jewish Church was the words of Deut 6⁴, 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD.' As such it was solemnly reaffirmed by our Lord Himself (Mk 12²⁹, etc.). This truth had been attained, not by any process of reason, but by a special revelation of God Himself. The Jew could go on to say what the Greek could not, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.' The God who revealed Himself to Israel was above all a God of grace and righteousness, a Redeemer, who manifested His love and care for His people in a practical way through the events of history. In this aspect, too, God must be one. There is but One God, not because it happens to be so, but because it cannot be otherwise. Philosophy and religion alike make the same demand. To have more than one God is, as the early Christians maintained, to have no true God at all. To be a polytheist is to be an atheist.†

So the way was prepared for a further revelation of the nature of God. The truth of the Unity of God 'had to be completely established first as a broad element of thought, indispensable, unalterable, before there could really begin the disclosure to man of the reality of eternal relations within the one indivisible Being of God. And when the disclosure came, it came, not as modifying—far less denying—but as further interpreting and illumining that unity which it absolutely presupposed.'² When it is rightly presented, the doctrine of the Trinity does not destroy but safeguards the Unity of God. The highest type of unity is not a mere barren numerical unity, but one that embraces within itself a wealth of diversity.

¹ This truth is implied as early as Amos. It is Jehovah who directs and overrules the movements of all the nations.

² Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, p. 85.

Opposed to this truth of the unity of God stands polytheism. In the Bible this is always represented as intimately connected with spiritual blindness and moral evil. Whether, as a matter of simple history, all forms of polytheism are in origin corruptions of a single older and purer belief in One God, is a question for the science of Comparative Religion to decide. At present very different answers are given. But the standpoint of Scripture is amply justified. From the point of view of Jewish and Christian revelation polytheism is a degraded and degrading form of religion. The Jews were always being tempted to lapse into idolatry because the faith and worship of Jehovah made too great demands upon them. The contest between Baal and Jehovah was not only a contest between two forms of religion, but between two standards of morality. Jehovah demanded personal righteousness in His worshippers. 'Be ye holy: for I am holy.' Baal did not. The prophets are always protesting against those who degraded Jehovah by putting Him on a moral level with the gods of the heathen. Throughout Old Testament history polytheism stood for a religion that corrupted the very springs of the spiritual life. It met men's desire for worship without demanding moral effort or reformation in the worshipper. Religion was regarded not as doing the will of God, but as bribing or cajoling God to do man's will. A firm belief in one Almighty God was shown to be the only basis of a moral and righteous life.

So, too, S. Paul's denunciation of heathenism in Rom 1¹⁸ ff. was amply justified. He 'looks at things with the insight of a religious teacher: he describes facts which he sees around him, and he connects these facts with permanent tendencies of human nature and with principles which are apparent in the Providential government of the world.'¹ The Gods of pagan mythology were attractive to the multitude largely because they were on a moral level with themselves. Religion had become the enemy of morality. How far the particular individuals of any one generation were personally responsible for this may be questioned. But the multitude 'loved to have it so', and made little or no effort to follow up the truth which was offered to them in reason and conscience. 'It was in the strict sense due to supernatural influence that the religion of the Jew and of the Christian was kept clear of these corrupt and corrupting features. The state of the Pagan world betokened the absence, the suspension, or withholding, of such supernatural influence; and there was reason enough for the belief that it was judicially inflicted.'²

The words '*living and true*' are in Scripture applied to God in opposition to the false gods of heathenism. God is living ('*vivus*', not '*vivens*'): not merely alive, but the source of all life (Ps 42², Jn 5²⁶, etc.). He is opposed to dead idols (Jer 10¹⁰, Acts 14¹⁵, 1 Thess 1⁹, etc.). So, too, God is *true* ('*verus*'): not only faithful to His word

¹ Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 49.

² *Op. cit.* p. 49.

(*verax*), but genuine (*ἀληθινός*). He is contrasted with the sham gods of heathenism as alone fulfilling the true conception of God (Is 44⁶ ff.); 'The only true God' (Jn 17³). The two ideas of living and true are combined (1 Thess 1⁹, 1 Jn 5²⁰).

Polytheism may appear at first sight to have lost its dangers. But its spirit is always threatening to corrupt the purity of Christian faith. Human nature desires a satisfaction for its instinct of worship. Fallen human nature desires to satisfy its instinct with the least possible moral effort. Hence men are always tempted to seek a refuge from the intense holiness of God in some object of worship that will be more indulgent towards sin and sloth. Accordingly we find in the Roman and Greek Churches a Saint-worship that in popular practice tends towards polytheism. Elsewhere we find what Dr. Hort called 'Jesus-worship',¹ i.e. a perverted and sentimental devotion to our Lord, not as the revelation of the Father and one with Him, but as a tender and not too exacting Saviour who will be a refuge from the Father's holiness and justice. In each case the One God is set on one side as too strict in His moral demands. A less exacting object of worship is invented or procured. The pleasures of religion are retained at the cost of its truth and purity. For practical purposes the result is polytheism. Its fruits to-day are the same as they were in the days of the prophets or of S. Paul, a relaxing of the moral life and the lowering of the moral standard. To-day as of old the Unity of God is the one safeguard of moral and spiritual progress.

§ 2. (a) How can we conceive of God? In Scripture, from first to last, God is represented as a 'Personal' God. He is said to possess will (Mt 7²¹, Jn 6³⁹, Eph 1¹¹, 1 Jn 5¹⁴, etc.): to know, to have a mind and purpose (2 Sam 14¹⁴, Jer 32³⁵, Mt 6⁸ and 32, Jn 10¹⁵, Acts 4²⁸, Rom 11³⁴, etc.): to love (Hos 11¹, Is 43⁴, Jn 15⁹, 1 Jn 4⁸ and 10, etc.). So, too, God is said to be jealous (Exod 20⁶, Deut 32¹⁶, etc.), and grieved (Gen 6⁶, Is 63¹⁰, etc.), to be pitiful and show mercy (Is 60¹⁰, Jas 5¹¹, etc.), to feel anger (Jn 3³⁶, Rev 14¹⁰, etc.). Further, in the teaching of Christ a wide range of images borrowed from human relationships is employed to depict the character of God. Not only is He above all 'the Father', but His acts are compared to those of a king, an unjust judge, an owner of sheep, a woman keeping house, etc. In all such images the life and character of God are represented in terms of human life. It could not be otherwise. Human personality is the highest form of existence within our own experience, and we are obliged to think of God in terms of the highest that we know. However far God's life may excel our own, it cannot fall below it. The God who created human personality cannot Himself be less than personal. We do not claim that in describing God in terms of human personality we are giving a complete or adequate description of Him. All that we say is that this is the least inadequate language that we

¹ Hort, *Life and Letters*, vol. ii. pp. 49-51.

can use. The criticism has often been made that man in speaking of God as personal is really making God in his own image.¹ It is suggested that it would be more reverent to think of God only as the 'great unknowable'. Since all definition implies negation, we should only speak of Him in negative terms, as not like anything within our finite experience.² Such agnosticism is not quite so reverent as it appears at first sight. It involves the assumption not only that man is unable to know God, but that God is unable to reveal Himself to man. If religion is to exist as a living force, and if God wishes men to have fellowship with Himself, men must make some effort, however inadequate, to picture to themselves the God whom they are bidden to serve and worship. We cannot love or pray to an 'unknowable'. The criticism forces us to remember that our idea of God, even at its highest, is incomplete and inadequate. We are necessarily limited by the capacities of our finite human personalities. As man's knowledge of his own personality has deepened, so his conception of God has deepened too and become less partial and inadequate. Further, to a Christian the Incarnation has proved that human personality is in its measure a mirror of the Divine Personality. In Jesus Christ God gave us the fullest revelation of Himself that we at present can receive, through the medium of a perfect human life and character. Jesus Christ has demonstrated what we may call the 'humanity' of God. However much more there may be in the nature and being of God that cannot be expressed in terms of human life and personality or embodied in a perfect human character, and that transcends human experience altogether, still all the elements of man's life and personality are to be found at their highest and best within the divine life and personality. If man is made 'in the image of God', the original cannot be wholly unlike the image. So, then, we speak of God as 'personal' because that is the loftiest conception of Him that we are able to form. We believe that, though it is inadequate, yet it is not in its measure untrue. Further, our human personalities are all of them imperfect and fragmentary. They hint at capacities that are only partly realized in our present life. No man taken by himself discloses even the full capacity of human nature as we know it here. We do not know what a perfect and complete human personality may mean.

¹ The German philosopher Fichte sums up the argument thus:—'You insist that God has personality and consciousness. What do you call personality and consciousness? No doubt that which you find in yourselves. But the least attention will satisfy you that you cannot think this without limitation and finitude. Therefore you make the divine Being a limited being like yourselves by ascribing to Him that attribute, and you have not thought God as you wished but only multiplied yourself in thought' (Quoted by Bruce, *Apologetics*, p. 81).

² In substance this objection is as old as Xenophanes, who argued: 'If the lions could have pictured a god, they would have pictured him in fashion like a lion; the horses like a horse: the oxen like an ox.' Supposing that lions can reflect, and that 'lion-hood' is the highest kind of existence known to them, the lions who conceive of God as an unlimited lion, would seem to be more intelligent than their human critics.

'We are not so much complete persons as on the road to personality.' When we think of the Personality of God we think of Him as possessing in all their completeness all those attributes which we perceive ourselves to possess tentatively and incompletely. He alone realizes the full meaning of personality.†

(b) The perversion of the truth of the personality of God is known as 'anthropomorphism'. We fall into this error when we ascribe to God the limitations and imperfections of our own finite human personalities. Anthropomorphism degrades the idea of God by ascribing to Him human infirmities.¹ It arises from the forgetfulness that our highest conceptions of Him are inadequate. We are tempted to argue from them as if they were unreservedly true. It is largely against this danger that the next words of this Article are directed. '*God is everlasting, without body, parts or passions, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness.*'

We may take these in order. By speaking of God as '*everlasting*' (*aeternus*) and '*without body*', we mean that God is raised above the limitations of both time and space. We ourselves live in time and space. We cannot get outside them. All our experience is necessarily presented under the forms of time and space. When we say that God is above them, we do not attempt to picture God's consciousness or to describe what they mean to Him: all that we affirm is that they impose no limitations upon His knowledge and activity as they do upon ours. If we consider our own mental pictures of either time or space, we can easily see that they are really self-contradictory. However far distant we travel in imagination to the beginning of time or space, there is always more time and more space beyond them. The beginning of either is to us unthinkable. This in itself suggests that our knowledge about them is only relative and imperfect. To take the thought of time first: God is eternal. We do not pretend to say what time means to God. We can only picture to ourselves eternity as an endless succession of moments. By our imaginations 'eternal' can only be viewed as 'everlasting'. But the eternal God is not limited by time as we are. There was no moment of time when He first came into being. Again, with us time is associated with change and decay. But God never grows old or weary (Is 40²⁸). Time does not hamper His knowledge or His power as it does our own. In some sense the future is as present to Him as the past. He lives 'in an eternal present'. It is as being eternal that He is 'the only wise God' (Rom 16²⁷); 'one day is to the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day' (2 Pet 3⁸).

So, too, with space. God is without body, for He is Spirit (Jn 4²⁴, R.V. marg.). Not only does He not possess bodily needs and appetites; He does not need to be fed or to be awakened (cp. the protests of Ps 50¹²⁻¹³), as the primitive mind supposed; but His activity is not

¹ Cp. Browning's *Caliban on Setebos*.

limited by any considerations of space. We can only imagine God as 'ubiquitous' or 'omnipresent', *i.e.* as present in all places at the same time. But God's presence is not in space at all: it is not on a level with that of even the most subtle of material substances. God does not occupy space like a created object. He can act always and everywhere. Nothing is hidden from His sight or His control. 'Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him, saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth?' (Jer 23²⁴, cp. Ps 139). In early parts of the Bible we find traces of a primitive anthropomorphism that puts God away in some distant place or confines Him to one place at a time. Thus He needs to come and see for Himself the tower of Babel (Gen 11⁵) and the real truth about Sodom (Gen 18²¹). Again, His power was regarded as limited to the territory of Israel (1 Sam 26¹⁹). But such ideas were transcended as the Jewish religion progressed. In Ezek 1⁴ ff., for instance, the elaborate symbolism is an attempt to picture God's omnipresence in Babylon no less than at Jerusalem.

Any view of God that regards Him as limited by time or space detracts from His claim to our unconditional trust and obedience. We are not likely to regard God's dominion as confined to any one country. But we are tempted to limit His dominion to certain spheres of our own life. This is a practical denial of His unlimited supremacy.

God is without parts (Latin *impartibilis* = unable to be divided).—If God does not occupy space He is indivisible, since division implies space. But the word means more than this. We think of God as possessing certain faculties. In ourselves these may be divided one against another. We may be distracted by competing interests or desires. Our reason may be opposed to our inclination. Or again, we are forced to acquire our knowledge piecemeal. Our consciousness cannot retain all that we know. We are subject to lapses of memory. But God's being is not thus divisible. All that He is, He is essentially and not accidentally. What we from our human standpoint regard as separate attributes, His mercy, wrath, love, remembrance, etc., are really aspects of one consistent and unchanging Being. There can be in Him no conflict of purpose or desire. His knowledge can never fall short of full attainment. He can never forget. He can deal with all things at once. We do not need to attract His attention. His interest is not divided. 'Before they call, I will answer' (Is 65²⁴. Contrast the taunts of Elijah in 1 Kings 18²⁶⁻²⁷).

God is without passions (Latin *impassibilis*, a word which originally meant 'incapable of suffering').—This is closely connected with the foregoing statement and is intended to rule out anthropomorphic ideas about the changeableness of God. The Bible does not hesitate to speak of God's wrath, jealousy, sorrow and love. But these are not passing emotions, passions that for a time overcome God and turn Him aside from His purpose. They are rather aspects of God's one and unchanging character. God's purpose and character are ever one

and the same. But as God deals with the manifold material of our inconsistent and variable lives, His attitude in relation to us appears to change. God's wrath is not a transitory feeling: it is rather one aspect of His love as it deals with human sin. God's action seems to us to change, as it meets the varying needs of His government. God is now merciful, now punishes, now restores (*e.g.* Is 60¹⁰ and Mt 18²⁷ and ³⁴). But the change is never arbitrary. Behind it all lies the one immutable purpose and character of God, giving consistency and unity to all that He does. 'God's immutability is not due to carelessness or indifference. It is rather a mark of intense moral activity. It may be defined as that moral changelessness by which all the powers of God's nature are brought under the dominion of a single consistent purpose.'¹ This moral constancy of God is the ground of faith and hope in Him. 'I the Lord change not: therefore ye, O Sons of Jacob, are not consumed' (Mal 3⁶). 'God is not a man that he should lie' or 'repent' (Num 23¹⁹). We cannot help using human language in speaking of God's actions. There is a certain necessary 'anthropomorphism'. The only danger is that we may argue from our imperfect human conceptions as if they were complete and adequate (*cp.* Is 55⁸⁻⁹). For instance, certain theories about the atonement have been constructed out of very crude and literal ideas of the wrath of God. God's mercy does not incline Him to forgive and His justice to punish: His justice is the ground of forgiveness (1 Jn 1⁹). God not only loves but is love (1 Jn 4⁸). He is 'the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning' (Jas 1⁷). There is no contradiction within the Divine Being. Each of the divine qualities involves all the rest (1 Jn 1⁵).

We can hardly deny that since God is love, He is in some sense capable of suffering. The life and Passion of Christ are the manifestation in space and time of 'an element which is essential and eternal in the life of God'.² This idea of the sympathy of God with human sorrow and suffering underlies much of, *e.g.* Hosea, the later chapters of Isaiah, 'In all their affliction he was afflicted'³ (Is 63⁹, cp. Judges 10¹⁶), and the teaching of our Lord. God rejoices over the return of sinners (*e.g.* Lk 15^{7, 20}). He can sympathize with human sorrows and sufferings. But such suffering is one aspect of His perfection.†

(c) *God is of infinite power*.—'With God all things are possible' (Mt 19²⁶). God's omnipotence is the perfection of His will. He is almighty, *i.e.* all-sovereign: unfettered by any limitations in His actions, unbounded in His resources. All the power that exists in the universe, of body, mind or will, is in origin His. He is pleased to lend it to beings whose wills are free. As such, they may pervert or misuse it. But its source is all the time in Him and its exercise is never with-

¹ W. A. Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, p. 118.

² Cp. D. White, *Forgiveness and Suffering*, pp. 82-91.

³ But the actual rendering of the verse is doubtful.

drawn from His control. 'Precisely in this way above all others, that He is omnipotent over a free world, does God reveal the greatness of His power most clearly.'¹ Thus God is not hindered in His activity by any foreign or independent power in the world. Nor yet is God limited by creation in the sense that He has exhausted His resources in it. He has inexhaustible power and wisdom in reserve. On all such points God's infinite power is contrasted with man's finite power.

But God's infinite power does not mean that God can do anything whatever. He cannot lie or contradict Himself (2 Tim 2¹³). He cannot do wrong or undo the past or make men holy apart from their own efforts. For all these things are contrary to His own laws. These laws are not imposed upon Him by any external necessity, but are the free expression of His own character and purpose. As Hooker writes: 'The Being of God is a kind of law to His working.' 'God is a law both to Himself and to all other things besides.' 'Nor is the freedom of the will of God any whit abated, let or hindered by means of this, because the imposition of this law upon Himself is His own free and voluntary act.'²

He is of infinite wisdom.—'Omniscience is the perfection of God's mind as omnipotence is the perfection of God's will.' He is 'the only wise God' (Rom 16²⁷). Not only has God an immediate and perfect knowledge of the smallest detail of every event that happens upon this earth (Mt 10²⁹⁻³⁰, etc.), but He knows all the manifold intricacies of His universe. Every piece of truth gained, of whatever kind, is so far an entering into the mind of God. Science has been defined as 'thinking God's thoughts after Him'. Further, God knows all the possibilities that lie before the world. Nothing that happens can ever take Him unawares (Heb 4¹³). In what way God views the future we cannot say. All that we can affirm is that no contingency is unforeseen by Him or outside His control.

He is of infinite goodness.—The Latin *bonitatis* shows that goodness here means 'kindness' rather than holiness. It refers to God's infinite blessings to mankind, 'the riches of his goodness' (Rom 2⁴, cp. Tit 3⁴) as shown in creation, preservation and redemption.

§ 3. 'God is the maker and preserver of all things visible and invisible.'³—These words sum up the Christian view of God's relation to the world. (a) When we say God 'created' the world, *i.e.* made it out of nothing, we are of necessity using metaphorical language. There is nothing in our own experience to correspond to such a process. We can only modify or rearrange within certain limits what already exists. We are driven to say that God 'created the world out of nothing' in order to express the truth that there was nothing already existing in its own right, independently of God, out of which He made it (cp. Heb 11³, Rom 4¹⁷). This rules out two other views of creation.

(i) Plato taught that God made the world out of an independently

¹Martensen, *Dogmatics*, p. 81.

²Eccl. Pol. I. c. ii. § 2 and § 3.

existing matter. This has never been completely subdued to the divine will. Accordingly all material things, our own bodies included, possess an inherent taint of evil, a certain rebelliousness against the good.

This theory has the advantage of explaining the universal existence of evil. But it contradicts the very idea of God, and leaves us in 'dualism'. No such dualism—the assumption of two ultimate realities—can satisfy the needs of our mind. Our intellect demands a single ultimate and all inclusive reality. Christianity holds that the world as made by God is 'very good' (Gen 1³¹). Everything in it has a purpose. The evil in the world is due to the misuse or perversion from its true purpose, by beings possessed of free will, of what is intrinsically good.

(ii) Others again holding the view that matter is intrinsically evil, and being oppressed by the pain and wickedness of the world, taught that the world was not made by God Himself but by some inferior Being—a Demiurge or Creator. Thus they imagined a series of Emanations from God. 'Imagine a long chain of divine creatures, each weaker than its parent, and we come at last to one who, while powerful enough to create, is silly enough not to see that creation is wrong.'¹ Such a view at bottom is not far removed from that of certain modern pessimists.

Against all such views Christianity maintains that God Himself made the world, and that nothing exists in the universe, whether matter or spirit, that is independent of God or beyond His control and His care.

(b) Further, God has not only created but preserves the world from moment to moment. He is the sustaining force behind all life and all existence. Accordingly we need to hold fast to two counter-truths. The first is the 'transcendence' of God. God is above the world. He is the Master whose will all created things serve (Ps 29¹⁰), the Potter in whose hands men are as clay (Is 64⁸, 45⁹). He does not depend upon the world for His existence or His consciousness (Ps 90²). Creation was an act of His own free love. The second and complementary truth is God's 'immanence'. God dwells in his own world as the sustainer of all life. We find the signs of His presence in the beauty, order and movement of nature, and we can discern something of His providential ordering of history. 'In Him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17²⁸). Every part of His creation is present to Him at every moment, and every part is in its measure a revelation of His presence. In the apprehension of truth and the voice of conscience we are in the highest degree aware of His operation through the natural powers of our own minds and wills.†

Each of these truths has been exaggerated to the practical exclusion of the other. Thus we get:

(i) *Deism*.²—This view of the world exaggerated the idea of God's

¹Bigg, *Origins of Christianity*, p. 135, on the Gnostics.

²We must distinguish between 'Deism' and 'Theism'. Deism is the view here described. Theism is simply belief in a God.

transcendence. The Deists practically taught that God made the world, started it and left it to run by itself like a machine. God was regarded as living afar off, apart from the life of the world, with little or no interest in its concerns. The world pursued its course in accordance with certain fixed laws. God was an absentee God, at most returning occasionally to visit the world, when His visits were marked by strange and violent catastrophes. God's active sovereignty was practically denied. His presence was recognized only in the abnormal. This view of God's relation to the world is impossible for the mind of to-day. Modern science is always bringing before us the complex and unceasing energy of God in the world of nature and in the processes of evolution. The world is seen to be not a piece of mechanism but a living organism. God is recognized as present no less in the orderly progress of life than in startling and unusual events.

(i) *Pantheism*.—This isolates and exaggerates the truth of the Divine Immanence. It views all that exists as equally the manifestation of the one divine life. God is conceived as having no existence above and apart from His own self-realization in the world. He has no conscious life except where the one great universal world-life rises to self-consciousness in creation. At death the individual life falls back into that universal life from whence it came.

‘The one remains, the many change and pass; . . .
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.’

Accordingly all things must be as they are. ‘Whatever is, is right.’ This universe is only an eternal process which must go on along its course. Man may be conscious of his own life, but he cannot alter or amend it. The universal life realizes itself equally in all that exists, pleasure and pain, false and true, good and bad.

Pantheism has a great fascination for many minds. It appeals to man's love of consistency. The man whose interest in science or philosophy usurps a disproportionate place in his life, is readily attracted by a view of the world that gives him the unity for which he seeks. Pantheism appeals to man's intellectual and contemplative faculties at the cost of his moral and social faculties. It is found in the religions of the East and in some modern philosophy. In a slightly different form it underlies certain forms of ‘scientific monism’, in which the idea of one universal matter underlying all existence is substituted for the idea of one universal life or spirit. But pantheism fails to give an account of the whole of experience. It cannot explain certain facts of life. Man's indignation at wrong-doing; his conviction of the eternal difference between right and wrong; his sense of responsibility; the efforts and struggles of the moral life; all these contradict pantheism. If all things are equally a manifestation of the divine life, then the ultimate value of all moral distinctions must be

denied. But our sense of right and wrong is a fact that demands explanation. Pantheism does not explain it so much as explain it away. Unless we are prepared to throw overboard the whole of the moral life of mankind as an illusion, we cannot accept pantheism. The God of pantheism is no God at all. ‘The immanence of God becomes . . . a polite expression for the beauty and fruitfulness of nature, human and otherwise.’†

§ 4. *And in unity of this Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.*—

(a) This formal statement of the doctrine of the Trinity did not come ready-made into the world. It is the result of the Church's efforts to express in the simplest possible terms the new truths about God that she had come to know through the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. The doctrine was not the result of abstract speculation. The Person and claims of Christ raised new problems about the nature of God and demanded new explanations. There were certain very definite concrete facts of history and experience, of which Christians were compelled to give some account.

(i) The first disciples of Jesus Christ were Jews. As such they worshipped and served the One God. Their knowledge of God was confirmed and deepened by intimacy with their Master. He Himself reaffirmed the Unity of God. He employed the Jewish Scriptures. He joined in the worship of the Synagogue and Temple. He prayed and taught others to pray to the Father, identifying Him with the God of the Old Covenant.

(ii) Through their prolonged intercourse with Him the disciples became convinced that our Lord too was divine. He spoke of Himself as ‘Son of Man’,¹ and Himself interpreted the meaning of that title in the light of Dan 7¹³ (e.g. Mk 14⁶²). They were compelled to ask ‘what manner of man is this?’ (Mt 8²⁷, etc.). By His question He encouraged them to think out for themselves who He was. He commended S. Peter who could find no word short of ‘Messiah’ able to contain all that He had shown Himself to be. He claimed a unique intimacy with the the Father (Mt 11²⁵⁻²⁷). In His own name He revised and deepened the law of Moses (Mt 5², etc.). He taught His disciples to repose in Him an unlimited confidence that no mere man had the right to demand of his fellow-men (Mt 7²⁴, etc.). He died for

¹ The title seems to come from Dan 7¹³. There it denotes not an individual but a figure in human form, which is interpreted as ‘the saints of the most high’, v. 27. That is, it stands for Israel, in contrast with the beasts, which stand for heathen nations. But very soon ‘One like unto a son of man’ came to be interpreted as an individual, the Messiah. In the Book of Enoch this interpretation is made explicit. ‘The Son of Man’ is a superhuman being, who executes God's judgment. How far it was a recognized Messianic title in our Lord's day, is disputed. He would hardly have assumed it if it was popularly regarded as synonymous with Messiah. For discussion of this title, see A. E. J. Rawlinson, *The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ*, pp. 242 ff.; C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 241 ff.; A. M. Farrer, *A Study in S. Mark* pp. 247 ff.

His claim to be the Christ and the Son of God (Mk 14⁶¹). The whole impression made upon them by His life and works was crowned and brought to consciousness by His Resurrection (e.g. Rom 1⁴). He was indeed the Son of God. No language short of this could express the place that He had come to take in their knowledge of God.†

(iii) He had spoken to the disciples of the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, as divine yet distinct from Himself¹ (Jn 14¹⁶ and 15²⁶). They were to expect the Spirit's coming when He was gone (Acts 1⁴⁻⁵). In that coming He Himself would come too (Jn 14¹⁸). At Pentecost they had a personal experience of the Holy Spirit. A new and lasting power entered into their lives. They knew that He too could be no less than God. Further, in the Baptismal formula the teaching of Christ is summed up.² Converts are to be baptized 'into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost' (Mt 28¹⁹). The name is one. It belongs equally to the three Persons, who are associated on an equality and distinguished from one another by the use of the definite article.

(iv) We turn to the witness of the early Church as presented in Scripture. In the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles and the Apocalypse we find evidence of a new life and experience shared by men and women of very diverse types and races. They worshipped the Father. But they placed Jesus the Messiah side by side with Him and applied to Him the divine name *Kύριος*,³ familiar to Jews as the translation of Jehovah in the Septuagint, and to Gentiles as a title of heathen gods. The disciples' experience of the power of Christ was not ended by the Ascension. He was still a living Saviour. The life that flowed from Him was divine.⁴ In the hour of death S. Stephen prayed to Him (Acts 7⁵⁹). The cures wrought in His name were proclaimed to be His work as really as those wrought during His earthly ministry (Acts 3¹⁰, 9²⁴). 'Jesus is Lord' was the earliest profession of faith (1 Cor 12³). He was worshipped (1 Tim 3¹⁶). The Church was His body, filled with His life (1 Cor 12¹³, Eph 4¹², etc.). He was daily expected to return as judge in glory (Acts 3²¹, 1 Thess 4¹⁶, etc.). So, too, the Holy Spirit revealed His own divine power in many ways. Not only did He bestow supernatural gifts, such as prophecy and speaking with tongues, but He shed abroad in men's hearts new peace and light and strength (Rom 8¹⁵⁻¹⁰). Christians witnessed by their changed lives to His indwelling presence (Gal 5²²⁻²⁴, Rom 8³, 15¹³, Eph 3¹⁶, etc.).

A practical belief in the Father, the Son and the Spirit underlies such passages as these:

¹ It is not easy to distinguish in the fourth Gospel between our Lord's actual words and the Evangelist's own meditation upon them; but on such a point we can hardly suppose that the teaching of Christ was misapprehended.

² The genuineness of this will be discussed later.

³ Either 1 Thessalonians or Galatians is the earliest extant epistle of S. Paul. See the opening words of each, 1 Thess 1¹ and Gal 1¹.

⁴ We need to remember that the 'Christ' of the Epistles is earlier than the 'Jesus' of the Gospels. The Gospels were written by and for men who believed in the glorified Christ.

'If any man hath not the Spirit of God, he is none of his. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus shall quicken also your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you' (Rom 8⁹⁻¹¹).

'Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the elect . . . according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ' (1 Pet 1²).

'Hereby we know that we abide in him, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father hath sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him and he in God' (1 Jn 4¹³⁻¹⁴).

A long list of similar passages might be given.¹ They all spring out of a fresh and vivid spiritual experience. In every case the writer is not consciously repeating the teaching of Christ. He is giving first-hand evidence out of his own life. Nor again are such statements consciously theological. Christians knew that since Jesus Christ had come into their lives they had passed from darkness into light. Their hearts were aglow with a new-found joy and peace. S. Paul, for instance, expected his converts to understand the meaning of his phrases from their own spiritual experiences. He is confident that a share in this new life is open to all who will believe in Christ. In speaking almost casually of 'the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost' (2 Cor 13¹⁴)² he simply sums up the working faith of the Christian community.

(b) (i) In the first reception of the good news Christians were hardly aware that there was an intellectual problem to be solved. They were not conscious that their faith was inconsistent with monotheism. S. Paul can still write: 'To us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things', though he proceeds to add immediately 'and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things' (1 Cor 8⁶, cp. 1 Tim 2⁵, Acts 14¹⁵ and 17²⁴). *ὁ θεός* is in the New Testament applied to the Father alone, but, on the most natural interpretation, *θεός* is applied to our Lord in Rom 9⁵ and Tit 2¹³.³ Divine names, titles and

¹ E.g. Rom 5¹⁻⁸, 8¹⁴⁻¹⁷, 15¹⁶⁻¹⁹ and ²⁰, 1 Cor 2⁹⁻¹⁰, 12²⁻⁷, 2 Cor 1²¹⁻²², Phil 3³, Eph 4⁷⁻⁹, 1 Thess 1²⁻⁷, Tit 3⁴⁻⁶, Heb 9¹⁴, 10²²⁻²¹, 1 Jn 5⁵⁻¹².

² These words were written not more than thirty years after our Lord's Ascension. It is obvious that S. Paul is not employing new or unfamiliar language. He expects the Corinthians at once to grasp his meaning. 'S. Paul and the Church of his day thought of the supreme source of spiritual blessing as not single but threefold—threefold in essence and not merely in manner of speech' (Sanday, *H.D.B.* vol. ii. p. 213). The form of speech suggests at once teaching on the lines of the baptismal formula of Mt 28¹⁹. See Plummer on 2 Cor 13¹⁴.

³ So, too, the most probable reading in Jn 1¹⁸ is *μονογενὴς θεός* (instead of *υἱός*). Cp. 'My Lord and my God' in Jn 20²⁸, which forms the climax of the Gospel.

functions that in the Old Testament belong to God, are freely ascribed to Him (Heb 1¹⁰⁻¹², Rev 1¹⁷, etc.). So, too, language is employed about the Holy Spirit that implies His divinity. We may sum up their attitude thus, 'In the first flush of their new hope Christians rather felt than reasoned out the conviction that their master was divine. It was a certainty of heart and mind—but the mind could hardly subject the conception to the processes of reason—the soul leapt to the great conclusion, even though the mind might lag behind. They did not stay to reason: they knew.'¹

But even from the first it was necessary in preaching the Gospel to express in words something of what the Saviour had proved Himself to be to His disciples. In the opening chapters of the Acts we find a very rudimentary theology. Jesus is the Messiah. At least in the earlier books of the New Testament, 'Christ' is no proper name, but a title of almost incomparable dignity and honour (Acts 2³⁶, etc.). He had fulfilled all Old Testament prophecy (Acts 3¹⁸, etc.). He was the suffering servant of Jehovah (Acts 3^{13, 26}, etc.). Through His death redemption had been won (cp. 1 Pet 1²¹). A crucified Messiah was a scandal to the Jews, and already through controversy Christians were forced to explain the meaning of His death. He was the Son of God, whose sonship had been vindicated by the Resurrection (Acts 9²⁰, 13³², etc.). The Resurrection made clear before men that the Death was not defeat but triumph.

Elsewhere we find a further exercise of reflection. S. Paul bids his converts at Philippi meditate upon the divine self-sacrifice involved in the Incarnation. 'Have this mind in you which was also in Messiah Jesus, who existing (*ὑπάρχων*) in the form of God (*μορφῆ* implying more than outward resemblance, essential being) counted it not a prize (a thing to be clutched hold of) to be on an equality with God (*τὸ εἶναι ἴσα*), but emptied himself (*i.e.* of His divine glory), taking the form of a servant (*μορφῆν*, again. His humanity and divinity were both equally real. He shared truly both the nature of God and ourselves), being made (*γενόμενος* in contrast to *ὑπάρχων* and *τὸ εἶναι*) in the likeness of men' (Phil 2⁶⁻⁷). This is not primarily a lesson in doctrine but in humility: its theology is all the more valuable because it is incidental. The illustration is meaningless unless S. Paul and his converts shared a common belief that Jesus of Nazareth had in some sense existed as God, before He came down to earth. This same belief is implied no less clearly in 2 Cor 8⁹.

Again at Colossae S. Paul had to deal with false teaching about angels. This he meets by asserting the 'cosmic significance' of Jesus Christ, *i.e.* His supremacy in the universe. 'He is the image of the invisible God,' 'the first-born (*i.e.* the heir) of all creation' (or possibly 'begotten before all creation'). 'In him all things were created,' including the angels themselves. He is the agent and goal of creation.

¹ Bethune Baker, *Christian Doctrines; how they arose*, p. 16.

'All things have been created through him and unto him.' He is the power behind the world. 'In him all things hold together' (Col 1¹⁶⁻¹⁷). In this passage S. Paul does not call Him the Logos, but he assigns to Him the functions of the Logos. He holds the central place in the history and meaning of the universe.

Similarly, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews insists upon the unique relation of Christ to God, in contrast with that of the angels. 'God hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son (*ἐν υἱῷ*, literally in 'one who is Son', as opposed to the prophets who are servants), 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' (Heb 1¹⁻⁴).

In Jn 1¹⁻¹⁴ (cp. Rev 19¹³) we find the explicit use of a technical theological term. The historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth is identified with the 'Logos' or 'Word' or 'Reason' of God. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.' The contrast between Jesus Christ and all men who had gone before is between those who bore witness to the Light and the Light Himself. Jesus Christ is asserted to be the eternal author of all the life and truth and goodness of the created world. But the term Logos can only be understood by a reference to contemporary thought.¹

Passages such as these contain a large amount of theological reflection. Their aim is primarily practical, but they mark the lines along which theology was bound to develop, if it was to be faithful to the revelation given to Christians in Christ.†

(ii) In the writings of the sub-apostolic times we find a like belief in God as revealed in the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The Church's faith is shown more decisively in her hymns, doxologies and worship, or in her Baptisms and Eucharists than in formal theological statement. The heathen Pliny, for instance, speaks of Christians singing hymns to Christ 'as to a God'.² In the letters of S. Ignatius and S. Clement³ of Rome passages are to be found similar to those already quoted from the New Testament. But this condition of devotion uninterrogated by reason could not be final. Human nature, and not least Greek human nature, was as inquisitive and argumentative then as it is to-day. Even in the pages of the New Testament we

¹ See below, p. 40.

² Pliny, *Ep.* 10, §96, *Carmen Christo quasi deo dicere*.

³ *E.g.* Clement, *ad Cor.* c. 46, 'Have we not one God and one Christ and one Spirit of grace, that was poured upon us.' c. 58, 'As God liveth and the Lord Jesus Christ liveth and the Holy Spirit, who are both the faith and hope of the elect.' Ignatius, *ad Eph.* c. 9, 'As being stones prepared beforehand unto a building of God the Father, being carried up to the heights through the engine of Jesus Christ, which is the Cross, using the rope of the Holy Spirit.' *Ad Magn.* c. 13, 'that ye may be prospered . . . in the Son and the Father and the Spirit.' So also *ad Rom.* c. 6, he speaks of 'the passion of my God.'

find traces of false teaching that raised deep theological problems. Questions were asked and could not be checked. 'Why is it right to worship Jesus as Lord and yet refuse to burn incense to the Emperor?' 'If Jesus Christ is God's Son, is he truly God? If so, are there two Gods or one?' Even a child could ask such questions. It was not unreasonable for men who might be called upon to die for their faith at any moment, to wish to be able to give some account of it. Further, not only were such questions as these asked, but explanations were given by individual teachers that the Church felt to be false or inadequate. The Church did not wish to speculate, but in the presence of teaching that denied or explained away the truth that she was commissioned to teach and by whose fulness she lived, she could no longer be silent. Not only the enquiries of religious men but the assertions of 'heretics' compelled the Church to think out her belief and find words in which to express it. Her aim was, in the first instance, practical and religious, not theological. She wished to safeguard her own worship and vitality. So she was always saying 'no' to various explanations which, though plausible and attractive, gained their simplicity at the cost of ignoring or explaining away some of the facts. The human mind naturally dislikes mystery¹ and is attracted to what is simple. But the Church, out of loyalty to the whole truth, had the courage to set aside all such inadequate explanations. Her aim throughout was that the Christian faith in all its mysterious fulness might be handed on undiminished to future generations.

(c) Christianity was born into a world that was full of religion.

(i) There was, of course, Judaism, not only the Judaism of Palestine but the more liberal Judaism of the dispersion, which had gathered around itself in all lands a circle of 'God-fearing' Gentiles, attracted by its strict monotheism and its lofty moral teaching. In this way Jewish ideas of God were spread abroad far more widely than we might have supposed. Outside Jewish influences in the heathen world we may draw a sharp distinction between the religion of the philosophers and the religion of the plain man. Philosophers had attained to the idea of the unity of God, though their God was often regarded as a being unknown and unknowable, far removed from the world of common things. Popular religion interposed between the God of the philosophers and the needs of the ordinary man an indefinite number of divine beings of uncertain status, gods, demi-gods, heroes, spirits and the like, to whom worship was offered and who were supposed to have great influence on worldly affairs. These were real objects of pagan devotion. Further, Greek thought had become largely orientalized. Ideas such as that of the impossibility of a good God having

¹ Cp. Hooker, v. 'The strength of our faith is tried by those things wherein our wits and capacities are not strong. Howbeit because this divine mystery is more true than plain, divers having framed the same to their own conceits and fancies, are found in their expositions thereof more plain than true.'

contact with an evil matter, dominated the theological speculation of the more thoughtful pagans. Yet again the mystery-religions of the East had won their way to popular favour. They offered the hope of immortality and salvation from death to the initiated. This salvation was too often conceived in physical rather than moral terms. Such religions encouraged vague religious emotions divorced from practical holiness. There was no orthodox pagan creed. The various cults lived, on the whole, in friendly terms with one another. The result was a medley of vague and shifting popular theology, with a background of serious and more or less consistent philosophical theory. There were plenty of ideas about God in the air, even if those ideas were not always defined.†

Accordingly the Christian Church had the greatest difficulty in framing a vocabulary in which to express her meaning. She was driven to borrow words and phrases from Jewish and heathen thought, to separate them from vague or popular or pagan senses, and to stamp upon them a new and technical limitation which they were very far from possessing in popular usage. Then she had to bring her teachers to a common agreement to employ them only in this limited sense, at least in all formal definitions of the faith. 'If the church was compelled to devote an infinitely minute and subtle attention to the adaptation and definition of words it was because it had new and high and infinitely important things to express, and had to create, although out of existing materials, a language in which truly and adequately to express them.'¹ This was the source of infinite danger. Christianity had opened a new world of ideas and truths. But the familiarity and associations of the old language tended to disguise the novelty of the ideas and truths that it was being used to convey. Men were tempted to endeavour to make Christ and Christianity fit in with their own current conceptions of religion, not to expand and reform those conceptions in the light of a fuller disclosure of truth. Human nature is always conservative, and in all doctrinal controversy there was the disposition to water down the Christian faith so as to accommodate the facts to the words and not to expand the words so as to embrace the facts. This building up of a Christian terminology by conflict with false teaching was a slow process. We must be prepared to find in earlier writers tentative expressions that a later age would condemn as ambiguous or even heretical. Terms that came in time to be employed only in a limited and technical sense, were at first used with a certain ambiguity. As we follow out the course of controversy through which the formulas of the Church took shape, we shall find abundant illustrations of these difficulties and dangers.

(ii) We can now turn to contemporary Jewish ideas about God. Few to-day would undertake to prove the doctrine of the Trinity from

¹ Du Bose. *Ecumenical Councils*, p. 95. The whole passage pp. 94-95 should be read.

the Old Testament. Since, however, the Jews received a special revelation of God we are not surprised to find that Jewish faith could not rest content in a bare Unitarianism. We find in the Old Testament and in later Jewish theology several lines of thought which pointed towards the recognition of distinctions within the Divine Being. (a) In opposition to surrounding polytheism, the Jews laid stress on the Unity and transcendence of God. Hence the need was felt of some link between God and the created world. The idea of God's 'word', as the creative or self-revealing utterance of God, started from such passages as 'By the word of the Lord were the Heavens made' (Ps 33⁶) and 'God sent his word and healed them' (Ps 107²⁰, cp. 147¹⁵). Again, the special revelation given to the prophets is called God's 'word'. 'The word of the Lord came' (Joel 1¹, etc.). 'The word which Isaiah saw' (Is 2¹). God's word came to be regarded as a manifestation of God, yet distinct from Him. It is His effective utterance by which He creates the world, directs history, and reveals Himself; it is the active expression of His mind and will in and to His creation. A kindred idea is found in the mention of 'the Angel of Jehovah' and the 'Angel of the Covenant', who appear to be both identified with and distinguished from Jehovah (e.g. Gen 16 compared with 16¹³, Hos 12⁴⁻⁵, Jos 5¹⁴⁻¹⁵ compared with 6², Mal 3¹).¹ So, too, God's 'Name', i.e. God's self-revelation, is almost personified (e.g. Ex 23²¹, Is 30²⁷). God's 'Presence' (Deut 4³⁷, cp. Is 63⁹) and God's 'Glory' (Ex 33¹⁸ compared with v. 20, 1 K 8¹¹, cp. Jas 2¹, where Jesus Christ is called 'the Glory') are all in some way viewed as manifestations of God, yet distinct from Him. In such ways as these Hebrew thinkers strove to combine the transcendence of God with His activity in the created world. They represented His self-revelation as mediated by an Agent, who was viewed as more or less personal and yet divine.

In the Wisdom Literature the 'Word', though still in evidence (Wisdom 9¹⁻², 18¹⁵ ff.) tends to give place to the conception of the divine 'wisdom'. In Prov 8²² wisdom is pictured as dwelling with God from eternity (cp. Wisdom 8³⁻⁵, 9⁹ ff., and Eccles 24¹ ff. where wisdom is identified with the Law). The idea is of God's thought or plan. As the plan of a work of art exists in the artist's mind before he realizes it in his work, so the rational principle of the world existed in the thought of God before it proceeded forth to be actualized in creation. Similarly, in Alexandrian Judaism the 'Word' acquires something of the meaning of the Greek term *logos*, which connotes not only 'significant utterance' but also 'reason', 'principle', 'thought'. In Philo, the Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, in the first century A.D., the Logos is the Divine Reason issuing forth from God for purposes of creation. The Logos is not strictly personal, but on the way to becoming so. Through the Logos God comes into con-

¹ Up to the time of S. Augustine the Fathers universally identified the Angel of the Lord with the Second Person of the Trinity.

tact with the world: its presence is to be seen in the order and system of creation and in the moral and religious life of mankind.¹

At this point Jewish and Gentile thought meet. Alexandrian Judaism was strongly influenced by Greek philosophy. The idea of the Logos or reason of God permeating all things and constituting the rational unity of all life, was common to much of the higher thought of the day. In the Stoic philosophy, which came to be the religion of most educated men, the life and unity of the world was derived from the *σπερματικός λόγος*, the 'generative reason', whence all things came and in virtue of which they lived. Stoicism was pantheistic. God and man were akin because they both shared the divine Reason and in so far as men conformed their conduct to the divine Reason they shared the life of God Himself. The Stoics in reality had no personal God. If they tolerated the belief in the many gods of the traditional faith, they viewed them as like themselves, manifestations of the 'generative reason'.

(β) We find also in the Old Testament the idea of the 'Spirit of God'. The Hebrew word like the Greek *πνεῦμα* embraces many shades of meaning, 'breath,' 'wind,' 'life,' 'spirit.' Its exact shade of meaning in any particular instance is not always easy to discover. As in man 'breath' is the proof of life, so the 'breath' or the 'spirit' came to stand for the 'life'. By a natural analogy any unusual exhibition of power from the strength of Samson (Judg 14¹⁹) or the skill of Bezaleel (Ex 36¹) to the insight of the prophets came to be attributed to the presence of the Spirit of God. It is an almost physical conception. 'The Spirit of God is the vital energy of the divine nature, corresponding to the higher vitality of man.' 'The breath of God vitalizes what the Word creates'² (e.g. Gen 1). To a limited extent personal qualities and acts are attributed to the Spirit, since the Spirit is God (Is 63⁹⁻¹⁰, 48¹⁶). 'It is the living energy of a Personal God.' In Wisdom 1⁵ it is identified with the divine Wisdom. We cannot say more than that the conception of the Spirit of God paved the way for the thought of personal distinctions within the Being of God.^{3†}

(d) In stating her faith the Church tried as far as possible to employ the language of Scripture. The language and thought of the New Testament is dominated throughout by the historical facts of the human life of Jesus Christ. He lived above all as the 'Son' of God. He spoke of the 'Father' who sent Him, and revealed the Father through a perfect life of sonship. He also spoke of the 'Spirit' of God whom He would send. Thus the terms 'Father, Son and Holy Spirit'

¹ In Philo the Logos is styled 'the image of God', 'the elder son of God' (the universe being God's younger son), 'the high-priest of the universe,' etc. Philo would have agreed with the prologue to S. John's Gospel, as far as the statement 'the Word was made flesh'.

² Swete, *H. D. B.* vol. ii. p. 403.

³ It is usually agreed that apart from the historical facts of the Incarnation, we could not distinguish between the activity of the Word and the Spirit.

refer primarily to the manifestation of God through the life of Jesus Christ.¹ So, too, the Church came to speak of the Son as 'begotten' of the Father, and the Holy Spirit as 'proceeding from' the Father, because that is the language of Scripture, shaped by the outward events and consequences of the Incarnation. To use a technical phrase, all such expressions refer in the first instance to the 'Economic Trinity', i.e. the Trinity as revealed by God's threefold dealing with men. God had made Himself known through the life of Christ and the coming of the Spirit as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier.

But even within the New Testament Christians had begun to think out the relation of Jesus of Nazareth to all history and all existence. To call Him the 'Christ' was to find a place for Him within the eternal purposes of God. To some extent, at least, Jewish thought had come to regard the Messiah as existing from all eternity with God, waiting to be revealed in His own time.² But for the Gentile world the title Christ had no interest. Its value needed to be translated into other terms. As the missions of the Church extended, one wider and more universal designation had to be found to express all that Jesus Christ was felt to be not only for the Jews but for the whole world. Accordingly by S. John He is identified with the Logos, the Word or Reason of God. He had revealed to those who knew Him the meaning of all life and all existence. And this identification had been anticipated by S. Paul. In a passage such as Col 1¹⁵⁻¹⁶, though he does not use the term Logos, he attributes to Christ just that central position in the divine economy that Jewish and Gentile thought assigned to the Logos. By this identification the supreme claims of Christ were made intelligible to the educated world. But even so the Christian Church never allowed herself to lose sight of the living Personality of the Saviour. The centre of her devotion and her penitence was always the historic figure of Christ crucified.

So, even within the New Testament the Church was advancing in her belief from the 'Economic' to the 'Essential' Trinity. That is, she was coming to see that the threefold revelation of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit rested upon and pointed back to a threefold distinction within the very being of God. About the 'Essential' Trinity, the relations of the Three Persons as they are to one another in the eternal life of God, Scripture says very little. Human language and thought can deal only in a limited way with such a subject. The terms Father and Son, for instance, which were borrowed from temporal and human relationships, must clearly be used with caution. We need great care in applying any words spoken by our Lord in His earthly life, through human lips, to the Essential Trinity. The Essential

¹ This explains the mention of only two Persons in almost all apostolic salutations. They are not maimed Trinitarian formulas. Rather the writers have in mind not the doctrine of the Trinity as such, but the revelation of God as Incarnate. See Moberly, *Atonement and Personality*, pp. 188-193.

² Cp. 1 Enoch 48²⁻⁷ and 62²⁻³.

Trinity, however, is clearly implied in Jn 1¹. (Cp. also Jn 17⁵.) It is also hinted at in Mt 11²⁷ and Lk 10²², where the Son's knowledge of the Father depends on a previously existing Sonship, not the Sonship on the knowledge.

As we shall see, the very ambiguity of these terms 'Son', 'Word', 'Spirit', was the cause of much confusion of thought. The Church in using them gave them a special sense. But Jewish and Gentile Christians were in danger of continuing to use them in their old sense and carrying with them ideas of God which fell short of Christian truth.

(e) We may now turn to the attempts made to explain the fact of Christ, which the Church rejected as inadequate or untrue.

(i) First in time comes the tendency known as 'Ebionism'.¹ The term is vague and covers many shades of belief. Ebionites were those who endeavoured to interpret Jesus Christ in the light of previous Jewish ideas about God and redemption. The Jewish mind was dominated by two great conceptions, first the transcendence of God, secondly the final and unchangeable character of the Law, given by God Himself, through obedience to which salvation could be obtained. Starting from the former conception the Ebionites regarded the idea of a real Incarnation as blasphemous. It was unthinkable that the high and holy God could degrade Himself by appearing in human form on earth. Further, to suppose that Jesus Christ was God endangered the unity of God. No, Jesus of Nazareth must be a man pre-eminent for holiness, who was chosen to be Messiah because of his faithful observance of the Law and was raised from the dead.² Again, if salvation could be gained by the observance of the Law, there was no need of a Saviour. Jesus Christ could be at most a new prophet or law-giver, a second Moses, sent not to supersede but to fulfil and elucidate the Law. Christians were to obtain salvation by a right observance of the Law as interpreted by Him. For this purpose a uniquely inspired prophet was all that was required. Enough has been said to show that Ebionism was an attempt to explain the facts in the light of *a priori* Jewish ideas. Ebionites refused to enlarge their ideas of God and redemption in the light of a fuller revelation. They desired to reduce Christ and the Christian revelation to terms acceptable to the Jewish mind, and to interpret Christianity by Judaism, not Judaism by Christianity. This tendency underlay the controversy about the keeping of the Law and the admission of Gentiles. The infant Church at Jerusalem began as a sect within Judaism. The full import of the claims and work of Christ was realized only by degrees.

¹ The name is probably derived from a word meaning 'poor'. The Ebionites identified themselves with the 'poor' and meek who were persecuted by the wicked rich. Others, less probably, derive the name from one Ebion, the reputed founder of the heresy. Others suppose it to have originated as a title of contempt bestowed on the first Jewish Christians.

² As we might expect, some, but not all, Ebionites denied the Virgin-birth.

Through controversy the distinction between Judaism and Christianity was made apparent,¹ and it became clear that Jesus Christ was too great to be confined within Jewish categories.†

(ii) *Docetism*.—If Ebionism stands for the attempt to find a place for Jesus Christ within Judaism, Docetism stands for the attempt to find a place for Him within the circle of current Gentile ideas about God, the world and redemption. Its root is to be found in the dualism that characterized so much of the Greek and Oriental thought of the day. In the attempt to explain the pain and suffering of the world, men had come to find the origin of evil in matter, which was imperfectly subdued to the will of God. Hence, all that was material possessed an inherent taint of evil. Now, if God is good and matter evil, a real Incarnation is unthinkable. The good God could never pollute Himself by entering into union with matter. Men needed rather a Saviour who would free them from bondage to matter. So the physical side of our Lord's life, His birth, His eating and drinking, His passion, death and Resurrection must all be only an 'appearance' (*δοκεῖν*—hence 'Docetism'). His Body itself must be only a phantom, like the bodies of angels when they appeared to men (e.g. Tobit 12¹⁹). Again, the Greek mind always tended to identify salvation with enlightenment. If men only need one who will enlighten them by revealing the truth about God and themselves, a Docetic Christ would answer all requirements. Docetism can supply a picture of God and redemption. If Christianity is only a religion of ideas, an apparent Incarnation would serve to disclose them to men, as well as a real Incarnation. Docetism was a tendency rather than a system. Docetists varied in the extent to which they allowed their ideas to dominate their teaching. Within the New Testament we find evidence for the existence of Docetism. 1 Jn 1¹⁻⁴, 4¹⁻³ and 2 Jn 7 are aimed at those who denied that Jesus Christ had 'come in the flesh'. The letters of Ignatius are full of denunciations of this heresy.² The Church felt that it undermined the historical character of her Saviour.

Both Ebionism and Docetism spring from ideas about the nature of God. Hence their place is in any discussion about the doctrine of the Trinity rather than that of the Person of Christ. If they were accepted, the need of any restatement of the doctrine of God disappeared. The question before the Church was this, Are we to take existing ideas about God and God's relation to the world and make the new facts square with them as best they may? Or are we to accept

¹ Attempts have been made to represent Ebionism as the original Christianity unspoilt by the teaching of S. Paul. It is rather a degenerate form of primitive Christianity. The Ebionites refused to advance to the full Catholic view of our Lord's Person and so they tended to sink below the primitive conception of Christ. We must not suppose, however, that all Jewish Christians were unorthodox. Many went no further than to combine Christianity with the keeping of the Jewish Law. Such a compromise could not last, though Jewish Christians of this kind are mentioned as late as the fourth century. Others combined Ebionite with Gnostic and Docetic teaching.

² See e.g. *ad Smyrn.* c. ii-iii, *ad Trall.* c. ix-x., with Lightfoot's notes.

and face the new facts and, if necessary, enlarge our ideas about God in the light of this wider knowledge?¹†

(iii) The tendencies of thought disclosed in Ebionism and Docetism underlay all the many false explanations, in conflict with which the doctrine of the Trinity was developed. In opposition to Gnosticism which interposed a large number of Emanations between God and the world, Christians were compelled to insist on the unity or 'Monarchia' of God, the Creator and sustainer of all things. The question then arose: What position is to be given to Jesus Christ? Under the influence of a conception of the Unity of God that was borrowed from Judaism or Gentile philosophy attempts were made to safeguard the unity of God either by denying the full divinity of Christ or by identifying Him with the Father. So we find two types of answer (a) 'Dynamic' Monarchianism, (b) 'Modal' Monarchianism. (a) Dynamic or Ebionite Monarchianism gave practically the answer of the Ebionites. Jesus Christ was a mere man (*ψιλὸς ἄνθρωπος*). From His birth or baptism a divine Logos, i.e. influence or power, resided in Him. As a reward of His moral excellence and unity of will with God, He was raised to divine honour. This was taught at Rome by two teachers of the name of Theodotus, by Artemon and above all by Paul of Samosata. Such views had few attractions for Christians. They destroyed any real Incarnation and were hardly consistent with the power of Christ in their own lives.

(b) 'Modal' Monarchianism (sometimes known as Sabellianism²) made a different approach. It originated in Asia Minor and appeared in Rome at the end of the second century. Taking as its fundamental principles the unity of God and the deity of Christ, it refused to allow any personal distinction between the Father and the Son. God is one and Christ is God. God when He so willed became the incarnate Son and suffered and died. Christ is the Father incarnate. The doctrine in this form appealed to deep Christian instincts and was welcomed by many simple Christians. In opposition to some contemporary tendencies to think of Christ as a second and subordinate God, Modalism asserted His unqualified deity. Its emphasis on the

¹ We may pass over the strange speculations, many of them akin to Ebionism or Docetism or both, which are grouped under the name of Gnosticism. They were for the most part Oriental speculations, antecedent in time to Christianity, which did not profess to start from the Christian revelation so much as to find room for it within their own schemes of the world. For an account of Gnosticism see Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, I, c. iv, and K. E. Kirk, *The Vision of God* (full edition), Lect. iv.

² Sabellius was one of the Modalist teachers in Rome about A.D. 220 and was the only one to be excommunicated by the Roman Bishop. Contemporary evidence suggests that, like the other Modalists of that time, he taught the personal identity of the Father and the Son. Perhaps it was because he had been excommunicated at Rome that in the fourth century more elaborate forms of Trinitarian doctrine, which it was desired to brand as heresies denying the distinction of the Persons, were attached to his name. There is no evidence that Sabellius himself made a special use of the term *prosopon*.

unity of God was fully justified by Scripture and by the constant teaching of the Church in conflict with paganism. The doctrine in fact represented certain profound Christian convictions and a refusal to think about them.¹ It was rightly felt to be inconsistent with the evidence of the Gospels, for it left no room for the mutual love of Christ and the Father as exhibited in His earthly life, nor for that dependence of the Son upon the Father which is the constant theme of S. John's Gospel.² Moreover, Modalism suggested that the Incarnation was a passing mode of the divine life. The one solitary God whose being was without personal distinctions had no permanent principle of self-communication in Himself. The Incarnation as Son was a phase, and could hardly on the Modalist view be a permanent phase, of the Father's existence. Modalism was the statement of a problem rather than a theologically tolerable doctrine.^{3†}

(iv) But the most powerful heresy in conflict with which the doctrine of the Trinity received its final expression was Arianism. Arius started from a philosophical idea of God that ruled out in advance the possibility of a real incarnation. In common with Judaism and current Greek philosophy he regarded the unity of God in such a way as to exclude all contact between God and the world and all distinctions within the divine unity.⁴ Accordingly, he endeavoured to find a place for Christ outside the being of God, yet above creation. God, he taught, was alone eternal. He could not communicate His own being or substance to any created thing. When He willed to make the world, He begat (*i.e.* created) by an act of will an independent substance (*οὐσία* or *ὑπόστασις*) to be His agent in creation, who is called in Scripture the 'Son' or the 'Word'. As the very name 'Son' suggests, God had not always been a Father, but became such by creating the Son. The Son is not of the same substance as the Father, else there would be two Gods. He is only 'the first of created beings'. As such He can only know the Father relatively, not absolutely. Still, He is not a creature like other creatures. As a rational being He possessed free will. By the grace of God and His own moral effort He so used it as to become divine. We can speak of Him as 'God only begotten'. At the Incarnation He took a human body but not a human soul. The Holy Spirit bears the same relation to the Son as the Son does to

¹ The evidence of Tertullian, *Adv. Praxean*, and Hippolytus, *Refutatio* (Bks. 9 and 10 on Callistus) shows that Modalism under the pressure of controversy developed a slightly more elaborate theory, viz., that in the historical Christ the deity is the Father and the humanity is the Son.

² It was this Gospel which supplied some of the Modalist proof-texts, 'I and my Father are one', 'he that hath seen me hath seen the Father'. See Tertullian *op. cit.*

³ In the West Modalists were often known as 'Patripassians' because they 'made the Father suffer'.

⁴ Arius belonged to the school of Lucian of Antioch, which may have been affected by the 'dynamic Monarchianism' of Paul of Samosata, who in turn was influenced by the Jewish idea of a 'baldly transcendent God'. But the main root of Arianism seems to have been in the 'subordinationist' tendencies of Origen's theology.

the Father. Arius' method throughout is based on the teaching of pagan philosophy. His object was to present Christianity in such a way as to make it acceptable to men who retained pagan ideas about God and life. The Arian Christ was a heathen demi-god bridging the gulf between the unknowable God of heathen philosophy and the world.

Arianism never really commended itself to the conscience of the Church. If Arian views won a temporary acceptance, it was because they were not understood. Arianism was essentially a novel exposition unknown to Scripture and tradition. It might be buttressed up by texts of Scripture isolated from their context, but its true origin lay outside Christianity altogether. It was an attempt to find a place for Christ in pagan philosophy. Arianism contradicts the elementary facts of Christian life and experience.

The Church has always worshipped Christ. If He is not truly God, that is idolatry. The distinction between God and the loftiest of created beings is infinite. Arianism is really polytheism. To yield to the Arian Christ that faith and worship that are due to God alone is blasphemy. Further, if Christ is not divine, to offer Him worship is not to honour Him but to act contrary to His own teaching. He always rejected unreal devotion. Again, as S. Athanasius saw, Arianism destroys the basis of redemption: The Arian Christ can be no true mediator between God and man, because He Himself is neither. Since He is unable to know the Father Himself, He cannot reveal Him to others. As a creature, He cannot be a source of divine light or life.¹ God remains unknown and man unredeemed. The opposition to Arianism was not due to love of argument nor even to a desire for theological accuracy. Its opponents saw that Arius sacrificed the revelation of the self-imparting love of God that met the needs of the human soul, to an un-Christian notion of God carried over from heathenism. The chief value of Arianism was that it compelled the Church to become conscious of her real belief and so to frame the doctrine of the Trinity as to find a place for Jesus Christ within the eternal being of God.^{2†}

(f) We can now turn to the language in which the Church came to express the doctrine of the Trinity.

(i) The earliest technical term to appear is 'Trinity'. Theophilus of Antioch (180) used *τριάς* in speaking of God, His Word and His

¹ Contrast the saying of Athanasius, 'He was God and then was made man that we might be made God' (*Or. c. Ar. i. § 39*). His idea always is that to partake of the Son is to partake of God Himself. Athanasius' God, unlike Arius', did not hold Himself aloof from a perishing world. For his own view of salvation see his earlier tract 'On the Incarnation of the Word of God'.

² Arianism reappeared in the eighteenth century. Then, as in former days, it could not maintain itself. Arians were compelled by the irresistible logic of facts either to advance to a full belief in our Lord's Divinity or to descend to a purely human Christ. The point at issue between the Arian and Catholic view of Christ is well expressed in the famous question put to the Arian Dr Clarke 'Could God the Father annihilate God the Son?'

Wisdom. The Latin *Trinitas* is found a few years later in Tertullian and was commonly employed afterwards. Tertullian also was the first to use the terms *Una substantia* and *Tres Personae*. He employed the term 'substance' in a sense based on its philosophical use.¹ It meant for him a distinct existence, a real entity. It was that which underlies things and makes them what they are. It goes deeper than 'natura' which denotes only the sum-total of a thing's properties. Thus *Una Substantia* asserts in uncompromising fashion the unity of God. The term 'persona' was borrowed primarily from its grammatical use. He employed it in the sense in which we speak of first, second and third persons in the conjugation of a verb. This use was based on texts where he regarded the Persons of the Trinity as holding converse with one another or speaking in reference to one another. While he freely used the singular *persona*, he preferred the vaguer 'tres' where possible but in opposing Modalism was driven to say *Tres Personae*.² These terms commended themselves to the Western Church. During the Arian controversy the West was strongly Nicene, largely because it had already been provided with language in which to express the relations of the 'One' and the 'Three'.³

In the East agreement was less quickly reached. Only at the close of the Arian controversy was the use and meaning of *μία οὐσία* for the One, and *τρεις ὑποστάσεις* for the 'Three' fixed by general consent. When the Church rejected Arianism at the Council of Nicaea, in order to rule out all Arian attempts whatever to find a place for Christ outside the essential being of God, the word *ἁμοούσιος* was introduced into the Creed. The Son was said to be *ἁμοούσιος τῷ πατρὶ* and *ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς*. The opposition to *ἁμοούσιος* was due partly to reluctance to go outside the words of Scripture, partly to the fact that the word had already been used in a bad sense by heretics.⁴

¹ See Bethune Baker, *The Meaning of Homoousios* (Cambridge Texts and Studies), p. 15 ff.

² He speaks of our Lord as one 'persona', combining in Himself two 'substantiae', i.e. Godhood and manhood (*Adv. Praxeam*, c. 29). He writes, e.g. 'The mystery of the providential order which arranges the Unity in a Trinity, setting in their order three—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three, however, not in condition but in relation, and not in substance but in mode of existence, and not in power, but in special characteristics' (c. 2). But in c. 26 he is compelled to write, 'Ter ad singula nomina in personas singulas tinguimur.'

³ See *Adv. Praxeam*, cc. 11–12. Some have argued that this use of these terms is primarily legal. *Substantia* in Roman law meant a property which could be shared by several parties. *Persona* meant a 'party' whose existence was recognized at law. The legal sense of these terms may have assisted their use but was hardly primary. Tertullian does indeed, speak of the Father as the 'whole substance' and the Son as 'the portion' (*portio*) of the whole. This is the result of his materialism. He is laying stress on the distinction between the Persons and the full Godhead of the Son. In his writings first appear the physical illustrations of the Trinity. The Father is to the Son and the Spirit like the sun to its rays that issue from it and the light that falls upon us. Or again, the three are like the spring, the pool, and the river that issues from it.

⁴ Its opponents at Nicaea failed to see that a philosophical question can only be met by a philosophical answer. 'Consubstantial is but the assertion of the real deity of

But in time even the most conservative theologians came to see that error could be ruled out in no other way. The Arians evaded the meaning of all phrases from Scripture. At the same time it was made clear that the Council added no new fact to the Creed: this new term did but compress the true meaning of Scripture into a single decisive word. In the long controversy that followed Nicaea, the two terms *οὐσία* and *ὑπόστασις* came to be adopted in a technical sense by the Church to formulate her teaching.

In current language *οὐσία* meant one of two things. Either it meant a common essence of being, shared by a class of things: a universal, by ceasing to share in which they would cease to be the thing at all. In this sense the *οὐσία* of God is Godhead. Or it meant a particular or individual existence, 'a being', as in the phrase 'a human being'. Thus its use was not free from ambiguity.¹

ὑπόστασις was a less common word and originally was a synonym for *οὐσία*, the underlying essence of a class of things. As such, it was the exact equivalent of the Latin *substantia*, but it could also mean the abiding reality of a thing that persisted in spite of the variety of actions that the thing might perform or the various experiences it might undergo. Thus in the case of a person it fairly corresponded to the individuality that lasts through and holds together all our experiences. It was used in the earlier sense by Arius, Athanasius in his earlier writings, and even by one of the anathemas appended to the Creed of Nicaea. But it was the second sense that came to prevail in the formulas of the Church.

This ambiguity of language led to confusion. Those who used *ὑπόστασις* as a synonym for *οὐσία* and spoke of *μία ὑπόστασις* seemed Sabellians to those who distinguished between the two terms. Conversely, those who distinguished between them and spoke of *τρεις ὑποστάσεις* seemed tritheists or Arians to those who regarded the two terms as synonymous. But at the Council of Alexandria (362) under the leadership of Athanasius a reconciliation between the two usages was initiated. The orthodoxy of *τρεις ὑποστάσεις* was recognized, but the older use of *ὑπόστασις* (= *οὐσία*) was also approved. Gradually, owing largely to the influence of the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil, and the two Gregories, the usage of the Church settled down to the formula, *μία οὐσία, τρεις ὑποστάσεις*. The West retained *Una substantia, Tres Personae*.²

So it comes that in English we speak about 'Three Persons in One Substance', a literal translation of the Latin. The English terms are Christ in terms of the philosophy by which it had been denied' (Mackintosh, *Person of Christ*, p. 188).

¹ Origen clearly used it in both senses. He spoke of the Son as *κατ' οὐσίαν θεός* (perhaps he even used the word *ἁμοούσιος*). But elsewhere he speaks of Him as *ἕτερος κατ' οὐσίαν τοῦ πατρὸς*, using *οὐσία* almost in the sense of 'individuality'. It was partly this second meaning of *οὐσία* that laid *ἁμοούσιος* open to the charge of 'Sabellianism'.

² Certain Western writers did attempt to speak of *Una Essentia, Tres Substantiae*, but the attempt entirely failed.

not altogether happy. They convey false associations that are absent from the Greek. In Greek both *οὐσία* and *ὑπόστασις* define as little as possible where the minimum of definition is desirable. The Latin *personae*, especially in its legal usage, and still more the English 'Persons', convey an idea of separateness that is happily absent from *ὑποστάσεις*. Owing to the fact that human persons walk about in bodies divided by space, it is hard to free our imagination from the idea of separation in connexion with 'Person'. So, too, 'substance'¹ to our ears suggests the occupation of space. The terms need explanation. The Church uses them in her own sense, and before they can reasonably be criticized it is necessary to find out what that sense is. †

(ii) In thinking of the Trinity we must bear in mind three great considerations.

(a) All theologians confess that the best language that can be found is inadequate. The Church only uses these words, because she cannot escape. 'When it is asked what are the three, human speech labours indeed under great poverty of expression. However, we speak of Three Persons not that that might be spoken, but lest nothing should be said.'² The Fathers are full of similar confessions of the inadequacy of human language. The Church does not claim to be able to define or explain all that Godhead means. All that is taught is that whatever Godhead means, all three Persons equally possess it. For instance, in the Athanasian creed this truth is illustrated by applying various epithets to all three Persons and insisting that they belong to all three alike.

(β) There is what is called the 'Monarchia' of the Father. The Father is not more divine than the Son, but He is the Father. The Father depends on Himself alone for His Godhead. He is *ὁ θεός*. The Son eternally derives His Godhead from the Father (cp. *θεός ἐκ θεοῦ*). He is the Word or self-expression of the Father, and therefore eternally dependent upon Him. So, too, the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son. Thus the distinction between the Three Persons rests upon the different manner in which they possess the one Godhead. From the time of Tertullian various illustrations have been drawn to explain the Trinity. It was left to S. Augustine to introduce psychological analogies and find images for the complexity of the Being of God in the complexity of the life of our own being, e.g. memory, reason and will, or 'I exist, I am conscious that I exist, I love the existence and the consciousness.' Such illustrations must not be pressed, but they serve to show that the unity even of the human personality is not a bare unity but one embracing distinctions.

(γ) There is the doctrine of the *περιχώρησις* or 'coinherence' of the

¹ Because 'substance' is a familiar English word, the man in the street thinks he knows what it means when it is used in theology. It is perhaps a pity that some long and obviously technical term is not used.

² S. Augustine, *De Trin.* v. 9.

Three Persons. This corrects the excessive idea of separation involved by the term 'Person'. The Three so indwell in one another (cp. Jn 14¹⁰⁻¹¹, 17²¹, 1 Cor 2¹¹) that where One is, All are, where One works, All work, where One wills, All will. They are distinct but not separate. A right observance of this truth saves us from falling into Tritheism.

(g) The doctrine of the Trinity is based on fact and experience, not on speculation. But we shall expect that if it is based on a real self-revelation of God, it will recommend itself to our minds. We cannot say that reason could discover it or even prove it. But the Christian doctrine of the Unity in Trinity is really far more illuminating to our thought than a barren Unitarianism.

(i) It is almost impossible to conceive of God as personal at all if He is a bare Unity. In ourselves personality involves thought, will and love. Thought implies an object. A mind without an object of thought would be a mere blank. It is hard to see how the Unitarian God could possess consciousness apart from the world. The difficulty is no new one. Aristotle, for instance, raises the question 'what does God contemplate?' and concludes that in His eternal life God is His own object of contemplation (*νοεῖ ἑαυτόν*). Does not this involve something like distinctions within the Being of God? The highest type of knowledge is the knowledge of a Person.

(ii) When we turn to will the force of the argument is increased. Will necessitates an object on which it can act. At its highest will is realized in its influence on another will. How then could God realize His will apart from some eternal object on which to realize it?

(iii) When we come to love, the idea of a unipersonal God is seen to be even less tenable. If 'God is love', not simply 'God is able to love', then from all eternity God must have had an object of love. Love in any true sense of the word can only exist where there is an object able to receive and return the love. The doctrine of the Trinity renders conceivable the existence of what corresponds in human experience to knowledge, will and love within the eternal Being of God. Otherwise it is hard to see how we can avoid the conclusion that God is dependent upon the created world for the realization of His Personality.

Once again the doctrine of the Trinity makes the thought of creation easier. God from all eternity possessed within Himself a real activity. The Word from all eternity responds to the Father's love. As the indwelling source of the order and unity of the world (Col 1¹⁶⁻¹⁷) He leads the world to respond to the Father also. 'The world', it has been said, 'is the poem of the Word to the glory of the Father.' Unless we recognize real distinctions within the divine life, it is almost impossible to avoid falling into either Deism or Pantheism. The Doctrine of the Trinity combines and harmonizes the truth that is expressed one-sidedly in each of these two theories. 'It can explain how God became a Creator in time because it knows how creation

had its analogies in the uncreated nature; it was God's nature eternally to produce, to communicate itself, to live. It can explain how God can be eternally alive and yet in complete independence of the world which He created, because God's unique eternal being is no solitary and monotonous existence; it includes in itself the fulness of fellowship, the society of Father, Son and Spirit.¹

Lastly, we must always remember that the Being of God is a mystery. We are bidden to 'worship', not to understand 'the Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity'. Whenever the mind comes into contact with reality it is baffled by a sense of mystery. Much more must it be so when it comes into contact with God, the ultimate reality.² We are learning ever more the mysterious depths of our own personalities. Far more wonderful must be the Tri-personality of God.†

Note on Natural and Revealed Knowledge of God.—During the present century a revival of classical Reformation theology, associated particularly with the name of Karl Barth, has brought into prominence the question of the nature of revelation. Is anything which the Christian can recognize as knowledge of God derivable from any source but the specific action of God in Christ and the preparatory divine action in the history of Israel which preceded it? Or can the existence of God, and perhaps something of His attributes and mode of operation in the world, be discerned by rational reflection upon what is given in the natural order, apart from the Biblical revelation? The Barthian school would argue (1) that apart from the free grace of revelation fallen man cannot either reach or anticipate a true knowledge of God, (2) that the conclusions of rational or natural theology are either based on invalid reasoning or else are irrelevant to Christian faith, (3) that to admit a natural knowledge of God as a foundation or supplement to revealed knowledge deposes Christ from His supreme place as Redeemer and Revealing Word of God to sinful and self-reliant man. On the other side it is argued (1) that man's intellect, admittedly able to reach truth in some spheres, cannot be denied *a priori* the possibility of discovering some knowledge of the Creator through His creation, (2) that only the attempt to construct rational theology can show what valid results it can

¹ Gore, *Bampton Lect.* V. end.

² 'What is real is always mysterious, just because what is real is always imperfectly known. What is clear and simple is not reality, but the conceptions of our minds. Take, for example, a straight line as Euclid defines it. The straight line is simply a mental conception—there are no straight lines in nature—and therefore it presents no difficulty. Define it as Euclid does and you can know about it all that there is to be known. Now contrast with that straight line the very smallest beetle. The beetle is a humble portion of reality; the beetle is really there; and therefore you can spend a lifetime in the scientific study of the beetle and know him but imperfectly at the end of it. Take another example. How comparatively easy it is to understand the characters in fiction and how difficult it is to understand the people whom we meet every day. . . . That is because the characters in fiction are creations of the mind, while our relatives are real'—(Goudge, *Cathedral Sermons*, pp. 72–73).

reach, and that any such results cannot be ignored by the Christian theologian, (3) that the Biblical revelation did in fact pre-suppose some knowledge of God, could not have been communicated unless such knowledge had been present, and cannot be expounded theologically without the use of some of the 'rational' principles (*e.g.* that of analogy) which form part of the method of natural theology.

Three brief comments only can be made on this controversy here. First, the discussion has drawn fresh attention to the supernatural character of revelation in all its aspects. Thus it has challenged views which too easily minimize the distinction between truths of natural reason and truths of revelation ('All knowledge of God is in some sense revealed, and revealed truth is rational'). The 'particularity' of the Gospel, *e.g.* the Incarnation of God at a particular time and place, in a particular historical person, takes it out of the realm of rational speculation. It must be the object of *faith*, and this corresponds to its character as given by the divine action. Secondly, natural theology has in some of its exponents in the past claimed a power of demonstrative *proof* and an extent in the range of its conclusions which the arguments employed did not warrant. The present intellectual and moral confusion of man both emphasizes the need for 'revelation', and also puts special difficulties in the way of the construction of a natural theology. Thirdly, the conviction that the natural reason is one source (though limited) of our knowledge of God is deeply rooted in our tradition and will not easily be abandoned by Anglican theologians generally. The Bible itself (*e.g.* Rom 1²⁰, Acts 14¹⁷) suggests that the creation bears intelligible witness to its Creator apart from historical revelation. Much that is characteristic of our tradition is summarized in the following words of a modern Anglican theologian. 'Faith and reason, theology and divine revelation are organically continuous with each other. Just as natural religion requires faith in reason as a God-given guide and instrument, if it is to have the courage and confidence to affirm its conclusions, so faith in revealed religion requires the aid and co-operation of reason if it is to understand and communicate itself.' (J. V. Langmead Casserley, *The Retreat from Christianity*, p. 43.)†