

**INTRODUCTION TO  
DOGMATIC THEOLOGY**  
on the Basis of  
The Thirty-Nine Articles

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## FOREWORD

I HAVE heard with great thankfulness of the Publisher's decision to issue a new edition of Litton's *Introduction to Dogmatic Theology*. It is a work which ought to be in the hands of every one who is engaged in preparing either others or himself for the pastoral office. To say that it is the product of ripe scholarship would sound impertinent in the ears of those who know anything about Litton and his writings : but there is another merit to which I can refer more freely, and that is, that the work is true to its name ; it is a treatise on dogmatic theology : it is free from the limitations to which commentaries on the Thirty-nine Articles are necessarily subject : it is a comprehensive, balanced, thorough treatment of dogmatic theology from the standpoint of a loyal son of the Church of England.

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS ON THE STUDY OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

THERE seem to be two tendencies at work among us in the study of Dogmatic Theology which are in distinct opposition to one another. On the one hand, we may notice an increasing number of books which offer to give a more or less complete account of Christian theology, and which present, in fact, a dogmatic system. They may not pretend to be more than sketches of a vast subject, but, still, they aim at being systematic sketches; and the Church is thus credited with a peculiar dogmatic system of its own, in which every doctrine has its fixed place, and by the standard of which each must be judged. It is a sort of system of theological law, of which the Church is regarded as the guardian and the master. Accordingly, we are taught to look up with a great deal of submission to a class of persons who are specially known as theologians, and who, like the inner world of lawyers, are supposed to have the key to theological arguments in a manner which is beyond the capacities of less specially-trained minds. But while the dogmatic aspect of theology is thus being reasserted among us, there is another powerful tendency which is adverse, if not to dogmatic methods in general, yet at least to any such dogmatic system as that of the Mediæval Church, or to such systems as the school of thought just mentioned would revive among ourselves. A conspicuous example may be taken from the well-known Berlin Professor, Dr. Harnack, who tells us, in his *Outlines of the History of Dogma*, (§ I., 10)<sup>1</sup> that the object of such a history is to get rid of dogma altogether. 'By laying before us,' he says, 'the process of the origin and development of dogma, it offers the most appropriate means for delivering the Church from dogmatic Christianity.' He adds, indeed, that 'it also testifies to the unity of the Christian Faith in the course of its history, since it shows that the central significance of the person of Jesus Christ and the fundamental thoughts of the Gospel have never been lost, and have defied all attacks.' It seems difficult

<sup>1</sup> Dogmengeschichte, von D. Adolf Harnack, in *Grundriss der Theologischen Wissenschaften*, published by J. C. B. Mohr, Freiburg, i. B., Third Edition, 1898.

to understand a 'central significance' and 'fundamental thoughts' which must never be expressed in definite or dogmatic language; but, whatever the inconsistency betrayed in such a statement, the idea in the writer's mind is sufficiently evident. He regards the dogmas which the other school of thought would impose upon us, not as cardinal truths of religion and life, but as fetters, which have been woven by the human mind at various stages of religious life and thought, and which, by the very facts of their development, are shown to possess no permanent truth. Thus, he says, in the same connexion (§ I., 6), that 'the contention of the Churches that dogmas are simply the exposition of the Christian revelation, since they are deduced from Holy Scripture, is not confirmed by historical inquiry. Much rather is it the result of such inquiry that dogmatic Christianity, in its conception and its completion, is a product of the Greek mind, working on the ground of the Gospel.'

Such are the two chief opposing tendencies on this subject which may be observed at the present moment, and they appear to be each exposed to the same danger, and require to be checked by one and the same consideration. The word 'dogma' is here used in the general sense of positive Christian truth, without being restricted to points of doctrine which have received some authoritative decision. In this sense both these schools of thought seem to regard such dogmas or doctrines as definite scientific statements, which lay claim to a sort of completeness, and which, when they have assumed that form, are either to be rigorously insisted upon, as a sort of final law on the subject, or, for that very reason, are to be thrown aside, as fettering the elasticity of truth. The fact, on the contrary, which seems to need, above all things, to be kept in mind, in respect to dogmas and dogmatic statements, is that they are the expressions of just so much of the truth as the human mind and heart for the time being could comprehend; that, consequently, they are never a complete statement of the truth, but that, at the same time, they possess permanent value, as the expression of a real part of truth, of more or less importance, and of more or less enduring authority, according to circumstances. Our position, therefore, with respect to a dogma or dogmatic statement which has received official sanction in the Church should not be to regard it as a final expression of the truth, still less to disparage it as having little value, on the ground of its being only a partial expression. As a partial expression of the truth it possesses a real value, but we must at the same time keep our minds and hearts open to other aspects of the same truth, and to suitable expressions of those aspects.

Let us take as an illustration that great doctrine which writers like

Professor Harnack have more particularly in view, when they speak of the product of the Greek mind working upon the basis, or soil, of the Gospel—the doctrine, namely, of the Trinity, as formulated in the great creeds. It is not only true, but a truism, that the statement of that doctrine, as presented in the formal decisions of the Councils, is cast in the mould of Greek thought. The very words *οὐσία, ὑπόστασις, ὁμοούσιος*, and other technical expressions of the Trinitarian controversy, are, of course, the products of Greek philosophical thought; and though the great word *λόγος* has a Hebrew connexion, yet in the mind of a Father like Origen, and the subsequent Greek Fathers who were so deeply influenced by his thoughts and language, its significance was, no doubt, profoundly coloured by its associations in Greek philosophy. We need not, surely, go to Berlin to discover these plain facts; but are the definitions of the Councils evacuated of all value or permanence by that discovery? The answer to this question depends mainly upon the value you place upon Greek thought and Greek philosophy. If that thought and that philosophy have no permanent value for mankind, then, of course, it is a matter of no importance what is the relation to it of the great truth of the Trinity—or of any great truth, whether religious or moral or historical. But if the Greek mind is but one side of the human mind—a side which may be more prominent and active at one time than at another, but which can never be without importance—then those aspects of the truth of the Trinity which were apprehended by that mind, and were expressed by it, become of permanent value to human thought; and the dogmatic statements which were the result of generations of the thought of that mind, working on the New Testament revelation of the Trinity, remain, under all circumstances, of inestimable value. There have been, perhaps, signs that those statements may prove to be of the highest importance in the presentation of the Christian revelation of God to the Indian mind; and it may possibly prove that, in the struggle of Christianity with the Indian religions, we may see acted again before our eyes the very struggle of the Church of the second and third centuries with Gnosticism and Arianism. Gnosticism, as it is presented in ordinary Church histories, seems a dreary field of wild speculation; but it may be that we now see in India what the victory of Gnosticism really means, and that as Christianized Greek thought repelled Gnosticism from Europe, so now in India that thought is at last entering upon a struggle with Gnosticism triumphant. Let it be granted, then, to men like Harnack that the Nicene Creed and part of the Athanasian are in great measure expressions of the doctrine of the Trinity in terms of Greek thought; but that

does not prevent their being, so far as they go, real expressions of that doctrine, and consequently having a permanent and momentous value.

But, on the other hand, the inference we thus deprecate may usefully warn us not to treat those dogmatic statements respecting the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as if they were an adequate, or even the highest, expression of the truth—as if, in fact, they enshrined it in a sort of sanctuary, within which alone it can be duly viewed. It should never be forgotten that the highest and most perfect statements on all doctrinal truths are in the Scriptures, and the Scriptures alone; and if the value of the doctrinal statements of a particular age, or of a particular mind in the Church, be given an undue prominence, they may actually tend to obscure our apprehension of part of the light which would otherwise pour upon us from Scriptural statements and revelations. There is reason to fear that this has actually been the case in respect to the doctrine of the Trinity. Suspicion, for example, has been thrown upon the genuineness of the baptismal commission of our Lord, recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel, on the ground that the mere fact of its speaking of 'the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,' indicates a post-Apostolic origin. But what is this but to assume, by a strange illustration of the way in which extremes meet, that the whole and sole interpretation of the words 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,' is to be found in the dogmatic decisions of the post-Apostolic Church? It is at least a very curious instance of the manner in which one extreme may play into the hands of another. The profound Scriptural words 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,' have been so much associated by divines with ecclesiastical definitions, so much regarded—to use a common expression—as parts of 'the baptismal formula,' that a Rationalist cannot contemplate them in any other connexion, and concludes that their mere existence in a verse of a Gospel is sufficient to show that that verse cannot have had a primitive origin.

On the contrary, from a historical and unbiassed point of view we may fairly argue to the primitive character of that expression, on the ground that no later writer would have been likely to state the great Name in such simple, human, and unphilosophical terms. The words are instinct with the life of our Lord's actual teaching and actual experience. His own personal life had revealed to His disciples the Father and the Son, and their mutual relations. They had seen Him living continually in a spirit of filial dependence, acknowledging, in every word and deed, a Father from whom He came and to whom He would return, whose will it was His whole mission to fulfil, and whose fatherly relation to men He had come to

reveal. 'This,' He had said, 'is life eternal—that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.' Accordingly, He sums up His work in saying: 'I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world'; and, at an earlier period of His ministry: 'All things are delivered unto Me of My Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son.' This revelation had been made not so much in words as in life. The inner life of the soul of the Saviour had been manifested to His Apostles, and they had seen before their eyes the manifestation of a Divine Father and a Divine Son. Similarly His last teaching had revealed to them the nature and the office of the Holy Spirit, and no words could have been more precious to their memories than those in which He had promised that He would not leave them comfortless, but would come to them in the person of that Spirit, who would speak to them in His own name and His Father's.

The words in question, accordingly, are not a mere 'baptismal formula.' They have behind them the whole substance, the living reminiscences of our Saviour's life and teaching; they stamped upon the minds of the Apostles, in one pregnant phrase, the life that was manifested, which they had seen with their eyes and heard with their ears, and which their hands had handled. There lie depths in those simple personal words, 'the Father, the Son, and the Spirit,' points of deep contact with the human soul, in its natural relationships and its Divine kinship, which are sadly obscured if we allow them to be primarily associated in our thoughts with dogmatic and philosophical definitions of faith. It is for this reason that some, if not many—of whom the present writer must confess himself to be one—regret arrangements in our Church services which throw a too predominantly philosophical colour over this most living and most human, because most Divine, of truths; and he must own also that among the few points in which a devout son of the Church may legitimately desire some alteration in her formularies, not the least important to his mind is the Collect for Trinity Sunday, which, instead of bringing home to us by our Lord's own touching words, respecting the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, this human character of the greatest of all Divine truths, bids the simple Christian to worship what are, after all, the mental abstractions of Trinity and Unity. In a word, we may deprecate Harnack's disparagement of the Greek expression of one aspect of the supreme truth of the Godhead, and yet we may deem it of the highest importance not to allow that dogmatic statement, however admirable, however permanent in value for its own purposes, to narrow our view of the

deeper, the broader, the more living, embodiment of that great truth in the Scriptures themselves.

This affords, in fact, a crucial instance of a cardinal principle to be borne in mind with respect to theological truth—namely, that its due apprehension is never a purely intellectual matter, but is always dependent on moral and religious experience. To a certain extent this is the case with all sciences which deal with external realities, as distinct from purely mental sciences, such as mathematics. A man may go a long way in acquiring a knowledge of astronomy or geology by mere literary study, but he can never fully master what is known of them without personal observation of the facts with which they deal. That observation itself, however, in the case of the natural sciences, is to a large extent mechanical; and a man's success in those sciences, assuming the moral energy necessary for all successful work, is almost entirely a matter of physical and intellectual capacity. But in theology the case is entirely different. There the realities with which a man has to deal are furnished entirely by spiritual experience. Without that experience a man cannot duly apprehend the meaning of the theological terms he is using; still less can he appreciate the practical problems with which theological thought is concerned. What Coleridge has said of moral science is pre-eminently true of theology: 'The postulates of geometry no man can deny; those of moral science are such as no good man will deny.' Perhaps in theology we ought rather to say they are such as no sinful man, conscious of his sinfulness, will deny. The main difficulty consists in the knowledge of our own hearts—of their weakness, their corruption, and at the same time their capacity for Divine love and truth. The primary terms of theology, the very idea of God (if He is considered as more than a mere First Cause), righteousness, sin, law, forgiveness, salvation—these are words of which, if a man is to reason about them with any correctness, he must have learned the real meaning, or something of it, by experience, often a sad and bitter experience; and the meaning of theological dogmas and theological controversies becomes apparent in the light of such experience alone.

It is here, it may be observed in passing, that the essential weakness consists of much of the rationalistic criticism of the Scriptures. It is the criticism of men who are dealing with the mere words of the Scriptures, and who know too little of the realities to which the words refer. One of Luther's finest sayings was written by him on a slip of paper within three days of his death: 'No one can understand Virgil in his *Bucolics* unless he has been five years a shepherd; no one can understand Virgil in his *Georgics* unless he has been five years a



farmer ; no one can thoroughly understand Cicero in his Epistles unless he has been engaged for twenty years in the public affairs of some important State ; and so,' he adds, ' let no one suppose that he has any real taste of the Scriptures unless he has spent a hundred years with Prophets such as Elijah and Elisha, John the Baptist, Christ, and the Apostles, in the government of the Church.' But Mr. Mill or M. Renan can tell you offhand that our Lord's discourses in St. John's Gospel are ' poor stuff of Alexandrian metaphysics,' and the youngest German *privat-docent* can dissect in cold blood an Epistle of St. Paul. The dogmas of theology, however, are the expression of truths which no mere intellectual force, but a deep and varied experience, extending now over many centuries, has extorted from those Scriptures.

This is a point of view which is, happily, being forced upon our attention, and will be forced upon it more and more, by that study of the development of dogma, which we owe mainly to the German theologians of this century. It is a strange thing to reflect that the science of the history of doctrine is little more than a century old. Two great divines indeed made important contributions to it in the middle of the seventeenth century : Petavius the Jesuit, and a man whom the Scottish Church has the honour to claim, John Forbes of Corse, Professor in the University of Aberdeen, whose *Instructiones Historico-theologicæ* have still an honoured name, even in Germany, and should be more studied than they are among ourselves. But the systematic study of the growth of dogma, and of theological doctrine in general, cannot be dated much further back than the latter part of the eighteenth century. Perhaps it was not possible, until developments in printing had brought the vast records of ancient Christian thought, in the Fathers and mediæval writers, within practical handling. But at the present time there is no more fruitful or more interesting branch of theological study, and it may be safely said that it is now quite out of place and fruitless to attempt to treat any dogmatic subject—such, for instance, as the Thirty-nine Articles—without following the historical development of the doctrines they embody. But that historical development, as has just been urged, is not a mere intellectual process ; it does not consist in a mere evolution of ideas, by virtue of some internal necessity. It consists of the growing apprehension by the human spirit of the living spiritual realities, of which those doctrines are the expression. The content of a doctrine, so to say, is enlarged from time to time by some great spirit like Athanasius or Augustine, Anselm or Luther or Butler, who, like a spiritual Columbus, ventures on a perilous voyage—a voyage, perhaps, not without its errors and shipwrecks—to some

new continent of spiritual truth, and brings back experiences which throw a fresh light on words and passages of the Scriptures, of which the full meaning had hitherto lain comparatively dormant. Such an acquisition, once made, is indeed a possession for ever; but those who would enjoy it must themselves in their turn sail the same voyage, made easier by the chart left them by the first navigator, if they are really to apprehend the meaning he has opened up in the sacred words.

Let us take a brief illustration from one of the profoundest and most inexhaustible of all Christian doctrines—that of the Atonement. There is none, perhaps, in which the development is marked more clearly by the actual spiritual experiences of the human soul. In early Christian times we find what seems to us at first, no doubt, the strange conception of a ransom having been paid to the Evil One, and of his having at the same time been deluded in his belief that he could retain in his power the sacred Soul, over which he seemed to have gained a temporary victory. Yet it will be found, perhaps, both that that theory is not in substance so absurd as it seems, and that the form of it is due to the special spiritual apprehensions of its age. In the Early Church all evil was regarded as centred in the Evil One. There is no feeling more prominent in the early Fathers than that of the personal struggle of the Saviour with the Evil One, and one of the most conspicuous aspects of Christianity in their minds is that the power of the Evil One, over the bodies and souls of men, had been broken by the Saviour. We may be sure that there was a greater reality in that aspect of the truth than can, perhaps, well be appreciated by ourselves, who have never lived, as the Fathers had lived, in a time at which St. John could say, that 'the whole world lieth in the Evil One.' That was the form of the statement, and perhaps a truer form than we now realize; but as to the substance, is it not, as a matter of fact, the case that every redemption involves the payment of some ransom to evil? What is a war—a war even for the highest and noblest ends—but the payment of a tremendous ransom in precious lives, and some things more precious even than lives to the evil against which it is waged? And as to the supposed illusion of the Evil One, is it not true, is it not one of the most amazing truths, that the powers of darkness, which for the time overwhelmed our Lord, were acting under the illusion that they were really able to crush Him? Combine this substantial truth with the spiritual apprehension of personal evil which marked the early Christians, and it is, perhaps, not difficult to see that a conception of the doctrine of the Atonement, which is now too often

put aside as almost grotesque, really embodies a profound truth, derived from a deep experience.

The next great step was made by Anselm. In this doctrine, as in most others, the Greek mind had seen the individual aspect of the truth, and a similarly individual apprehension of it is observable also in St. Augustine ; but to St. Anselm, inheriting the conceptions of the Roman mind, there presents itself the idea of a vast Order—an Order like that which he and other great Churchmen were endeavouring to realize in the realm of the Western Church—which could only be maintained by the rigid enforcement of satisfaction for any infringement of its laws. He seeks, therefore, above all things, in the work of our Saviour, for some satisfaction to the Divine Majesty for the insult offered to it by sin. It must be owned to be a grand conception, even if, as Von Hase finely says, it reflects somewhat too much of the spirit of feudal chivalry—*etwas ritterlich aufgefasst*. Then came the Reformation, when the relation of all Christian truths to the individual soul is conceived with a new vividness ; and then arises, especially in the mind of Luther, a deeper, if not a new, apprehension of the manner in which the Saviour unites Himself personally with the soul of every believer, makes Himself personally responsible for its sins and its evils, as a husband might do for his wife, and pleading for each soul before God His own sufferings and His own merits, throws over the sinner, in effect, His own righteousness and His own life. To the Greek, the Saviour is fighting with an external spirit of evil ; to the Schoolman, He is making a sacrifice which restores the balance to a disordered realm ; to the Reformer, He is uniting Himself to the soul in its personal struggles, sins, and infirmities, and establishing a gracious exchange between Himself and the soul which, in His mercy and condescension, He loves.

Now, the lesson to be drawn from such a review is this : try to confine this truth within the limits of expressions appropriate to either of the forms of experience in question, and the dogmatic statement is necessarily inadequate. The reality is too vast, and its expansiveness would burst any form of words in which you tried to embody it. Each of these views is a real aspect of the truth ; you cannot afford to sacrifice any of them, and for the purpose of your spiritual apprehension of the mystery you must combine them all. What you need for the official security of Christian teaching is some broad general statement, such as is contained in our Article, that our Lord ' truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile His Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men.' That is needed as a sort of fence around the truth, to quote an old Rabbinical phrase ; but the truth

itself is infinite in its meaning, and can only be fathomed by the deepest spiritual experience. No man who wants to realize it can afford to forego either the thought of the early Church, or the conceptions of Anselm, or the vivid apprehensions of Luther. When you have said, as a historian of dogma often does, 'This is a conception of the Greek mind,' 'This is a reflection of mediæval experience,' 'This is due to the experience of a monk in his spiritual agonies,' do not let it be supposed that by classifying these apprehensions of the doctrine you have done with them. If you want to know what the truth really means, you will take them all; you will try to enter into them all; you will submit yourself in homage to the struggles and experiences of the great saints of the past, and will try, in prayer as well as in thought, to enter into their spiritual life.

If these considerations are just, do they not make Dogmatic Theology the most permanently interesting, the most profoundly human, of all studies, that of the Scriptures alone excepted? After all, it is but a part of Scriptural study; for it is by these spiritual experiences of human nature alone that the Scriptures can be adequately interpreted. Does it not appear that both of the extreme tendencies which were mentioned at the outset are equally to be avoided—that which disparages dogmatic statements because, as is alleged, they are only the products of the human spirit working upon the foundation of the Scriptural revelation, and that which would provide us with a single clear and definite statement of 'the length and breadth and depth and height' of Christian truth and Christian life? If there is one thing to be guarded against in dealing with Dogmatic Theology it is system. It is the systematizers, whoever they may be and however great they may be—even a St. Thomas or a Calvin—who create in the end, though much against their purpose and wish, the chief difficulties on this great subject. The true method is that which was followed alike by the Lutheran Church and by our own—the method which lays down certain great principles or articles, aphorisms of truth, which have been acquired by the human spirit in its long spiritual struggles, but leaves vast openings between them, which it does not attempt to fill in, because human experience has not yet adequately travelled over those spiritual spaces, and is in no position to lay down their exact bearings. The Articles of the Church of England are to dogmatic truth what Bacon's Aphorisms, in the *Novum Organum*, are to his grand *Instauratio Magna*—central truths, by which the soul may be guarded from wandering into false paths, but within which it has an unlimited freedom. Happily, they refuse to be forced into a system. They lay down great theological principles, which mark out the lines

within which our thoughts must move, seeking further treasures of doctrinal truth in the infinite depths of the Scriptures, and in the profoundly moving records of the experience of the saints.

The present volume, by a distinguished divine who has passed away, was published in two parts, in 1882 and 1892, and is now reprinted in a more convenient form, at the instance of persons who have found by experience that it is peculiarly valuable as an Introduction to the study of Dogmatic Theology. It surveys more comprehensively than any English book on the subject the general course of theology in early, mediaeval, and modern times, and illustrates the principles of the various systems, whether Catholic or Protestant, which have from time to time prevailed. The author's sympathies are with the Protestant Theology which is embodied in the Thirty-nine Articles. But he states fairly the Roman and other systems, and gives a view of the course of recent controversy. The book will afford a student a good general conception of the problems of theology, and will give him very valuable guidance in appreciating the issues at stake. It ought, moreover, to be of especial value at a time when the conflict between Roman and Protestant principles is again acute. It will enable them both to be better understood by English students, and ought thus to conduce to a clear and intelligent decision between them.

HENRY WACE.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

### TO FIRST EDITION

It has been subject of remark by one of our Bishops<sup>1</sup> that there exists no work from an English pen on Dogmatic Theology, which could be recommended to candidates for Holy Orders as an introduction to that study. The criticism is just. Our theology, copious and valuable on isolated topics, is singularly deficient in works corresponding to those of the great foreign theologians, Romish and Protestant, in which a systematic survey of the whole field is taken. Hence such treatises as those of Martensen and Van Oosterzee have been largely read by our students, and no doubt with profit. But independently of some graver defects, a translation seldom succeeds in fully conveying the sense of the original; and the original itself is commonly too racy of the soil whence it sprang to fall in readily with English habits of thought and expression. There seems room therefore for, at least, an attempt in this direction, and without professing to be a Manual for Candidates, for which perhaps it is hardly fitted, the following volume aims at being primarily a Compendium of Dogmatic Theology on the subjects treated of, and indirectly a doctrinal commentary on such of the Thirty-nine Articles as belong thereto; not, however, as is usual, on each Article separately, but on the Articles as grouped under the heads to which they may be referred; which, since several of them really present but different sides of the same subject, is the first step towards a clear view of the system on which they are founded.

A few words may be in place on the position which the writer occupies. It has been matter of debate whether or not the Anglican Church is a Protestant Church, and whether or not she possesses a theology of her own, neither that of Rome nor yet of Geneva, but occupying a midway position between the two. With all such questions the writer has no concern. Whatever may be the character of the Anglican Church as a whole, the Thirty-nine Articles, at any rate, admit of no doubt as to their parentage; at least as regards those points on which they differ from the Church of Rome.

<sup>1</sup> Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, Charge, 1867.

For, as is well known, they consist of two quite distinct portions, one of which contains the doctrines common to us and the Romish Communion, the fundamental doctrines of the Œcumenical Creeds which both accept, while the other has reference to the points of controversy between us and that Communion. There can be no question that on these latter points the Anglican Church, if she is to be judged by the statements of the Articles, must be ranked amongst the Protestant Churches of Europe ; and of the two families of foreign Confessions, under that of the Reformed rather than that of the Lutheran type. And such she is generally considered to be. Yet it may be alleged that the character of the Anglican Church is not to be determined from the Articles alone, but from her formularies as a whole, and there may be some ground for this assertion. But whether such is the case or not, a discussion of this delicate topic is foreign to the purpose of the present work. It makes no pretensions to frame, or to represent, a theology of the Church of England, as an insular production ; a task very difficult in itself, and doubtful in its results. In respect of the leading points of controversy alluded to, its aim is simply, from a comparison of the public Confessions of the Reformed Churches, amongst which, as far as the Articles are concerned, our own is to be ranked, to expound the dogmatical system which goes by the general name of Protestant as distinguished from that of Rome.

Independently of the difficulties attending an attempt to establish a special Anglican theology on such points, the writer must avow his conviction that, in a scientific point of view, all such attempts will probably end in failure ; and that there are only two systems of Dogmatic Theology, coherent in structure and capable of scientific exposition, the Romish and the Protestant ; these words being understood not in the popular sense, but of the principles of the respective systems, as they are found stated in the public Confessions of Faith, and elaborated in the works of the principal theologians, on either side, since the Reformation ; a Bellarmine and a Möhler on the one, a Chemnitz, a J. Gerhard, and a Quenstedt, on the other ; worthy successors, all of them, of the great scholastic divines of the Middle Ages. The experiment, in fact, of such a *Via Media* theology was made many years ago in one of our universities under the most favourable auspices ; but it produced no permanent result. The golden mean, in its actual application, was found to involve as many difficulties as either extreme. An example may be, the subject of Scripture-interpretation. The Romish doctrine of a living, infallible expositor in the person of the Pope is quite intelligible, has the merit of simplicity, and, *if only the fact could be proved*, removes

many perplexities ; the *genuine* Protestant doctrine, too, stands on its own ground, equally intelligible. The *Via Media* theology adopted neither the one nor the other, in its integrity. It admitted, in some sense, the right of private judgment, it denied the infallibility of the Pope ; but its admission of the right of private judgment was accompanied with the proviso that the conclusions arrived at should always be in accordance with ' the voice of Catholic antiquity.' How or where the voice of Catholic antiquity, ruling disputed points of interpretation, was to be ascertained, could never be satisfactorily made out. In fact, the prime architect of this theology has himself demolished his building. We are told, on his plenary authority, that ' as a doctrine, it is wanting in simplicity, hard to master, indeterminate in its provisions, and without a substantive existence in any age or country.'<sup>1</sup> Or as he has tersely expressed it in another work : ' The *Via Media* was an impossible idea ; it was what I had called standing on one leg ; and it was necessary, if my old issue of the controversy was to be retained, to go further one way or the other.'<sup>2</sup> A writer may be pardoned who accepts the judgment of so great a master, and ventures to think that nothing in Dogmatic Theology that will satisfy the demands of consecutive thinkers is likely to be produced except on the lines either of genuine Romanism or of genuine Protestantism.

This does not imply but that within the main lines on either side subordinate differences have not always existed, and may always be expected to exist. The symbols of the Lutheran and the Swiss Churches are easily distinguishable, and the Sacramentarian controversy threatened at one time to produce a rupture between them ; and even in the Romish Church, a considerable latitude of private opinion is, very properly, allowed. But these internal differences do not affect the essential principles of the respective systems ; and in expounding, for example, the theology of Protestantism, it is unnecessary to draw a distinction between the Lutheran and the Reformed Churches : they both agree in certain fundamental points as against Rome, and refuse to be combined with the system of the latter into a *tertium quid*.

The writer has aimed at compression throughout, and therefore historical details and subordinate points of discussion have been, as much as possible, avoided, or briefly referred to in notes. In some parts he may seem to have transgressed this rule by a rather copious citation of passages from Confessions of Faith and theologians. On

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Newman's preface to his *Prophetical Office of the Church*, third edition, 1877.

<sup>2</sup> *Apologia*, p. 260.



such abstruse subjects as, e.g., the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, Original Sin, and the like, the writer was not indisposed to shelter himself under the authority of great names. Moreover, where doctrines are ascribed to a system, or an author, it seems only fair to quote the *ipsissima verba* in which they are expressed. He also indulged the hope that some readers may be induced to explore for themselves the treasures of thought which lie buried in the ponderous tomes of what may be called the scholastic age of Protestantism, that is, the two centuries succeeding the Reformation. No better corrective of the loose habits of thought prevalent in our day exists than a perusal of writers who for learning, depth, and, above all, precision of language, have few equals.

The writer only wishes further to observe that it has been his aim to introduce to the notice of English divines that branch of theology which in Germany has received the name of 'Symbolik,' and of which Möhler's work is probably the specimen best known to us; that is, a scientific comparison of the dogmatical systems of the two great divisions of western Christendom, exhibiting their fundamental doctrinal differences, rather than the popular aspect which they severally present to the world. In the Elizabethan age, and for some time subsequently, this branch of study, though not systematically cultivated, generally formed part of the theological equipment of our divines; as may be seen in the works of Jewell and his contemporaries, in the smaller treatises of Hooker, and, later on, in those of Bishop Hall, Field, and Davenant. Circumstances, to which it is unnecessary here to refer, brought about a neglect of it; our Universities ceased to contain or send forth champions of genuine Protestantism; with the result that, when the Oxford movement began many years ago, it bore in the eyes of the clergy and many distinguished laymen the aspect of a new discovery; instead of being (as it was) Romanism under a new guise, that is, Romanism shorn of some of its most prominent peculiarities, such as the formal co-ordination of tradition with Scripture as the rule of faith, the addition of five sacraments to the two appointed by Christ, the abuses of Purgatory, the supremacy of the Pope, and the like.

Romanism (including its mutilated counterpart, Anglo-Catholicism) is a religion of the incarnation, the virtue of which is communicated by sacraments; Protestantism is a religion of the atonement, the virtue of which is appropriated by direct faith in Christ, His word and His work, not, however, to the exclusion of sacraments in their proper place. Broadly, this is the difference. On neither side are these cardinal facts of revelation, or their connexion, denied; there

could have been no atonement if there had not been an incarnation ; but the stress laid on the one or the other, and particularly differences of view as regards the instrument of appropriation, may affect our whole conception of Christianity and lead to widely divergent theological systems. To explain this, and to make it clear that some modern theories on, among other points, justification, the nature of justifying faith, and the sacraments, are nothing but a revival of the scholastic theology, on which Romanism itself is founded, is the general design of the work.

With the exception of the topics, the rule of faith and man before and after the fall, the earlier part of the work deals but little with modern controversies ; controversies, that is, which have arisen since the Council of Trent. Happily, the principal divisions of Western Christendom all accept the three creeds, and the decisions of the early Councils on the Holy Trinity and the Person of Christ. With the latter part the case is different. Eschatology, perhaps, excluded, the matter is distinctly controversial, and on points which, to the present day, are warmly debated. The plan of the author rendered this necessary ; but he trusts that no expressions, or insinuations, have fallen from him inconsistent with the temper which ought to govern theological controversy.

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# INTRODUCTION

TO

# DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

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## PRELIMINARY

### § 1. THE PROVINCE OF DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

THE word 'dogma' occurs in the New Testament in the sense of injunctions or ordinances to which obedience was required, such as the decree of Cæsar (Luke ii. 1, comp. Acts xvii. 7), the decisions of the Apostolic Council at Jerusalem (Acts xvi. 4, 17), and the precepts of the Mosaic law (Ephes. ii. 15; Col. ii. 14); and not in the sense of doctrines proposed to faith. In the writings of the early Fathers, the word signifies the fundamental truths of Revelation, such as they were delivered by the Apostles in their oral teaching and their writings, and before they became acted upon by the speculative intellect of the Church. Philosophy assigned to each science its peculiar dogmata, or first principles; and those of Christianity were its historical facts with their inspired explanations. But since religion leaves no faculty of man unaffected by its influence, and appeals to the intellectual as well as the emotional part of his nature (as indeed faith, the most comprehensive of its synonyms, always presupposes something to be believed), it was inevitable that in process of time attempts should be made to systematize and arrange the materials furnished partly by Scripture, and partly by the implicit faith of the Church; and this necessarily in the current language, and under the influence of the philosophy of the age. And this scientific action was materially promoted by the appearance of successive heresies. Each, as it grew to a head, called forth in opposition all the resources of argument, from whatever quarter, which the Church could summon to her aid; and no Christian truth emerged from the conflict the same in its mode of expression, and in its established connection with other

truths, as it descended into the arena. A legitimate development, not of new truths from the old, but of the mode of exposition of the old, was coëval with Christianity, and is inseparable from the idea of a living body like the Church ; it finds a place in Scripture itself, in which the progression of Christian doctrine, from its first elements to its more perfect exhibition, is evident, though, from the form in which by Divine wisdom the New Testament was cast, and the special function which Scripture discharges in the Church, a systematic arrangement of doctrines, and especially as distinguished from Christian practice, is not to be looked for in it. This reflex action of the intellect on the faith of the Church is the source of dogmatic theology, and furnishes its true idea. Hence may be obviated sundry misconceptions of its nature. It is not, for example, a mere stringing together of texts or passages of Scripture under certain heads ; which may be a preliminary to the formation of Biblical, but is not in itself dogmatic, theology. Of course a Christian dogmatic theology must, of necessity, be a Biblical one ; so far, that is, as it ever appeals to Scripture as its ultimate authority ; but formally the two are not identical. The Church, in its true idea, being the Communion of Saints, the temple of the Holy Ghost (Ephes. ii. 21, 22), possesses a relative independence as regards spiritual illumination : the voice of the Holy Spirit in Scripture is one thing, and the work of the same Spirit in the Church is another, though the two are inseparably connected ; and hence the Church may, for the time being, and for a special purpose, dissociate reflection upon her own faith from the authentication of it by Scripture : and in so doing, she lays the foundation of that branch of theology to which the name of ' dogmatic ' is properly to be assigned. Nor is it, as sometimes seems to be supposed, merely a system of logical analysis and deduction, like the scholastic theology, with no basis in the living Christian sentiment, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, in the Church. Severed from this latter, it no doubt merits the strictures that have been levelled against dogmatic theology in the mass, but which apply only to a limited and inaccurate conception of it.<sup>1</sup> Still less may it assume the position of an arbiter of the faith, dictating its ' sentences ' to the submissive reception of the Christian body ; to which assumption the word ' dogmatism ' probably owes the sinister meaning commonly attached to it. No order or class, in the Church, whether ecclesiastical or scholastic, is empowered thus to rule the Christian conscience ; and dogmatic theology loses its value if it is

<sup>1</sup> Such, *e.g.*, as that of the late Bishop Hampden, who, in his otherwise instructive ' Bampton Lectures,' appears to identify dogmatic theology with the subtleties of scholasticism.



not a living reproduction of what is already held, in solution as it were, by the Christian community at large to which the writer belongs.

From these observations it will be seen that the dogmatic theologian occupies an essentially different position from that of a philosophic inquirer into the claims of Christianity. He is presumed to be neither outside nor above the Church, but in it ; a partaker of its life, an expositor of what he himself believes and has experienced. To this branch of theology the maxim emphatically applies, *Pectus theologum facit*. A dogmatic theology free from all prejudication, the author of which is supposed to come to his subject with his mind a *tabula rasa*,<sup>1</sup> is a misnomer ; and not less so is one which affects to be an exposition of individual opinion rather than of the common faith of the Church. Nor does he take up the position of an apologist. Dogmatic theology presupposes the Divine origin of Christianity to be admitted, and occupies a midway position between the study of evidences and the homiletic functions of the Christian minister.

But here questions arise which seem to present difficulty. What are we to understand by the Church of which the dogmatic theologian is supposed to be a member ? And where is its accredited profession of faith to be found ? Before the schism of East and West the reply was easy ; the faith of the Church—not the *fides quâ*, but *quæ creditur*—expressed itself, on certain fundamental points at least, in the Ecumenical creeds, or the two earliest of them. Heresies, on these points, had come and gone, proving themselves to be such, not by the Vincentian rule, *Quod semper*, etc.—an unsatisfactory one at best, for of what value was it (to take one example), at a period when, as one of the Fathers complains, the whole world almost had become Arian ?—but by their very want of vitality and permanence, as the branch from which the sap has been diverted of itself withers and drops off. On this basis of the creeds the work of J. Damascenus (A.D. 730) contained a valuable, though limited, survey of Christian doctrine ; but it was the first, and the last, of the kind which could lay claim strictly to the title of Catholic. After its separation from the East, the Western Church busied itself with questions in which the Greek Church, even if no rupture had taken place, would have felt little interest ; and the West itself, at the Reformation, became split up into separate Churches, bound together by no tie, except the acceptance of the three creeds, and each with a Confession of Faith of its own, more or less

<sup>1</sup> Strauss's notion of it—' Christliche Glaubenslehre,' Schenkel, Dog. i. § 2.

polemical in character. The result is that a Catholic dogmatic theology, except as regards the fundamental doctrines of the creeds, is now only an idea, incapable of being realized ; for a writer on the subject must belong to one or the other of the sections which divide Western Christendom, and must, if he is to produce anything of value, be an exponent of the theology of his own particular communion : he must identify himself with its teaching and traditional sentiment. And thus, in the present day, any such system must be more or less of a partial character ; it is the dogmatic theology of the Romish, or of the Lutheran, or of the Reformed, or (as some would say) of the Anglican, Church. If we consent, as we well may, to merge minor differences, at any rate the Romish and the Protestant systems stand out in strong contrast ; and it may be affirmed that no Romanist could fairly expound a system of Protestant doctrine, and probably the converse equally holds good. The other question is, Where is the traditional theology of each particular Church to be found ? Not primarily in the works of its theologians, still less in the varying teaching of schools or parties, which may from time to time make their appearance, and then pass away. The authorized public Confessions of Faith are the proper standards to appeal to ; it is they that impart a definite character and historical continuity to each Church. As long as these Confessions are not repudiated, or altered, by the body in its corporate capacity, they must be taken to decide the position which, in the controversies which agitate Christendom, that Church occupies. And on this ground, if the Thirty-nine Articles are to be considered as the distinctive, as they certainly are the principal, dogmatical formulary of the Anglican Church, there can be no doubt as to her position. The chief theologians, however, of each Church, if not primary, may be very important secondary sources of information ; and the more so in proportion as they lived nearer to the time when the Church first assumed its distinctive features. Hence the earlier are, in this point of view, more valuable than the later. Some of the works of such writers have enjoyed an almost symbolical authority in their respective Churches ; as, *e.g.*, those of Jewell and Hooker in our own, those of Melancthon in the Lutheran, and those of Calvin in the Swiss Protestant Churches. Where the meaning of the Confessions may be obscure or ambiguous, the comments of those who either assisted at the drawing-up of such Confessions, or have been held most accurately to represent their spirit, are justly deemed of the greatest assistance towards arriving at a conclusion. But no name, however venerable, and no school of opinion, however for the time prevalent, can be of much use in this point of view, if, instead of

building on the foundations already laid, it aims at raising a new structure not in harmony therewith : such attempts to alter the essential character of a Church can only be of detriment to it ; they must impede its natural growth, and therefore efficiency, and may issue in its dissolution.

## § 2. LITERATURE OF THE SUBJECT

The Patristic remains of the first centuries contain many valuable dogmatical treatises, that is treatises on special topics, but hardly any the aim of which is to exhibit the faith of the Church in a connected system, the proper province of dogmatic theology. Some attempts, however, in this direction were made, as, *e.g.*, by Clemens Alexandrinus, and especially by Origen in his work *Περὶ ἀρχῶν* ; but they were defective in many respects, and moreover seem to have led to nothing beyond themselves. John of Damascus, to whom allusion has been already made, may be considered the founder of this branch of theology. His work ' *De Fide Orthodoxa* ' is a summary of the decisions of councils, and of the statements of the principal Greek Fathers, especially Gregory Nazianzen, on the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation ; and deservedly obtained a high reputation not only in the Eastern Church, but in the Western also, as soon as it became known through the medium of translations. And with it the literary activity of the Eastern Church on this subject seems to have come to a close. The main defect of the work is its almost total silence on Anthropological questions, or those relating to human agency in the work of salvation ; nor does it treat of the Church, its idea, functions, and ministry. To supply these deficiencies was the appointed work of the Western Church. But though in the controversial treatises of Tertullian, Ambrose, and above all Augustine, with whom must be joined the Augustine of the middle ages, Anselm, the father of the scholastic theology, the materials were furnished in rich abundance, they were not collected and arranged until the great theologians of the properly scholastic period undertook the task, and performed it in a manner which must extort the admiration of even those to whom the general features of scholasticism are repulsive. What a marvellous monument of industry and acuteness is the ' *Summa Theologiæ* ' of Thomas Aquinas, the angelic doctor ! And the same may be said of the works of his fellow-labourers in this field. But its slavish submission to ecclesiastical authority on the one hand, and its unwarranted employment of Aristotle's philosophy on the other, rendered the scholastic theology but a meagre expression of the Christian faith ; and at the first breath of the religious impulse of the

Reformation it tottered to its fall. The material principle of Protestantism, justification by faith only—or, in other words, the doctrine that the Christian believer enjoys direct access to God through Christ, without the intervention of the Church—and its formal principle the supreme authority of Holy Scripture, were alike foreign to the spirit of this theology, which accordingly found no congenial home in the Reformed Churches. Yet it had too deeply struck its roots wholly to disappear. The first Reformers, while protesting against its Pelagian tendencies, made use of its terms and received arguments—they could not do otherwise if they were to be understood; and to this day we employ its language without perhaps suspecting whence it is derived. No writer is appealed to with greater deference by the Protestant theologians of the seventeenth century than Thomas Aquinas. But though the scholastic theology continued to furnish the shell of theological discussion, it lost its power as a living system.

It was the Reformation that gave birth to what we now mean by the term ‘dogmatic theology.’ The public confessions on either side—such as that of Augsburg, with its Apology, on the one, and the decrees of the Council of Trent, with its Catechism, on the other—are in reality compendiums of this science, of no mean literary merit, a praise especially due to the Romish Catechism. At an early period of the movement Melanchthon’s ‘*Loci Communes*’ (A.D. 1521) appeared, a work pronounced by Luther to be worthy of admission into the Canon; it was much enlarged, and in some points of doctrine modified, in subsequent editions. The most distinguished commentator on it, and indeed the chief Lutheran theologian of that century, was Martin Chemnitz, whose ‘*Loci*,’ and especially his ‘*Examen Concilii Tridentini*,’ are classical works. The school of Melanchthon occupied a middle position between the fully developed Lutheranism of the ‘*Formula Concordiæ*,’ drawn up A.D. 1579, and the doctrine of the Swiss Calvinistic Churches. For these latter Calvin performed the same service which Melanchthon had done for the Lutheran; and in his ‘*Institutions*’ produced a work which for lucidity and philosophical depth surpassed all similar attempts of that age, and exercised a vast influence throughout the Reformed Churches of Europe, our own not excepted. It has not been superseded by any subsequent work on the same basis, viz., the doctrine of absolute predestination.

The seventeenth century was the scholastic age of Protestant theology, and witnessed its most important productions. Such works as the ‘*Loci*’ of J. Gerhard (best edition that of Cotta, 1762–81, in twenty quarto vols.), and the ‘*Theologia Didactica-Polemica*’ of

A. J. Quensledt (died 1688), remind us of the labours of Albert Magnus and Aquinas ; but they are in a great measure free from the defects which have consigned their predecessors to the shelf. Equally exhaustive in their treatment, they are far more Scriptural, and less prone to indulge in idle subtleties. With these lights of the Lutheran Church are to be associated the names of Baier, Buddeus, and Hollaz (the two latter of the next century) ; while the Reformed Church may boast of such writers as Beza, Gilbert Voetius, and F. Turretin. It is from the writers of this period that the student will derive the most solid instruction.

The Romish Church has never been so productive as the Protestant in this branch of theology. Two great theologians, however, she possesses—Bellarmine and Bossuet : the former a controversialist, armed at all points, and though not always fair in his statement of the opinions he opposes, eminent for learning and acuteness ; the latter of classic rank in the literature of his country.<sup>1</sup>

The history of dogmatic theology in recent times is its history in Germany ; for in England, with the exception of some isolated treatises, little attention has been paid to the subject. After the dreary reign of rationalism, of which the works of Wegscheider and Bretschneider, at the beginning of this century, may be taken as the culminating point, there has been an auspicious revival of the old orthodox theology, under a form more suited to modern taste : among others of less note, Nitzsch, Twesten, Thomasius, Philippi, and Martensen, deserve honourable mention as having contributed to the change. None of these would dissemble their obligations to the celebrated Schleiermacher, who, though he can hardly find a place in the ranks of orthodoxy, yet, by recalling attention to the fact that the true basis of dogmatic theology is to be sought in the inner life of the Church, communicated an impulse in the right direction, which has been widespread and lasting. But for the history of recent German theology the reader is referred to works which expressly handle that subject.<sup>2</sup>

It remains briefly to notice the arrangements that have been adopted by different writers. The ordinary one, for a long time, was that of 'Loci,' or heads : thus J. Gerhard's great work treats, in order, of Scripture, Person and Work of Christ, Creation, Freewill, Justification, Sacraments, Church, Christian Ministry, Civil Magistrate, Wedlock, Death, Resurrection and Judgment, and a Future State. The want of a central governing principle in this method

<sup>1</sup> See especially his 'Histoire des Variations,' etc.

<sup>2</sup> As, for example, Farrar's 'Bampton Lectures.'

produced attempts at a more scientific one, and the 'Loci' gave place to systems such as that of Calvin, who treats, first, of God the Creator; secondly, of Christ the Redeemer; thirdly, of the Holy Ghost; and lastly, of the Church—an arrangement evidently founded on the Apostles' Creed: or that of Quenstedt—1. The end of Theology (God); 2. Its subject (man); 3. The sources of salvation (Christ); 4. The means of salvation (Church, etc.). The trichotomy of the Apostles' Creed, the doctrine concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, has been recently revived as a foundation by Marheineke and Martensen; it is however open to objection, as more suited to the dogmatic theology of the Greek than to that of the Protestant Church. The method of 'Loci,' on the whole, offers as many advantages as any other; and in the present work, at any rate, which is intended to be indirectly a commentary on the Thirty-nine Articles, seems the appropriate one. The topics, however, may be disposed in a natural order. The first thing, obviously, is to settle what is the supreme authority in matters of faith, or the Rule of Faith; Christian Theism, including the Holy Trinity, naturally follows; then the State of Man unfallen and fallen, with a section on the Angels; and then the Person and Work of the Redeemer.

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## THE RULE OF FAITH

'Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an Article of Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of Holy Scripture we do understand those Canonical books of the Old and New Testament of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church. . . . And the other books (as Hierome saith) the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet it doth not apply them to establish any doctrine. . . . All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive, and account them Canonical' (Art. vi.). 'The Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and the New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises. . . . The Law given from God by Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites, does not bind Christian men, nor the civil precepts thereof ought, of necessity, to be received in any commonwealth' (Art. vii.). 'The three Creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warranty of Holy Scripture' (Art. viii.). 'The Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith: and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore although the Church is a witness and keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree anything against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce anything as necessary to salvation' (Art. xx.). 'When they (General Councils) be gathered together (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men whereof all be not governed by the Spirit and Word of God), they may

err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining to God. Wherefore things ordained by them, as necessary to salvation, have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture' (Art. xxi.). 'Credimus unicam regulam et normam, secundum quam omnia dogmata omnesque doctores æstimari et judicari oporteat, nullam omnino aliam esse quam Prophetica et Apostolica scripta quum Veteris tum Novi Testamenti. . . . Hoc modo luculentum discrimen inter sacras Veteris et Novi Testamenti literas et omnia aliorum scripta retinetur, et sola scriptura S. iudex, norma, et regula, cognoscitur, ad quam ceu ad Lydiùm lapidem omnia dogmata exigenda sunt et indicanda, an pia, an impia, an vero, an falsa, sint. Cætera autem symbola, et alia scripta, non obtinent auctoritatem iudicis hæcenim dignitas solis Sacris Literis debetur), sed duntaxat pro religione nostra testimonium dicunt, eamque explicant, ac ostendunt quomodo singulis temporibus Sacræ Literæ in articulis controversis in ecclesia Dei a doctoribus qui tum vixerunt intellecta et explicata fuerint' (Form. Concord., lib. symb. Eccl. Luth., edit. Francke). 'Credimus scripturas canonicas utriusque Testamenti ipsum verum esse verbum Dei: et auctoritatem sufficientem ex semet ipsis non ex hominibus habere. Et in hac scriptura S. habet universalis Christi Ecclesia plenissime exposita quæcunque pertinent cum ad salvificam fidem tum ad vitam Deo placentem recte informandam. Nihil dissimulamus quosdam Vet. Test. libros a veteribus nuncupatos esse Apocryphos, ab aliis Ecclesiasticos, utpote quos in ecclesiis legi voluerunt quidem, non tamen proferri ad auctoritatem ex his fidei confirmandam. Illam duntaxat Scripturæ S. interpretationem pro orthodoxa et genuina agnoscimus quæ ex ipsis est petita scripturis (ex ingenio utique ejus linguæ, in qua sunt scriptæ, secundum circumstantias item expensæ, et pro ratione locorum vel similium, vel dissimilium plurium quoque et clariorum expositæ) cum regula fidei et caritatis congruit' (Conf. Helv., lib. symb. Eccl. Ref., edit. Augusti). 'Confitemur sanctos Dei viros divino afflatos spiritu locutos esse. Postea vero Deus . . . servis suis mandavit ut sua illa oracula scriptis consignarent' (Conf. Bel. iii., *ibid.*). 'Profitemur nos amplecti sacras canonicas . . . S. S. . . . instinctu Spiritus S. primitus scriptas' (Dec. Thor. i., *ibid.*).

The subject of the Rule of Faith does not, in our Articles, occupy its proper place, which, as is evident, should be antecedent to the discussion of particular doctrines. As it forms a main point of controversy between the Romish and the Reformed Churches, the compilers were probably actuated by the laudable desire of exhibiting the common faith of Christians on the doctrines of the Holy Trinity, and the Person and Work of Christ, before noticing differences. But in a system of dogmatic theology, such an arrangement is out of place. If the symmetry of the system is to be preserved, and the subordinate doctrines to be properly estimated, the depository of the faith must be ascertained before its contents become matter of discussion. The doctrine of our Church, in common, as has been seen, with the foreign Protestant Churches on this point, is that Holy Scripture, by which is to be understood the Canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, is, as having been given by inspiration of God, the sole Rule of Faith (*norma credendi*), and the supreme judge of controversy; and further, that whatsoever is necessary to salvation may be plainly and sufficiently read therein, or proved thereby. This general statement branches out into several particulars.

## § 3. CANON OF SCRIPTURE

By the word Canon (*κανών*) was meant, originally, not a catalogue of the inspired writings, but the fundamental doctrines of Christianity which were to be a rule, or guide, in public teaching. These sometimes, as in the Apostles' Creed, appear in short summaries, sometimes are referred to by writers (Irenæus, Tertullian, etc.) as well known and acknowledged by the Churches. It is in this sense that S. Paul calls the measure of divine truth which the Philippian Church had attained to a Canon (Phil. iii. 16). Since this Canon of truth, whether inward in the heart, or expressed in writing, derived all its validity from its presumed correspondence with the teaching of the Apostles, and since this latter, after their decease, could be found with certainty only in their writings, it became a matter of vital moment to ascertain, with all care and diligence, what were those writings, which, when collected together, might for ever form an authentic record of Apostolic doctrine. The result of this pious labour is the volume of our New Testament, all the books of which we receive as they are commonly acknowledged. As regards the Old Testament, we accept the judgment of its proper historical guardians, and consequently exclude some of the books which the Council of Trent (Sess. iv.) admits, but which the Jews did not acknowledge as on a level with the others. The whole, as forming the standard of faith and morals, came to be called the Canon, and the writings contained in it Canonical.

For the history of the formation of the Canon of the New Testament, or rather of the evidence to its existence from an early age (for the actual process of its formation is involved in obscurity), the reader is referred to works which treat expressly of the subject, such as Westcott 'On the Canon,' and especially Kirchofer's excellent work. For our present purpose, a mere sketch will be sufficient. We observe, then, that from the first our present books are cited as Scripture, that is, as books *sui generis*, possessing an authority which belonged to no others; that they were publicly read in Christian assemblies as the Word of God; that catalogues were formed of them, of which thirteen, of a date previous to the fifth century, are extant, and which, though in some of them certain books are omitted, all agree in containing no other; and that the oldest version, the Peschito, contains these and no others. Commentaries were written on them, and they were appealed to by heretics and unbelievers (with few exceptions), as well as by orthodox writers, as authentic records of the Christian religion. Notwithstanding this general agreement as to what books were to be accounted Canonical, it is impossible to assign the particular time when the collection was made, or the



persons who were engaged in it. No traces exist of this question having been formally discussed in any Council ; that of Laodicea, A.D. 364, which has been improperly supposed to have fixed the Canon, merely giving a catalogue of the books already received. Unlike the books of the Old Testament, those of the New were addressed to Churches scattered over the known world : time, therefore, was needed, both for a circulation of the books and for a general recognition of their authority. When to this we add the difficulties of transcription and communication, and the political disadvantages under which for several centuries Christianity laboured, preventing the assembling of any Council to determine this and similar questions it cannot be matter of surprise that the Canon should only gradually have assumed its present form. One circumstance that must have retarded the work was the swarm of Apocryphal writings which appeared soon after the Apostolic age, and which commonly laid claim to Apostolic origin. To sift the evidence for these spurious compositions must have been a work of no small difficulty ; and it speaks highly for the diligence and judgment of the early Church, that none of them appear in its catalogues, are quoted as Scripture by the Fathers of that age, or were read in the assemblies of Christians.

The books which Eusebius, a writer of great research and impartiality (A.D. 315) calls *ὁμολογουμένοι*, that is universally and without controversy admitted, are our present ones, with the exception of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that of S. James, that of S. Jude, the second of S. Peter, the second and third of S. John, and the Apocalypse : these, he says, were questioned by some, though received by the majority.<sup>1</sup> They are just such as, from their nature or contents, we might expect to have been of tardier recognition. For either, like the Epistle to the Hebrews, those of S. James and S. Jude, and the Apocalypse, they do not expressly assert their Apostolic origin ; or, like the second and third of S. John, they were addressed to individuals, which evidently would render it more difficult to prove their genuineness. Whatever may be the deficiency of evidence for these books, it must never be forgotten that it is comparative, and that those for which there is the least, rest on testimony incomparably stronger than can be adduced for any Apocryphal writing. Nor must it be forgotten that the very hesitation and reserve with which the disputed books were received adds weight to the judgment of the early Church, where it was unanimous. From the candidly-expressed doubts of the first three centuries in regard to some books we derive the same benefit in estimating the claims of the rest as we do,

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. Hist., lib. iii. 27.

on the fact of our Lord's resurrection, from the incredulity of S. Thomas.

Nevertheless, these disputed books cannot be placed exactly on the same level with the rest. We admit them into the Canon as, on the whole, sufficiently attested, but we cannot now repair the disadvantage under which they labour, as having been not universally accepted by the ancient Church. The doubts which were then felt propagate themselves, unless fresh evidence should come to light, which is not likely. Comparatively, therefore, with the others they occupy, as regards the external testimony, an inferior position, and on this account have sometimes received the name of Deutero-Canonical.<sup>1</sup>

The Canon of the New Testament being established, that of the Old to us Christians at once follows. For by our Lord and the Apostles our present books of it are quoted and classified, and no others. Amidst the censures that Christ directed against the Jews of that age, he never charged them with adding to or corrupting their Scriptures. By their traditions they frequently 'made the Word of God of none effect,' but the Word itself they left intact. Tradition points to the return from the Babylonish captivity as the time when the task was undertaken of collecting the books, which, after the destruction of the temple, had become dispersed; and the same tradition makes Nehemiah and Ezra, especially the latter, principal agents in the prosecution of the task. To the collection thus formed, whether by Ezra or not, his own writings, together with those of Nehemiah and Malachi, that were written before Ezra's death, were added, and the Canon of the Old Testament completed. It was, with the exception of a few insignificant sects, acknowledged by the Jews throughout the world. Though a number of Apocryphal writings, most of them of Alexandrian origin, appeared subsequently to the last of the prophets, and some became incorporated in the LXX. translation, it does not appear that even in Egypt they ever obtained Canonical authority, and certainly not among the Jews of Palestine. It was, therefore, in disregard of the unanimous tradition of the appointed guardians of the Old Testament, as well as of the facts of history, that the Church of Rome pronounced, at the Council of Trent, that all the books contained in the Vulgate, Apocryphal or otherwise, should, under pain of an anathema, be accounted as sacred and Canonical. (Sess. iv., c. 1.)

We now proceed to the properly dogmatical aspect of the question.

<sup>1</sup> 'Ubi desunt primæ et veteris ecclesiæ firmæ, et consentientes testificationes, sequens ecclesia, sicut non potest ex falsis facere vera, ita nec ex dubiis potest certa facere' (Chemnitz, Exam. Con. Trid., lib. i., 22).

On what grounds, let us ask, do we receive a book as Canonical? The ultimate ground can be no other than our conviction that it is, or contains, the Word of God; in other words, that (to speak at present only of the New Testament) it is an authentic record, written under special inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of the Christian revelation. This, however, only leads the way to the further question, How do we arrive at this conviction? And the reply of the Romish Church is that the authority of Scripture depends on the decision of the Church; or, in other words, that the Canonicity of a book is to be admitted because the Church affirms it. It is true that this is not openly avowed in the decisions of the Council of Trent, but it is virtually assumed. For when the Council anathematizes all who do not receive as sacred and Canonical, *e.g.*, the books of Tobias, Judith, and Wisdom, and the two books of the Maccabees, which notoriously never had a place in the Jewish Canon (the original Hebrew), and were never unanimously accepted by the ancient Christian Church, but, on the contrary, were rejected by those Fathers who were acquainted with Hebrew, and who made the subject their special study,<sup>1</sup> it is obvious that it claims the power of fixing the Canon by its own plenary authority. It is only an accident how far the power may be exercised. The Council stops short at certain books which, no doubt, have been esteemed in the Church; but the principle may be extended to any books, whatever their contents or the attestation they enjoy. For the principle is, that the existing Church of Rome is the final court of appeal to decide what books are to be esteemed Canonical and what not.

Against this principle the Reformed Churches protest. In the first place, whatever may be the functions of the Church in this matter, it is certainly not the existing Romish Church, nor the Romish Church of the sixteenth century, from which we receive the Canon, but from that early Church which makes no pretensions to be an independent, infallible authority, but exercises its functions only in connection with the facts of history. The Tridentine Fathers were in no better position to determine these questions than we are. But, in the next place, the Reformers denied that *any* Church, or even the Church Catholic, possesses the authority claimed. By them the office of the Church, in relation to Scripture, is defined to be 'a keeper and a witness'; a keeper inasmuch as to its custody the sacred records are committed, to be jealously guarded from addition, mutilation, or deprivation; and a witness inasmuch as it is incumbent on the

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.*, Jerome, whose catalogue agrees with ours. The Apocryphal books found an entrance into the LXX. version, and thence passed into the Old Latin translation; from which they were received into the Vulgate.

Church to hand down, from age to age, the chain of evidence which proves these books, and no others, to have been from the first acknowledged. So far, no doubt, it is the Church that first introduces her members to the knowledge of the Bible, and, moreover, accompanies this introduction with her own testimony to its supernatural origin and priceless value ; but this is a very different thing from assuming a power to *make* a book Canonical by a simple authoritative decision. The Church, in this matter, discharges an office similar to that of the Samaritan woman in John iv., who invited her fellow-townsmen to come and see a man who had told her all that ever she did : she was the means, or occasion, of their becoming acquainted with the Messiah, but she did not make Him what He was, nor could she produce saving faith in them : they believed, when they did believe, not because of her saying, but because they had heard Him themselves, and perceived that it was indeed the Christ. The Scripture is never fully received on its proper grounds until a similar personal experience is wrought in its readers.

It must not be dissembled that the witness of the Church to the Canonicity of a book comes to us with a great weight of authority (authority in the classical sense of the word *auctoritas*, viz., prevailing moral influence), though not with that claimed for it by the Council of Trent ; but it is important to point out wherein this authority lies. The nearness of the primitive Church to Apostolic times, its knowledge of the original language, the sources of evidence then probably accessible which now no longer exist, and other like external advantages over us, are no doubt of great moment ; but they by no means exhaust the question. If they did, then *any* body of historical testimony, say of heathen writers possessing the same advantages, would be of equal value. The witness of the Church is valuable because it is the witness of the *Church* ; that is, of the body which possesses, by covenant promise, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the same Divine agent who inspired the books. The Church, therefore, of the Apostolic age had a spiritual tact and perception which, independently in a measure of the external testimony, enabled it to discriminate between the genuine writings of the Apostles, or Apostolic men, and spurious compositions. It was by its exercise that such a writing as the Epistle to the Hebrews, of which the human author, the *auctor secundarius*, is doubtful, gained admittance into the Canon, while others bearing the names of eminent Apostles were rejected. Neither species of evidence produced its full effect apart from the other : the historical led to the internal, and the internal confirmed the historical ; a reciprocal action was constantly going on, the result of which was the final settlement of the Canon. This process of

mutual confirmation belongs to the evidences themselves of Christianity, and is nothing but what occurs in the departments of art and literature. For example, a picture by Raphael commends itself at once to a cultivated taste ; and a cultivated taste, without knowing the painter, assigns such a picture to the bloom, not to the decadence, of the art.

And this internal evidence, the *testimonium S. Spiritus* in Scripture, is ever repeating itself, and is as valid now as it was in the first century. For the presence of the Holy Ghost is not limited to any age of the Church ; we, too, believe that we enjoy His gracious influences, and with them the power of discerning the voice of the Spirit in Scripture. A book written by an Apostle, in the exercise of his office, strikes a corresponding chord in the spiritual mind ; and a spiritual mind, even if the name of the author be not certainly known, feels no hesitation in accepting the testimony of the early Church as to its Apostolic parentage. The external evidence, say the Protestant theologians, can only produce an historical faith (*fides humana*) ; the witness of the Holy Spirit in Scripture itself is the source of the *fides divina*, or spiritual persuasion ; and on this, in the last resort, our conviction of its being the Word of God must be founded. So it is, in fact. The Holy Spirit in the Word, and the Holy Spirit in the heart, answer one to the other as sound and echo, or voice to voice. Christians have the mind of Christ, and therefore know, as none else can, the things of the Spirit, that is of Christ (John xvi. 14 ; 1 Cor. ii. 14, 16) ; and the testimony thus furnished by Scripture itself is direct and conclusive, it being presupposed that the external testimony corroborates, or does not militate against it. Those who disparage this source of conviction may be asked how otherwise are the laity, who have neither time nor ability for learned researches, ever to arrive at a happy persuasion that the words they read are a message from God ?

From the foregoing observations it will be seen how the inference, that because, in a certain sense, we rely upon the Church to declare what is Scripture we are therefore bound to receive implicitly all else that the Church teaches, is to be met. As *against Rome* the reply is sufficient that we do not, in fact, receive the Scriptures on the testimony of the Romish Church ; but the question may arise in reference to the early Church, on whose testimony we do acknowledge that we rely in this matter. The answer, then, must be that the office, even of the early Church, is here only ministerial, not finally authoritative ; it is but the outer tabernacle through which we pass to the Holy of Holies, not the very interior sanctuary itself. The Church presents us with the book, but this does not necessarily imply that she has

succeeded in exhibiting in her faith or practical system a true reflection of its contents. The Jews scrupulously guarded and handed down their sacred books, but failed to read them so as to correct their prevalent errors of faith and practice ; they handed down, in fact, their own condemnation. And so it is with the Christian Scriptures. The Church of every age that transmits them in their integrity, hands down, consciously or unconsciously, the antidote to its errors, if such there be ; and must submit to be tested by this unerring standard. We are grateful for the care with which the sacred touchstone has been preserved and conveyed to us ; but once in possession of it, we apply it without hesitation to test the Christianity even of the transmitters—even as our Christianity of the present day may undergo a similar ordeal at the hands of our successors, and by a similar application of the Divine standard which we religiously cherish. The Bible may not have spoken its last word to the early Church ; and it may be equally true that it has by no means done so to modern Christendom. In short, the two questions are altogether distinct, Has the Church faithfully discharged her office of keeper and witness of Holy writ ? and, Is her practical interpretation of it a correct one ? We may thankfully reply to the former in the affirmative, while suspending our judgment as regards the latter. Nor would the early Church itself have demanded more at our hands. A Cyprian, a Chrysostom, or an Augustine, may not be safe guides on all points, but they would have been the first to say, Here is the inspired volume which we have received from our predecessors, and to which we, in our turn, bear testimony ; let whatever we write be judged by it, and accepted or rejected accordingly.

That the doctrine of the witness of the Holy Spirit to His own Word may be misapplied is true. It is so when a professed discerning of the mind of the Spirit in a book is held of itself to warrant its admission into the Canon : or, to state the same thing from its converse side, if, because we fancy we do not discern the Holy Spirit in a book, we conclude that we are at liberty to reject it ; as Luther rejected the Epistle of S. James because it did not come up to his conception of what a Canonical book should be. But the error lies, as is often the case, not in the principle itself, but in the misuse of it. A book which comes down to us, on probable testimony, as the work of an Apostle, written in the exercise of his office, or under his immediate superintendence, and on that ground assigned a place in the Canon by the early Church, cannot be set aside on the adverse judgment of any individual Christian. For if such a one should profess that he discerns in it no trace of inspiration, the answer must be, that no individual Christian possesses a monopoly of the Holy

Spirit, and that it is more probable that he should be mistaken than that the whole Church should have gone wrong. It would be a serious thing indeed were the whole Church to come round to his opinion ; but this is exactly what has never happened in the case of any Canonical book. We must believe, then, that it was Luther's own fault if he failed to find spiritual nutriment in the Epistle of S. James, rather than that the epistle itself is deficient in internal evidence. We must not put asunder what God has joined together, or invert the order which Divine Providence has established in this matter. The Epistle of S. James, or the Apocalypse, reaches our hands as part of the Canon, admitted into it by that age which had the best means of deciding on its pretensions, and accepted by all Christian Churches. It comes therefore with a *prima facie* weight of evidence in its favour—evidence, as we must believe, partly founded, as regards those who admitted the book, on the very same internal witness of the Holy Spirit which we profess to rely upon. From this its position it cannot be deposed except by a verdict of the Church universal ; and this cannot now be expected, partly on account of the divisions that prevail in Christendom, and partly because the historical evidence on which the early Church decided is, in a great measure, no longer extant : a plain intimation of Providence, that we are not to make our private—or in modern phrase ' subjective '—notions the sole ground of our acceptance or rejection of a book. And thus, though the external attestation and the internal testimony are not the same, and the one is not complete without the other, we are warranted in believing that no one who, taking into his hands a book which has been received as Canonical by the whole Church, proceeds in a humble and devout spirit to study its contents, will eventually fail to perceive therein the witness of the Holy Spirit.

It must be admitted that in some instances it is the external testimony on which we have chiefly to rely. It might, *e.g.*, be difficult to maintain that the Books of Joshua and Ruth, though we place them in the Canon, reflect their own light, or convey a conviction of their origin, so forcibly as the Gospel of S. John, or the Epistles of S. Paul ; and the same may be said of some books even of the New Testament as compared with others. The testimony of the Holy Spirit is in these more latent, does not appeal so directly to the spiritual instinct, and therefore we are compelled to make up for the deficiency by leaning more upon the historical attestation.

It is to be noted, finally, that there is reason to believe that the office of inspired men was not merely to write themselves as the Holy Spirit prompted, but to authenticate the writings of their

predecessors ; a circumstance which may be thought to be hinted at in the well-known passage of Josephus (Cont. Apion, i. s. 8) : ‘ From the time of Artaxerxes to the present day, books of various kinds have appeared, but they are not esteemed of equal authority with the more ancient, because since that time the legitimate succession of prophets has failed.’ As long as this succession continued, inquirers had an infallible authority to appeal to on the question whether a book was to be deemed Canonical or not. Every reader of the Old Testament will have observed how often passages from the earlier prophets are quoted by the later ones, and thus receive an inspired attestation. In like manner S. Peter authenticates S. Paul’s epistles ; and it was doubtless ordered by Divine Providence that S. John should survive to see the Canon of the New Testament virtually completed, and to give it his imprimatur.

#### § 4. INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

In the preceding section the questions have been : What books constitute the volume of Holy Scripture ? and What has been, and is, the office of the Church in the fixing of the Canon ? The question now before us is, On what ground do we assign to the books thus ascertained as supreme authority in matters of faith and practice ? To the Christian, the books received in the first instance on the tradition of the Church commend themselves by the light which they impart, as the sun is seen by his own beams ; but a further question remains : What is the measure of the intensity of the light ? The witness of the Holy Spirit in the volume seals the witness of the Church ; but *to what extent* was the Holy Spirit an agent in its composition ? this is the point which now demands consideration. And the answer is : The supreme authority of Holy Scripture rests on the presumption that its authors when they wrote did so under a special influence of the Holy Spirit, differing not merely in degree, but in kind from His ordinary influences ; to which special influence the Church has given the name of Inspiration.

The plenary<sup>1</sup> inspiration of Scripture is rather assumed than anywhere directly affirmed in our formularies ; probably because at the time no controversy on the point had arisen, at least between the great contending divisions of Christendom. If there ever was a general consent of the Church Catholic on any question, it exists on this. East and West, from the earliest to the latest times, concurred in assigning to Scripture a pre-eminence which consisted in its being—as no other collection of writings is—the Word of God. The foreign Protestant Confessions (more explicit than our own on this

<sup>1</sup> This descriptive epithet is on many grounds to be preferred to ‘ verbal.’



point), take up the sacred tradition ; and the Church of Rome is in substantial agreement with them. That Church, as we think, has on insufficient grounds added to the number of Canonical books ; she has, in our opinion, improperly made tradition a co-ordinate authority with Scripture ; but the books which she does receive she with us assigns to the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is, next to our common acceptance of the doctrines contained in the three creeds, one of the links that connect us with that Church, and makes a reconciliation at any rate within the range of possibility. From this it will be seen that it is the province of dogmatic theology not so much to prove the inspiration of Holy Scripture—for no Christian Church, as a Church, least of all our own, doubts the fact—as to define and explain what is meant by it, and to attempt to meet objections which may be urged against the received doctrine on the subject.

And, first, let the meaning of the term ' inspiration,' as applied to Scripture, be fixed ; fixed for the purposes of this discussion. The etymology conveys simply the notion of ' in-breathing,' or the communication of Divine influence ; for what special purpose is determined by the nature of the result. Thus Bezaleel is said to have been inspired for the work of the tabernacle (Exod. xxxi. 3) ; Moses was inspired to give the law, David to compose Psalms, the Prophets to admonish and to predict, the Apostles to preach and lay the foundations of the Church. In one of our Collects we ourselves pray for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The expression therefore ' inspiration of Scripture ' admits of a variety of meaning : it may, *e.g.*, be understood as simply affirming that a peculiar religious geniality pervades a book : or, in a more definite sense, that the authors of certain books did indeed enjoy the privilege of a special Divine assistance as men, but not particularly so as writers ; and that this is enough to account for the position of pre-eminence which the Church assigns to Holy Scripture.

What was the nature and extent of the Divine influence which prompted, or superintended, those of the Apostles who did write, in the particular act of *writing* ? Was it something, if not beyond yet distinct from their general endowment of inspiration ; or was their writing such and such books merely the natural efflorescence of the latter ? As we may say, Milton was a great genius, and, therefore, naturally threw off the ' Paradise Lost.' Was there, in short, a commission to write as well as to teach ? The hinge of the controversy really turns on the answer to these questions.

No little difficulty has been introduced into the subject by the indiscriminate use of the words ' revelation ' and ' inspiration.'

It is obvious that the mode of the operation of the Holy Spirit on the mind of a writer is a matter quite beyond our ken ; the result is all that is cognizable by or concerns us. The result, then, in the case of the inspired writings, is such a combination of Divine with human agency as renders them at once Divine and human.

The older theory of plenary inspiration which makes the sacred writers to have been merely amanuenses, or passive organs, of the Holy Spirit—the theory which in modern times has received the name of mechanical—has not been able to maintain its ground. The writings of the several authors are strongly marked by the peculiar colouring which the abilities, education, or natural temperament of each were calculated to impart. An epistle of S. Paul could never be mistaken for one of S. John, and S. Peter, in his manner, resembles neither of those Apostles. Each has his own peculiar—shall we say favourite?—topics, and expresses himself in his own way. The compositions themselves seem to have been the offspring of circumstances, and do not exhibit, on the part of their human authors, any preconceived plan. We must suppose, then, that the sacred writers, when under the influence of inspiration, were under no constraint in the exercise of their faculties, but wrote as men to men ; that the result, therefore, as it is the Word of God, is also, in a very real sense, the word of man. The Person of the Redeemer presents an analogy. He was truly God and truly man : his manhood was no docetic phantasm, but a reality (1 John i. 1) : but the mode of union is a problem which Christian speculation can hardly be said yet to have solved,

As an inference from Canonicity and Inspiration, the Protestant theologians are accustomed to predicate of Holy Scripture certain qualities, or attributes, which bear upon its fitness for the position which they assign to it in the Church ; such as truth, holiness, sufficiency, perspicuity, etc. Of these properties, perspicuity and sufficiency are of dogmatical import, and constitute points of controversy between the Protestant and the Romish Churches. With the former the subject of the present section, the Interpretation of Scripture, is intimately connected ; the latter will come before us in the following section.

In fact, a principal argument with writers of the Romish Communion against the fitness of Scripture to be the Rule of Faith is derived from its alleged obscurity ; of which they produce as evidence the variety of interpretations of which it seems capable ; both the Church and heretics appealing to it in support of their views, and in orthodox Christianity different sects, and even Churches, drawing different conclusions from the same book. As to individuals, can

two Christians be found in absolute agreement as to the meaning of Scripture? 'It is plain' (says Bellarmine) 'that Scripture is not *judex controversiarum*, because it admits of various senses; nor can Scripture itself declare which is the true one. Besides, in every well-ordered state, the law and the judge are distinct. The law prescribes what is to be done, and the judge interprets the law, and decides accordingly. The question is about the interpretation of Scripture; but it cannot interpret itself.' And after him Möhler: 'It is one thing to say that Holy Scripture is the source of doctrine, and another that it is the judge in the determination of what is doctrine. It can no more be the latter than a code of laws is identical with the bench of judges; judgment is given according to the code, but the code does not judge itself.' In other words, Scripture needs a standing hermeneutical tribunal, invested with authority to declare its meaning as particular cases arise, without which it would be of little value. Such a tribunal is actually supplied in and through the Church; whether by that term we are to understand the collective Episcopate, or general Councils, or the Pope, or the Pope and a Council combined. As might be supposed, the Protestant Confessions speak otherwise, for how can Scripture be the Rule of Faith if its meaning is not apparent, at least on all essential points? The following statement of a Polish Confession expresses the sentiment of all the Protestant Churches: 'In which Scriptures there is so much of what is plain and perspicuous that in them everything may be found that relates to faith and morals, or is necessary to salvation.' Accordingly, our own formulary declares that 'Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, or may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an Article of Faith' (Art. vi.). It is true that *who* is to read Scripture and prove thereby is not here specified; this is left to the common sense of those who accept the Article,<sup>1</sup> but it is plainly implied that *some one* can discover in the Scriptures statements plain enough to establish all the essential Articles of Faith, and this is all that is necessary for our present purpose. No doubt this 'some one' may be affirmed to be a Council, or the Pope, or the ancient Church: but until it is proved that these, or any of them, possess by Divine right a power to see in

<sup>1</sup> 'Not a word is said' (in Articles vi., xx.) 'in favour of Scripture having no rule or method to fix interpretation by; nor of the private judgment of the individual being the ultimate standard of interpretation' (Tract 90, v. 1). True, but why should such a rule or method be supposed necessary in the case of Scripture more than in that of any other book? And who can it be, after all, but an individual, or a company of individuals, that is to read and prove?

Scripture what the ordinary Christian cannot see, of which we say that no proof exists,<sup>1</sup> the Article must retain its natural meaning.

It is hardly to be supposed that a collection of books which professes to contain a Divine revelation would be purposely written so as not to be understood. To demand reverence towards writings of this character would be to set up a kind of fetish-worship, and must be accounted wholly unworthy of Him from whom we believe them to have proceeded. The Scriptures, too (to speak at present only of the New Testament), were addressed not to schools of philosophers, nor even to the ministerial order exclusively, but to whole Churches, containing men of every degree of culture and ability. That they would be understood by these must have been the expectation of the writers; and if they had been virtually in an 'unknown tongue,' the Apostle Paul, at least, would hardly have enjoined their being read in the public assemblies of Christians (Col. iv. 16; 1 Thess. v. 27; compare 1 Cor. xiv.). Now, it is true that we, as compared with the early Christians, labour under some disadvantages for the understanding of these writings; the language which was a living one to them, is to us no longer so; allusions familiar to them present, it may be, difficulties now; we possess not the advantage of living Apostles to explain their own statements; and other sources of comparative obscurity exist. But by the providence of God, sufficient knowledge of the language, and of the history, private and public, of the times, has come down to us to put us, for all practical purposes, in the position of the first readers. And what difficulties do remain, cannot be supposed to affect the essentials of faith.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, whatever the obscurity of Scripture may be, the question remains whether the sources we are referred to for its removal are themselves plainer. If it is the Creeds, their controversial clauses are, many of them, not very clear in meaning, and, at any rate, might be made the subject of prolonged debate; if a catena of the Fathers, say of the first four centuries, it is doubtful whether, amidst conflicting statements, any consentient interpretation, except as regards a few leading passages, could be extracted from their works. In truth, of all species of tradition, the hermeneutical is the least capable of being reduced to form.<sup>3</sup> But, even if such did exist, it must be

<sup>1</sup> Art. xxi., On the Authority of General Councils.

<sup>2</sup> An important distinction is to be drawn between obscurity of the *subject-matter* and obscurity of the *expression*—e.g., 'The Word became flesh'; here the fact is most mysterious, but the language is plain enough. We see 'through a glass darkly' as regards many revealed facts, such as the Incarnation or the Holy Trinity; but the question between Romanists and Protestants is not whether the *things* are obscure, but whether the *language* in which they are expressed is sufficiently plain.

<sup>3</sup> As is confessed by Möhler.—'We could hardly, with the exception of a very few classical passages, discover in them (the Fathers) any general agree-

expressed in human language, the meaning of which itself would become subject to controversy ; the interpreters would need to be interpreted themselves, and so on *ad infinitum*. The truth is, it is not because of the obscurity of Scripture that so much controversy has arisen respecting its meaning, but because of the universal latent feeling that it is, or ought to be considered, the supreme Rule of Faith ; and if any other book, or formulary, were to occupy this position in its stead, there would be just as much dispute respecting its meaning. The controversy evidently would be endless, unless it could be referred at last to the decision of a living, infallible judge ; which is, in fact, the conclusion to which the Romanist is ultimately driven.

It is not, indeed, affirmed that Scripture contains no obscure passages—passages in which the allusion is not apparent, or the expression ambiguous, or the construction difficult, or the reasoning not at first sight clear, or which may be prophetic and await light to be thrown upon them by future events ; but this is only what occurs also in heathen authors, of whose general meaning we entertain no doubt. Scripture contains in itself a germinant principle, and what may be obscure, or not acted upon in one age of the Church, may come to full recognition in another. The teaching of S. Paul on the topics of original sin and predestination can hardly be said to have received its due attention before the appearance of that great luminary of the Western Church, Augustine ; nor the teaching of the same Apostle on justification, previously to the Reformation. It was not until much later that Christian men perceived that the principles enunciated in the Pauline Epistles are inconsistent with the institution of slavery, though the institution itself is never expressly condemned ; and efforts were made to remove the scandal. But these admissions are compatible with the conviction that on all the essential points of faith, morals and discipline, Scripture is sufficiently perspicuous, it being presupposed that the reader brings with him a willingness to receive what it seems plainly to teach.<sup>1</sup>

ment of interpretation, beyond the fact that they all teach the same doctrine of faith and morals' (Symb., p. 390). In truth, the prescription of the Council of Trent, ' Ut nemo contra unanimum consensum Patrum ipsam Scripturam sacram interpretari audeat ' (sess. iv.), or any similar one, is incapable of fulfilment.

<sup>1</sup> ' These Epistles ' (S. Paul's) ' were certainly addressed to the whole Church, and were meant to be understood by men of average intelligence, who applied their attention properly. Their predestinarian meaning in parts is, on the whole, clear and decided, and the reason why their meaning is thought by many to be so very obscure and difficult to get at, is that they will not acknowledge this predestinarian meaning to be the true one. These interpreters create difficulties for themselves by rejecting the natural meaning of passages, and then lay the difficulty on the passages.' Mozley ' On Predes-

And it may well be that some difficulties have been suffered to remain, in order to stimulate curiosity, and to lead to a more diligent study of the sacred volume.<sup>1</sup>

The Protestant rule of interpretation is thus enunciated in the Helvetic Confession: 'Scripture (as the Apostle Peter says) is not of private interpretation, consequently we do not approve of any and every interpretation, much less of that which the Romish Church imposes, but only of that which is sought out of Scripture itself (due regard being had to the original languages, etc.), and which agrees with the Rule of faith and charity. The interpretations of the Fathers and the definitions of Councils we do not undervalue, but neither do we assign to them unlimited authority. In matters of faith we admit but of one Judge, God Himself speaking through the Scriptures; and as regards human opinions, the weight which we attach to them depends upon their being those of spiritually enlightened men.'<sup>2</sup> Here is stated the great Protestant Canon—**SCRIPTURE IS ITS OWN AUTHENTIC INTERPRETER**;<sup>3</sup> on which, as against Rome, all the Protestant Churches are in agreement. This rule rests on a twofold foundation—the doctrine of inspiration, and the structure of the volume. Each book of Scripture being the Word of God, in a sense in which no other writing is, requires for an authentic interpretation of it an interpreter similarly gifted with the writer, and none such is or can be formed outside the Canon itself: to interpret the writings of S. Paul, so that the interpretation shall be free from possibility of error, can only be the work of another Canonical writer; uninspired expositions may be valuable, but they can never be put on a level with the writing expounded. It might have been, however, that no inspired comment on another inspired writing could exist—that the Bible had been the production of one author; in which case, no doubt, the Protestant Canon would have been difficult of application. But here the structure of the volume comes to our aid. For, in fact, Scripture is not the production of a single writer (as regards its human authorship), but a collection of books by different authors, of various gifts and diversified religious experience, only connected together by the supernatural tie of inspiration. Hence, what is wanting in one may be supplied by another, note viii. The remark is applicable to many parts of Scripture, besides those relating to predestination.

<sup>1</sup> 'Magnifice et salubriter ita Spiritus S. Scripturas modificavit ut locis apertioribus fami occurreret, obscurioribus autem fastidia detergeret' (Aug. De doc. Christ. lib. ii. c. 7). Gerh. loc. ii. § 2.

<sup>2</sup> Conf. Helv. i. c. 1.

<sup>3</sup> More explicitly enunciated in another part of the same confession, 'Hujus (scripturæ) interpretatio ex se ipsa sola petenda est, ut ipsa interpres sit sui, caritatis fideique moderante regulâ' (ii. 2).

other ; and this is actually the case. The Levitical ritual is a system of dumb elements until we study it in conjunction with the Epistle to the Hebrews ; the fourth Gospel could not have been dispensed with if we were to have a full portraiture of the Word become flesh ; on the question of justification, S. Paul needs to be read with S. James, and both with S. John. Now, the writing of each of these authors is really an interpretation of his coadjutor in the same field ; not exactly an exposition—we cannot say that one writer comments on another—but yet really an interpretation in this sense, that the full meaning of the New Testament on any point cannot be gathered without a comparison of all the writers. And by this comparison it may be satisfactorily ascertained. If it is not S. John, or S. James commenting on S. Paul, it is the Holy Spirit Himself supplementing, through the individuality of S. John or S. James, what He had conveyed through the individuality of S. Paul ; which latter, because it had been conveyed through an individual without obliterating his peculiarities of character and training, could not, without a needless miracle, present *all* the sides or aspects of Divine truth—the *πολυποίκιλος σοφία* of God (Ephes. iii. 10)—but needed the completion which it actually received from other inspired sources. Thus the books of the New Testament (to confine our attention to these) mutually interpret, and are interpreted by, each other ; the structure of the volume points to its design and use ; and relieves us from the necessity of seeking in other quarters than within itself instruction on the essentials of faith and practice.

The fundamental system of Christian doctrine thus elicited from a comparison of scripture with scripture, and of one book with another, is what writers on dogmatic theology call the ' analogy of faith,'<sup>1</sup> in accordance with which doubtful passages are to be explained. It is obvious that this must be gathered from Scripture itself, otherwise it would be tradition under another name. It is not, however, a mere stringing of texts together on certain subjects, but the doctrine which lies at the foundation of the various passages which relate to a subject ; substantially the same amidst the variety of forms under which it may be presented. That such a substantial identity may and must exist is an inference from the unity of the primary Author, the Holy Spirit : if the human authors, however otherwise differing from each other, derived inspiration from one source, no real contradiction, none at least affecting essential points can be supposed possible. Whether the reader discovers this unity or not, depends

<sup>1</sup> ' Analogiam fidei, id est, vocem Spiritus S. in perspicuis locis sonantem (J. Gerh. loc. ii. c. 6). The expression is derived from Rom. xii. 6 ; where, however, it bears an altogether different meaning.

more upon his moral and spiritual than upon his literary qualifications : Scripture is understood by the light itself imparts ; but as the sun's rays shine in vain to the blind, so if the organ of spiritual vision be not in a sound state, it may well be that the meaning of Scripture shall be missed, or at least the analogy of faith not perceived. Nor is this without its analogy in merely human systems. The Platonic philosophy, for example, is a connected system ; it is understood to lie at the foundation of the various treatises of Plato ; statements or expressions in his writings which at first sight may seem to present difficulties are equitably interpreted by a reference to his philosophy as a whole ; and some have not hesitated to say that no one can fully understand, still less be a successful commentator on these writings, whose intellectual and moral endowments are not in sympathy with those of the philosopher.<sup>1</sup>

But Romanists adduce not merely varieties of meaning in passages, but essential ambiguity in the language of Scripture ; which latter may be literal and figurative, and figurative in many senses.<sup>2</sup> And so it may be, and is, in uninspired productions, without leading to real ambiguity. There seems to be, in fact, a confusion here between the meaning of a passage and the nature of the language employed ; which latter may no doubt be figurative, or analogical, and yet not introduce a double sense. The instance adduced by Bellarmine, ' My sheep hear my voice ' (John x. 27), is in point. Although the term ' sheep ' is figurative, and needs to be explained from other passages, there is but one *meaning* to the passage. Or merely typical applications, or accommodations (intended as such by the Holy Spirit), are transformed into double senses : as the passage, ' Moses made a serpent of brass,' etc. (Num. xxi. 8), which by our Lord is applied to Himself typically (John iii. 14) ; or ' A voice was heard in Ramah,' etc. (Jer. xxxi. 15), which by the Evangelist is accommodated to the slaughter of the innocents by Herod (Matt. ii. 17, 18). But there is no real ambiguity in the meaning ; as there is in the famous oracle, *Aio te, Æacida, Romanos vincere posse*. Hence the hermeneutical Canon on the Protestant side, that each passage of Scripture admits, in the first instance, of *but one sense, and that the grammatical* ; and, indeed, it is plain that if *any* sense might

<sup>1</sup> ' Every man is born either a Platonist or an Aristotelian ' (Coleridge).

<sup>2</sup> ' Est Scripturæ proprium, quia, Deum habet auctorem, ut sæpenumero duos contineat sensus, literalem sive historicum, et spiritualem sive mysticum ' (Bellarm. De V. D. lib. iii. c. 3). The ' *sensus literalis* ' is again divided into ' *simplex* ' and ' *figuratus* ' ; the ' *spiritualis* ' into ' *allegoricus*, ' *tropologicus*, ' and ' *anagogicus* ' (*ibid.*) ; which are explained in the following distich :

' *Littera gesta docet ; quod credas Allegoria ;  
Moralis quid agas ; quod speres Anagogia.*'



be imposed on a passage, this would be tantamount to its having *no* definite sense ; and thus Scripture would become useless as a Rule of Faith.

There appears, therefore, nothing special in this case to warrant the assumption that a living infallible interpreter is necessary ; and we may add, that if such had been intended we should surely have been left in no doubt to what body, or individual, the authority is committed. But Romanists themselves are, or until lately were, not agreed on this point. Is then each reader to be the judge of the meaning of Scripture ? Properly understood, this is nothing but the truth. It must be the reader himself who is to judge ; and this whether he expects to extract the sense from the text itself, or betakes himself to an infallible interpreter ; for, even in the latter case, he must have previously convinced himself, by an exercise of his own judgment, that the interpreter is infallible. Directly or indirectly, the reader is the ultimate judge.

Standing tribunals, an infallible chair, would not be in harmony with a religion which aims at producing free conviction ; and prefers an agreement gradually reached by conference, by study, by prayer, to one prematurely snatched by the submission of individual judgment to an external authority—that is, in fact, by the subjugation of reason and conscience to the mere ‘subjectivity’ of another. And thus, on the basis of the analogy of faith—‘One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all’ (Ephes. iv. 5, 6)—without the acknowledgment of which a Church would be no Church, but only a casual assemblage ; by preaching, by versions, by conferences, by commentaries, by treatises of all sorts, by private Christian intercourse, the meaning of Scripture is gradually approximated to, though never finally exhausted ; in the way and by the methods intended by its Divine Author—methods not legally stringent, or authoritatively decisive, as might be suitable to the dispensation of the law, but living, plastic, spiritual, as becomes a dispensation of grace and truth (John i. 14), the manhood, not the infancy, of revealed religion (Gal. iv. 1, 15).

As regards the question of interpretation, no hermeneutical tradition either exists, or is necessary, to enable us to ascertain the meaning of Scripture. But there is another kind of tradition, to which, indeed, the name is more commonly applied, and which the Church of Rome asserts to be of equal authority with Scripture, viz., *additions* to the written Word, supposed to have come down from the Apostles by an independent channel. The traditions of the Church, the Council of Trent affirms, whether relating to faith or practice, are to be received with the same reverence as Holy Scrip-

ture itself.<sup>1</sup> There is an unwritten<sup>2</sup> as well as a written Word of God; and the former was intended to run parallel with the latter, both conjointly forming the Church's Rule of Faith. As in the preceding section the perspicuity, so in the present the sufficiency, of Holy Scripture is the question in debate. The Reformed Churches admit no such co-ordinate source of things to be believed as necessary to salvation. Ecclesiastical practices which have been handed down from antiquity, and are not repugnant to Scripture, they do not indiscriminately reject; the decisions of Councils they do not undervalue; the three Creeds they accept as agreeable to Scripture and venerable monuments of the faith of the early Church; but none of these can claim to be the Word of God in the sense in which Scripture is, or, indeed, in any sense. 'No Word of God,' says one of the Protestant Confessions, 'at the present day exists, or can certainly be ascertained, concerning doctrines or precepts necessary to salvation, which is not written or based on the Scriptures, but has (as is alleged) been committed by unwritten tradition to the custody of the Church.'<sup>3</sup> The decision of the Tridentine Fathers is otherwise, and so is the statement of the principal theologian of their Church. 'The controversy between us and heretics' (Protestants), says Bellarmine, 'consists in this—that we assert that all necessary doctrine concerning faith and morals is not expressly contained in Scripture, and, consequently, besides the written Word there is needed an unwritten one; whereas they teach that in the Scriptures all such necessary doctrine is contained, and consequently there is no need of an unwritten Word.'<sup>4</sup>

The real question at issue must be clearly understood. A 'Word of God,' whether written or unwritten, conveys the idea of a revelation—something to be believed as an essential part of the Christian scheme. And it is in this sense that the expression is used in the Protestant Confessions, when they treat of this subject. 'Holy Scripture,' we say, 'containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be *believed as an article of faith*' (Art. vi.). It is not affirmed that rites and ceremonies, in themselves indifferent, should be summarily rejected if not literally found in Scripture; or that it is necessary to adduce express Scrip-

<sup>1</sup> 'Pari pietatis affectu et reverentiâ' (sess. iv.).

<sup>2</sup> Not that it was never committed to writing, for it is supposed to be found in the Fathers and other uninspired sources; but that it was not committed to writing, like Scripture, by the first inspired author. 'Vocatur doctrina non scripta, non ea quæ nusquam scripta est, sed quæ non scripta est a primo auctore, exemplo sit Baptismus parvulorum' (Bellarm. De V. D. lib. iv. c. 2).

<sup>3</sup> Dec. Thor. de Reg. Fid.

<sup>4</sup> De V. D. lib. iv. c. 3.

tural authority for such as we retain. Hooker, long ago, successfully maintained against the Puritans that the Church possesses an inherent power to adapt her polity or ritual to changing circumstances, provided always that such ecclesiastical regulations are in harmony with the spirit of the Apostolic tradition as it is preserved in Scripture. She may be justified, for example, in introducing or retaining infant baptism, though no instance of it occurs in Scripture, and its express Apostolic origin may be doubtful, as 'agreeable to the institution of Christ' (Art. xxvii.), or the general spirit of the Christian dispensation. 'Traditions and ceremonies' of this kind, if 'not repugnant to the Word of God,' are recognized as possessing a *relative* authority, so far as not to be needlessly infringed (Art. xxxiv.); but they can with no propriety be termed part of the Word of God, or necessary to salvation. Whether retained or rejected, they stand on the lower ground of expediency or order. But these are the things which the Romish controversialist commonly adduces as instances of the 'unwritten Word of God'; a skilful extension of the term to what really does not come under it. The instances, for example, which Bellarmine relies on are, infant baptism (as distinguished from adult), the forty days' Lenten fast, and the use of the holy oil in baptism.<sup>1</sup> Would he himself have maintained that these things are necessary to salvation? or that a Church which does not practise them, or some of them, thereby cuts itself off from the body of Christ?<sup>2</sup>

Confining our attention, then, to such tradition as may properly be termed the Word of God, the first question that we naturally ask is, Where is it to be found? And the answer is precisely the same as in the case of hermeneutical tradition; viz., that whether this unwritten word ever existed or not, that is, whether the Apostles taught more or otherwise than what is recorded in the Canonical Scriptures, no church or individual is now in a position to adduce a syllable thereof with certainty. Bellarmine divides such traditions into those of which Christ Himself was the Author, those which the Apostles delivered, and those which the Church has made such<sup>3</sup>: nothing under any of the divisions can be produced which can establish its

<sup>1</sup> De V. D. lib. iv. c. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Much confusion has arisen from the indiscriminate use of the word 'tradition' to signify either doctrines or ceremonies. 'Semper autem memoria repetendum est, statum disputationis Pontificiorum de traditionibus hunc esse:—Scripturam non omnia quæ ad *articulos fidei* et ad dogmata pietatis pertinent, habere, sed multa quæ ad *articulos fidei* necessaria sunt, credenda esse sine Scriptura, extra et præter Scripturam, ex traditionibus non scriptis' (Chemnitz, Exam. lib. ii.).

<sup>3</sup> De V. D. lib. iv. c. 2. The Church *makes* a tradition Apostolical, just as it claims the power to *make* a book Canonical.

claims to be received as a gift to the Church, supplementary to what is contained in Holy Scripture. There is no evidence for the Apostolicity of such doctrines, as, *e.g.*, Purgatory, or the Immaculate Conception, or the Infallibility of the Pope; and the decisions of the existing Church cannot supply the missing links of history.

It is desirable that there should be no misunderstanding on the point in debate. The vehicle of transmission is immaterial provided we have the same certainty in either case. The inspired oral teaching of the Apostles stood exactly on the same footing as their inspired written teaching: we pay no superstitious reverence to a book *as such*, that is, as distinguished from instruction conveyed orally. Let the tradition of the latter be authenticated as Scripture is, and we are ready to assign to it the same authority. It is not because they are unwritten, but because they cannot certainly be proved to be Apostolical, that traditions affecting the faith, not found in Scripture, or to be proved thereby, are to be rejected as an unwritten word; and the sufficiency of Scripture is to be inferred from the fact, not that the words were traced with a pen, but that it is really the only Apostolical tradition which can with certainty be pronounced such. S. Paul tells the Corinthians that what he had received of the Lord he had delivered to them (1 Cor. xi. 23); he exhorts the Thessalonians to hold the traditions which they had been taught, whether by word or epistle (2 Thess. ii. 15), and to rebuke the brother that walked not after the tradition which he had received (2 Thess. iii. 6); he enjoins Timothy to hold fast the form of sound words which he had heard (2 Tim. i. 13): either these (oral) traditions have irretrievably perished, or (as is the fact) they have passed, in another form, into the written Word, so that the Bible comprehends both the written and the unwritten Word of God, and we need not look further. In short, no Apostolical teaching is certainly extant except that which is embalmed in the New Testament; and if any such were to be disinterred, it would be equivalent to the discovery of a new Canonical book.

The first Christian Church was, no doubt, founded by the oral teaching of the Apostles, and continued for some time dependent on that oral teaching; never, however, wholly without a written Word, for it had the Old Testament, and the Apostles were always careful to connect their teaching, as far as might be, with the Jewish Scriptures (Acts xvii. 2, 3, xviii. 28, xxviii. 23); but still, certainly, without New Testament Scriptures. And if it had been provided that a succession of Apostles, of men inspired as S. Paul and S. John were, should continue to the close of this dispensation, the Church could have been perpetuated, and preserved from error, as it was

during the Apostles' life-time. This, however, was not the appointed plan. The men were to drop off in the course of nature and in succession, and an Apostolate of the written Word was to take their place, the men surviving in their writings. This work commenced in due time, and continued through a series of years ; one Apostolical writing proving itself on and by another, until the Canon was complete. These writings may be obscure or defective, but it is certain that we have nothing else to rely upon as genuine Apostolical tradition. And let us imagine what would be our condition if, without a living Apostolate, we had nothing but a tradition of oral teaching to look to, no authentic record of what Christ and the Apostles delivered. We need not go far to form a prediction. The Jews held fast to their written Word, but as soon as ever they attempted to complete it by traditions, it was to make it void (Mark vii. 9). Certain Christian Churches retain, and profess to honour, the written Word ; but they have admitted the principle of tradition as a co-ordinate authority, and the practical aspect of their Christianity is not such as to recommend the principle. It follows that a doctrine which professes to rest on unwritten tradition must be tested by its agreement with what we *know* to be Apostolical tradition, while we are not certain that anything else is ; and be accepted, or rejected, accordingly.

Pressed by these difficulties, the modern Romish controversialist modifies, by spiritualizing it, the idea of tradition. 'What,' asks Möhler,<sup>1</sup> 'is tradition ? It is that sentiment which belongs to the Church, and propagates itself by means of the teaching of the Church ; it is the living Word in the hearts of the faithful. To this sentiment the interpretation of Scripture in the decision of doubtful questions is entrusted ; or, in other words, the Church is the judge of controversies. In an external historical form' (where this is to be found Möhler does not attempt to explain), '*i.e.*, reduced to writing, this inner sentiment becomes the standard and Rule of Faith. In every political community a certain national character or spirit distinguishes it from other communities, and expresses itself in the public and domestic life, the laws and customs, the art and literature, of the community. This is its guardian genius, and as long as it flourishes in pristine vigour, it preserves the continuity of the national life ; either absorbing into itself or expelling foreign elements, should they make their appearance. When it becomes feeble, internecine factions and party spirit split up the body politic, and the latter tends to its dissolution. How much more must this

<sup>1</sup> Symbolik, s. 38.

be the case with the Church which is the body of Christ, His perpetual incarnation, possessing a more refined and delicate organization than any earthly society. Here to allow private opinions or private interpretations of Scripture to prevail against the common sentiment would be suicide ; it is only to the whole body that the promises of its exalted Head belong, and to it alone therefore it appertains to decide.' Thus far Möhler.

It is obvious that this is a conception of tradition very different from that of Bellarmine ; and in fact, there is a great deal in it which the Protestant is not at all concerned to deny. For what is this 'common sentiment' of the Church of which the gifted author speaks, but the spiritual illumination which is the fruit of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and which so far are Protestants from disparaging that, as we have seen (§ 3), they make it a necessary constituent in the argument for Canoncity.<sup>1</sup> And it is true that this gift belongs to the whole body, and to individuals as supposed to be members of the body. Moreover, it is certainly in its essence 'unwritten' tradition, for its primary seat is the heart (2 Cor. iii. 3), from which it may never emerge in spoken or written forms. But is it an absolutely *independent* sentiment ? No, for if it is the work of the Holy Spirit it is so through the external instrument specially thereunto appointed—the written Word of God. Through this, as an instrument, mediately or immediately applied, the Holy Spirit calls the inner sentiment of the Church into being ; dissociated from the written Word such alleged sentiment, as experience amply proves is apt to become fanatical, or worse : it is not produced, nor can it be perpetuated, in its proper purity apart from the written Apostolic tradition. But what is thus dependent upon another thing can never stand alone ; it may, and it does, possess a *relative* independence, but the ultimate test of its genuineness must lie out of itself, viz., in the inner sentiment of those writings respecting which we stand in no doubt that they come from God. But it is worth while to dwell a little longer on this point.

The oral teaching of the Apostles preceded their written, and the Church existed before the New Testament Scriptures. Strictly and formally, therefore, the Church cannot be said to be founded on the Scriptures as a book, but on the doctrine which the Scriptures contain.<sup>2</sup> And what was the order then is, by providential appointment,

<sup>1</sup> Tradition, therefore, is an improper term to apply to it ; being a gift of grace, it is incapable of being handed down from one generation to another, as a book, a doctrine, or a practice can.

<sup>2</sup> Hence the Canoncity of Scripture is not itself an article of faith. Bellarmine remarks with truth : 'Credere historias testamenti veteris vel evangelia Marci, Lucæ, etc., esse canonica scripta, immo ullas esse divinas Scripturas,

the order now—oral teaching precedes the written Word. Children receive the first lessons of Christianity from their parents, catechumens from their instructors, congregations from their pastors ; certainly the heathen from their missionaries. ‘ The Bible alone the religion of Protestants,’ is a saying which, most true in its proper acceptation, may be misunderstood ; as, for example, if it be supposed to mean that scattering broadcast translations of the Scriptures is the appointed means of converting the heathen. And thus, no doubt, there may exist for a time a pure Christian faith amongst those who have never seen the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> But not only has this oral teaching, if it is pure, been derived from the Scriptures, but it is the bounden duty of the Church along with it to place the inspired volume in the hands of the young within her pale, or of her heathen converts ; and to do so as soon as possible, in view of the too probable contingency of the enemy’s sowing tares. Nay, a considerable part of the oral teaching itself must consist of simple exposition of the sacred text. But as soon as this duty is fulfilled, there commences that healthy interaction between the Church and the Scriptures which was intended by their Divine Author ; the Church teaching, the Scriptures proving ; the Church speaking, no doubt, with authority (in the proper sense of the word), but ever appealing to the Scripture in confirmation of what she advances : and then it becomes difficult to distinguish how much of the common Christian sentiment has proceeded from the oral teaching, and how much from Scripture ; still more difficult to maintain that the former could have been what it is, if it is pure, without the latter. The case, then, supposed, as it must be if the argument is to be valid, of an inner tradition or sentiment, quite independent of Scripture, and ruling its interpretation, can never arise except in a Church which withholds the Scripture from the laity, and in so doing disparages Apostolical tradition itself. Where the Scriptures are freely read and habitually expounded, the spiritual perception of the Church is constantly recruited and corrected from them, so that the inner and the written tradition become inextricably intermingled. Should it, however, happen, as it may do and frequently has done, that the prevailing sentiment of the Church, that is, the visible Church, has, from the Scriptures falling into abeyance or other causes, drifted away from the Apostolic standard ; and this latter in the disinterred Scriptures comes into collision with the former ; how is the difficulty to be met ? A very

*non est omnino necessarium ad salutem, nam sine fide hac multi sunt salvati antequam Scripturæ scriberentur*’ (De Eccl. lib. iii. c. 14).

<sup>1</sup> Irenæus, *Cont. hæc.* lib. iii. c. 4. But, after all, Irenæus may mean no more, with respect to the barbarous people of whom he speaks, than S. Paul does with respect to the Corinthians (2 Cor. iii. 2, 3). Bellarm. De V. D. iv. c. 7,

prevalent ecclesiastical sentiment, for example, pleaded in the person of Dr. Eck, Luther's antagonist, for the sale of indulgences, and a similar one in the persons of inquisitors demanded that they whose only crime was that they could not believe certain doctrines, should be sent to the stake. There can be no doubt as to the answer. The voice of God in His written Word must control and correct the voice of God in the Church (real work of the Holy Spirit as that may be); for while the former was delivered, as we have seen (§ 4), under a special Divine superintendence, the latter enjoys no such prerogative, and is liable not merely to an admixture, but to a predominance, of human infirmity. The Romanist, however, cuts the knot otherwise. If the Church and Scripture seem to differ, so much the worse for Scripture. Scripture must give way for it is only a book which any one who fancies he understands it may make what he pleases of, while the sentiment of the Church is infallible. It is the necessary result of his theory.<sup>1</sup>

But, it may be urged, we have in the Creeds a Rule of Faith, and one in some measure independent of Scripture. Christendom, as a whole, accepts the three Œcumenical Creeds; and, moreover, each Church has its own particular symbol, which, to it, seems practically its Rule of Faith; the Romish Church, the decrees of Trent and its Catechism; the Anglican, its Thirty-nine Articles; the Lutheran, the Confession of Augsburg; the Swiss Churches, the Helvetic Confessions. If these are not, respectively, Rules of Faith, what are they? The question is not unimportant.

The reply, then, is that, although these formularies may for certain purposes, and under certain aspects, be considered Rules of Faith, none of them is *the* Rule of Faith; and, in fact, they are Rules in quite a different sense from that in which Scripture is. And our Church, in Article viii., is careful to guard against any misunderstanding on this point. The three Creeds, especially the earliest of them, come to us with the greatest claims to our attention, as deliberate professions of the faith of the Church of the first centuries on certain fundamental doctrines; professions, as regards the two later, put forth after much controversy, and under circumstances which lend peculiar weight to them. But in their present form they are not of Apostolical origin. Their contents, or the main truths expressed in them, we, of course, believe to be Apostolical, otherwise we should not receive them; but the mode of expression, the *statement* of the truths, was the work of uninspired men. They form, therefore, an Apostolical tradition only in the sense of being attempts to state, explain, or defend, the great doctrines respecting the Holy

<sup>1</sup> See Möhler, Symb. ss. 39, 40.



Trinity and the Incarnation, which, in an unsystematic form, are expressed or implied in Scripture. The fable which makes the Apostles' Creed the joint production of the Twelve has been long since exploded ; the various forms under which, though in substance the same, it was used in different localities, sufficiently prove that the Apostles left no such summary behind them ; or only such bare elements as, *e.g.*, 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. This does not in the least derogate from its just authority as the oldest traditional relic of what the first Christians believed on certain points, or from its value as a basis of Christian instruction, or as a baptismal profession of faith. But it does invalidate its claim to supersede, or to be co-ordinate with Scripture as the Rule of Faith ; for, like all other alleged traditional relics, we cannot, in its present form, trace it directly to the Apostles. How much more does this apply to the two subsequent Creeds ; one of which is the production of a Council which ' may err even in things pertaining to God ' (Art. xxi.), and the other is probably a work of the fifth century. But besides this, a moment's inspection of the Creeds proves that they are insufficient to be the Rule of Faith. The Apostles' Creed, though the Trinitarian hypothesis lies at the base of it, is so meagre in its statements on that subject that Socinians have always professed their willingness to subscribe to it. It omits, too, all mention of the Sacraments and their nature, and all allusion to the doctrine of justification ; points important enough to have produced a separation, apparently permanent, between large sections of the Western Church. The later Creeds, though explicit against Arianism and Sabellianism, do not fully supply these defects. On the whole, these venerable formularies cannot be considered a complete Rule of Faith ; and we may add, they were never intended to be so ; they were special protests against special heresies. They expressed not what the Church *was* to believe, but what she did believe on the doctrines assailed ; they are not *norma credendi* but *norma crediti*. And, as such, they can only make good their claims by proving their correspondence with Holy Scripture (Art. viii.). Nor is there anything essentially permanent in the form in which they enunciate these doctrines ; the permanency belongs to the doctrines themselves. That is to say, though we may admire the precision of language in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, and think it could hardly be improved upon, yet the Church is not tied to these or any other uninspired formularies ; and even if the Creeds had perished, though the loss would have been great, the Church, taught from above, and possessing the written Word, would be able, should the necessity again arise, to frame new formularies suitable to express her faith and to expel error.

Yet the Creeds, and other symbols of particular Churches, are in a certain sense a Rule of Faith ; they are so to the members of the Christian society which has adopted these symbols, and made them tests of admission : the proper light to regard them in is, as terms of communion. They lay down, that is, the conditions on which an applicant is to be admitted a member of the society. In framing such conditions, the society does not arrogate to itself infallibility ; it merely states what it believes as such a society, and reminds the applicant that if he becomes a member thereof he must be supposed to share its convictions. If he does not share them, he is under no compulsion to join the society ; and if he ceases to share them, he is under no compulsion to continue a member. Our Church proposes the Apostles' Creed to candidates for baptism as sufficient to stamp a distinctive character on their profession. If the candidate agrees with this, *her* interpretation of Scripture, he is admitted ; otherwise not. Such terms of communion are obviously a very different thing from the Rule of Faith. And what the Apostles' Creed, or the two other Creeds, are to the Church at large, each Church's particular symbol is to itself ; with this difference, that such symbol affects rather the teachers than the mere members of the society in question. Our Thirty-nine Articles are terms of Communion for the clergy of our Church ; we do not propose them to mere candidates for baptism. Such subscription is intended, and is necessary, to provide some guarantee that our teachers accept the peculiar ecclesiastical position which we occupy in reference to other Churches. For this position is one of opposition, not merely to the ancient heresies, but to various errors (as we believe them to be) of the Church of Rome ; and to leave it open to public teachers to teach what they please on other points, provided they adhere to the doctrines of the three Creeds, would be to ignore an essential feature of our Church, and to reduce it, so far, to a nebulous haze, without form or outline. The points of difference between us and Rome constitute the really essential portions of our formulary ; essential, that is, not to our being a Christian Church, but to the justifying of our position as regards the Romish Communion of which we once formed a part. Hence the attempts that have been made from time to time, in some Reformed Churches, to substitute, *e.g.*, the Apostles' Creed as the *norma docendi* for their distinctive confession, cannot be commended. If successful, it would be tantamount to ecclesiastical suicide ; nor, for the reasons before given, can this Creed be made the Rule of Faith instead of Scripture.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The well-known theory of Grundtvig, in Denmark. It had been previously

It is almost needless to observe that teachers who have subscribed our symbol cannot claim a right to fall back on Scripture alone, on the ground that we make Scripture the sole Rule of Faith. For the statements of the symbol are, in fact, our Church's interpretation of Scripture ; she claims to have examined Scripture and settled what it teaches ; the symbol is *to her* Scripture or Scriptural ; and she justly may call upon her ministers either to adopt her interpretations, or to retire from her communion.

The nature of the sufficiency of Scripture may be dismissed in few words. It contains no catechism, no articulated formulary of doctrine standing out in relief ; but the essential doctrines are so interwoven in its texture, that they can no more be separated from it than the miraculous element can from the Gospels. It is the Holy Spirit addressing those in whom He dwells as one friend would another, or as a father would his children come to years of discretion ; not as a schoolmaster or lawgiver (Gal. iv. 1-7)—‘ The servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth, but I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you.’ And as regards matters of ritual and polity, precedents are given, principles laid down, but no positive prescriptions or minute details—a ceremonial law forms no part of Apostolic Christianity. But whether as regards doctrine or discipline, the Church has ever found in the sacred volume all that she needs to fulfil her mission in the world, and to conduct herself to eternal glory ; all that she needs to refute heresy, or to separate from herself those accretions of error which may be expected, from time to time, to gather round her system in this imperfect state.

#### § 5. RELATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT TO THE NEW

In the Canon of Scripture we include, as has been seen, the books of the Old Testament ; but our seventh Article deems it necessary to remind us that there is no contrariety between the two main divisions of the sacred volume, neither as regards the author of salvation (Christ) nor as regards the object of faith (not transitory promises, but eternal life). It is probable that there is an allusion to the Gnostic and Manichæan heresies of ancient times, both of which exhibited a tendency to depreciate or reject the Old Testament as unworthy to have proceeded from the same Divine Author who inspired the New. These have passed away ; but opinions still differ as regards the propriety of co-ordinating the Jewish Scriptures with

defended in a work by Professor Delbrück, of Bonn, which drew forth three valuable letters in reply from Sack, Nitzsch, and Lücke, Bonn, 1827.

the Christian as a Rule of Faith : or if from the Canonicity of the former this must be allowed in general terms, how far it must be accepted with limitations ; in short, whether, though we may not *sever* the one from the other, we must not *distinguish* between them, and especially under the particular point of view now before us. Things may not be *contrary* the one to the other, and yet may differ in many important respects.

If we believe that the Jewish Scriptures proceeded from the same Holy Spirit who inspired the Christian, it is of course impossible to suppose that the former can contain anything really inconsistent with the latter ; still less can this supposition be entertained if we believe that the Mosaic dispensation, in its principal parts, viz., the Ceremonial Law and the institution of Prophecy (which also form the principal subjects of the Old Testament Scriptures), was specially intended to prepare the way for Christianity, or, as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews expresses it, to be a shadow of good things to come (Heb. x. 1). It is thus that Christ and His Apostles speak of this dispensation ; they appeal to its prophecies, they illustrate Christian verities by a reference to its ritual, they assert its Divine origin and authority, and the first Christians were so far from supposing that in becoming Christians they were setting up any system of religion *contrary* to that in which they had been nurtured, that they continued to attend the temple services, and to observe the Jewish feasts ; and this under Apostolic sanction (Acts iii. 1 ; xviii. 21 ; xxi. 24). If, later on, the Jewish ritual seemed to be waxing old and ready to pass away (Heb. viii. 13), it was only as the type begins to lose its importance in proportion as the anti-type is seen to have come. It is plain that there can be no *contrariety* between things which thus stand to each other in the relation of prophecy and fulfilment. But, as the very terms ' type ' and ' anti-type ' intimate, there may be a *distinction*.

The general answer then which must be given to the question, How far is the Old Testament to us Christians a Rule of Faith ? is, *so far* as it is in accordance with the clearer revelation of the New. This latter is to us the supreme authority, not only in contradistinction to human tradition, but also to those portions or features of the elder economy which, as compared with the Christian, bear the marks of imperfection, or of a merely provisional use ; and which therefore, we justly argue, have been superseded by the later revelation.

We may observe, then, that the two portions of Scripture are in complete accordance as regards the characteristics of a Monotheistic religion, founded on the moral attributes of Deity, and thus distinguished as well from the impure nature-worship as from the poly-

theism of heathenism. Hence, whatever instruction the Old Testament imparts respecting the nature and attributes of the Most High—His spirituality, power, goodness, holiness, and all-embracing providence—belongs to us as much as to those to whom it was originally addressed. All this is *presupposed* in the New Testament. Again, the religious experience of holy men of old, as portrayed especially in the Book of Psalms, connects us with them : insomuch that these lyrical compositions of the Old Testament have ever been found to adapt themselves readily to the purposes of Christian worship. With the exception of some portions, due to the immaturity of religion at that stage of its existence, and which our superior light enables us to separate from the mass, they adequately represent our religious experience : they fix for ever the substance and form of the emotional side of religion ; no small advantage, when we remember how easily the latter lends itself to perversion or deterioration. The typical import too of the Ceremonial Law, so far as it is declared in the New Testament, is of abiding value ; not the ceremonies themselves, but the truths shadowed forth in them and fulfilled in Christ, such as vicarious sacrifice and the covering of sin with blood. The ciphers of the Law, interpreted by the pen of inspiration itself, remain even to us a valuable source of instruction ; and the place where the Lord lay, under the veil of type and symbol, can never to Christians lose its interest. Finally, the moral lessons of the Old Testament, so much insisted on by the prophets to the disparagement of the mere ritual, remain as obligatory as ever they were. To some such extent as this the Jewish Scriptures form a portion of our Rule of Faith.

On the other hand, there are parts of them which have become antiquated by the coming of Christ. The Theocracy, *e.g.*, as a civil regimen, cannot be reproduced in the present day : the perfect fusion which it presented of the civil and religious economy, or, as we should now term it, of Church and State, was only possible where the Almighty Himself condescended to be a temporal King, and where idolatry was not only a sin but disloyalty to the Monarch, a crime *læsæ majestatis* : a truth too much forgotten by the Puritans of the seventeenth century, and not always recognized even now in its full import and inferences. ' The civil precepts ' of the Law of Moses ought not ' of necessity to be received in any commonwealth ' (Art. vii.). Human priests, too, and visible sacrifices have been for ever displaced in the Christian Church by the One High Priest, and His one sacrifice on the cross ; another truth which not only is set at nought in the Romish system, but seems forgotten by some modern Protestant expositors of Jewish prophecy. Again, *fulfilled* prophecy

belongs rather to the department of Christian evidences than to the subject of the Rule of Faith. And, generally, the spirit of the Old Testament rendered to bondage (Gal. iv. 24); the Law exacted an obedience which it furnished no means of fulfilling: it provided no adequate atonement for the sins specified, while for some of a deeper dye it provided no atonement at all: and so far as this was its tendency, it is opposed to the Gospel which reveals a full atonement for all sin, and encourages the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father (Gal. iv. 6). The Law still has its use in convincing of sin, but so far as it is merely preparatory to the Christian standing, it is not our standard of faith or experience.

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## CHRISTIAN THEISM

' There is 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 the Unity of this Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost' (Art. i.). ' The Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God' (Art. v.). ' *Ecclesiæ apud nos docent, decretum Nicænæ Synodi de unitate essentiæ divinæ et de tribus personis verum et sine ulla dubitatione credendum esse; vid, quod sit una essentia divina quæ et appellatur, et est, Deus, æternus, incorporeus, impartibilis; immensa potentia, sapientia, bonitate; Creator et Conservator, omnium rerum visibilium et invisibilium: et tamen tres sint Personæ, ejusdem essentiæ, et potentiæ, et coæternæ, Pater, Filius, et Spiritus S.*' (Conf. Aug. i.). ' *Deum credimus unum esse essentia vel natura, per se subsistentem, immensum, æternum, Creatorem omnium rerum . . . eundem nihilominus Deum immensum, unum et indivisum, credimus Personis inseparabiliter et inconfuse esse distinctum, Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum S.; ita ut Pater ab æterno generaverit, Filius generatione ineffabili genitus sit, Spiritus S. vero procedat ab utroque, idque ab æterno, cum utroque adorandus: ita ut sint tres non quidem Dii, sed tres Personæ consubstantiales, co-æternæ, et co-æquales, distinctæ quoad hypostases, et ordine alia aliam precedens, nulla tamen inæqualitate*' (Conf. Helv. c. iii.).

CHRISTIAN THEISM, our present subject, may, as appears from our Articles and the corresponding statements of other Reformed Confessions, be considered under two divisions; one comprising those truths respecting the Divine nature and attributes which are common to all Monotheistic religions, the other the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, which is distinctive of the Christian faith. In the following discussion this arrangement will be adopted. It must not, however, be supposed that the Monotheism of Christianity is either borrowed from natural religion, or from other sources than revelation. The unity and spirituality of the Divine Being are here to be