Phases of Faith by Francis William Newman

This is perhaps an egotistical book; egotistical certainly in its form, yet not in its purport and essence.

Personal reasons the writer cannot wholly disown, for desiring to explain himself to more than a few, who on religious grounds are
unjustly alienated from him. If by any motive of curiosity or
lingering remembrances they may be led to read his straightforward
account, he trusts to be able to show them that he has had _no choice_
but to adopt the intellectual conclusions which offend them;--that
the difference between them and him turns on questions of Learning,
History, Criticism and Abstract Thought;--and that to make _their_
results (if indeed they have ever deeply and honestly investigated
the matter) the tests of _his_ spiritual state, is to employ unjust
weights and a false balance, which are an abomination to the Lord. To
defraud one's neighbour of any tithe of mint and cummin, would seem
to them a sin: is it less to withhold affection, trust and free
intercourse, and build up unpassable barriers of coldness and alarm,
against one whose sole offence is to differ from them intellectually?

But the argument before the writer is something immensely greater
than a personal one. So it happens, that to vindicate himself is to
establish a mighty truth; a truth which can in no other way so well
enter the heart, as when it comes embodied in an individual case.
If he can show, that to have shrunk from his successive convictions
_would_ have been "infidelity" to God and Truth and Righteousness; but
that he has been "faithful" to the highest and most urgent duty;--it
will be made clear that Belief is one thing and Faith another; that to
believe is intellectual, nay possibly "earthly, devilish;" and that
to set up any fixed creed as a test of spiritual character is a most
unjust, oppressive and mischievous superstition. The historical form
has been deliberately selected, as easier and more interesting to
the reader; but it must not be imagined that the author has given his
mental history in general, much less an autobiography. The progress
of his _creed_ is his sole subject; and other topics are introduced
either to illustrate this or as digressions suggested by it.

_March 22nd, 1850._

PREFACE TO SIXTH EDITION

I had long thought that the elaborate reply made for me in the
"Prospective Review" (1854) to Mr. Henry Rogers's Defence of the
"Eclipse of Faith," superseded anything more from my pen. But in the
course of six years a review is forgotten and buried away, while Mr.
Rogers is circulating the ninth edition of his misrepresentations.

As my publisher announces to me the opportunity, I at length consent
to reply myself to the Defence, cancelling what was previously my last
chapter, written against the "Eclipse."

All that follows p. 175 in this edition is new.

_June_, 1860.

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CHAPTER I.

MY YOUTHFUL CREED.

I first began to read religious books at school, and especially the Bible, when I was eleven years old; and almost immediately commenced a habit of secret prayer. But it was not until I was fourteen that I gained any definite idea of a "scheme of doctrine," or could have been called a "converted person" by one of the Evangelical School. My religion then certainly exerted a great general influence over my conduct; for I soon underwent various persecution from my schoolfellows on account of it: the worst kind consisted in their deliberate attempts to corrupt me. An Evangelical clergyman at the school gained my affections, and from him I imbibed more and more distinctly the full creed which distinguishes that body of men; a body whose bright side I shall ever appreciate, in spite of my present perception that they have a dark side also. I well remember, that one day when I said to this friend of mine, that I could not understand how the doctrine of Election was reconcilable to God's Justice, but supposed that I should know this in due time, if I waited and believed His word;--he replied with emphatic commendation, that this was the spirit which God always blessed. Such was the beginning and foundation of my faith,—an unhesitating unconditional acceptance of whatever was found in the Bible. While I am far from saying that my _whole_ moral
conduct was subjugated by my creed, I must insist that it was no mere fancy resting in my intellect: it was really operative on my temper, tastes, pursuits and conduct.

When I was sixteen, in 1821, I was "confirmed" by Dr. Howley, then Bishop of London, and endeavoured to take on myself with greater decision and more conscientious consistency the whole yoke of Christ. Every thing in the Service was solemn to me, except the bishop: he seemed to me a _made-up_ man and a mere pageant. I also remember that when I was examined by the clergyman for confirmation, it troubled me much that he only put questions which tested my _memory_ concerning the Catechism and other formulas, instead of trying to find out whether I had any actual faith in that about which I was to be called to profess faith: I was not then aware that his sole duty was to try my _knowledge_. But I already felt keenly the chasm that separated the High from the Low Church; and that it was impossible for me to sympathize with those who imagined that Forms could command the Spirit.

Yet so entirely was I enslaved to one Form,—that of observing the Sunday, or, as I had learned falsely to call it, the Sabbath,—that I fell into painful and injurious conflict with a superior kinsman, by refusing to obey his orders on the Sunday. He attempted to deal with me by mere authority, not by instruction; and to yield my conscience to authority would have been to yield up all spiritual life. I erred, but I was faithful to God.
When I was rather more than seventeen, I subscribed the 39 Articles at Oxford in order to be admitted to the University. Subscription was "no bondage," but pleasure; for I well knew and loved the Articles, and looked on them as a great bulwark of the truth; a bulwark, however, not by being imposed, but by the spiritual and classical beauty which to me shone in them. But it was certain to me before I went to Oxford, and manifest in my first acquaintance with it, that very few academicians could be said to believe them. Of the young men, not one in five seemed to have any religious convictions at all: the elder residents seldom or never showed sympathy with the doctrines that pervade that formula. I felt from my first day there, that the system of compulsory subscription was hollow, false, and wholly evil.

Oxford is a pleasant place for making friends,—friends of all sorts that young men wish. One who is above envy and scorns servility,—who can praise and delight in all the good qualities of his equals in age, and does not desire to set himself above them, or to vie with his superiors in rank,—may have more than enough of friends, for pleasure and for profit. So certainly had I; yet no one of my equals gained any ascendancy over me, nor perhaps could I have looked up to any for advice. In some the intellect, in others the religious qualities, were as yet insufficiently developed: in part also I wanted discrimination, and did not well pick out the profounder minds of my acquaintance. However, on my very first residence in College, I received a useful lesson from another freshman,—a grave and thoughtful person, older (I imagine) than most youths in their first term. Some readers may
be amused, as well as surprized, when I name the delicate question on which I got into discussion with my fellow freshman. I had learned from Evangelical books, that there is a _twofold_ imputation to every saint,—not of the "sufferings" only, but also of the "righteousness" of Christ. They alleged that, while the sufferings of Jesus are a compensation for the guilt of the believer and make him innocent, yet this suffices not to give him a title to heavenly glory; for which he must over and above be invested in active righteousness, by all Christ's good works being made over to him. My new friend contested the latter part of the doctrine. Admitting fully that guilt is atoned for by the sufferings of the Saviour, he yet maintained, there was no farther imputation of Christ's active service as if it had been our service. After a rather sharp controversy, I was sent back to study the matter for myself, especially in the third and fourth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans; and some weeks after, freely avowed to him that I was convinced. Such was my first effort at independent thought against the teaching of my spiritual fathers, and I suppose it had much value for me. This friend might probably have been of service to me, though he was rather cold and lawyerlike; but he was abruptly withdrawn from Oxford to be employed in active life.

I first received a temporary discomfort about the 39 Articles from an irreligious young man, who had been my schoolfellow; who one day attacked the article which asserts that Christ carried "his flesh and bones" with him into heaven. I was not moved by the physical absurdity which this youth mercilessly derided; and I repelled his objections as on impiety. But I afterwards remembered the text, "Flesh and blood
shall not inherit the kingdom of God_" and it seemed to me as if the compiler had really gone a little too far. If I had immediately then been called on to subscribe, I suppose it would have somewhat discomposed me; but as time went on, I forgot this small point, which was swallowed up by others more important. Yet I believe that henceforth a greater disposition to criticize the Articles grew upon me.

The first novel opinion of any great importance that I actually embraced, so as to give roughness to my course, was that which many then called the Oriel heresy about Sunday. Oriel College at this time contained many active and several original minds; and it was rumoured that one of the Fellows rejoiced in seeing his parishioners play at cricket on Sunday: I do not know whether that was true, but so it was said. Another of them preached an excellent sermon before the University, clearly showing that Sunday had nothing to do with the Sabbath, nor the Sabbath with us, and inculcating on its own ground a wise and devout use of the Sunday hours. The evidently pious and sincere tone of this discourse impressed me, and I felt that I had no right to reject as profane and undeserving of examination the doctrine which it enforced. Accordingly I entered into a thorough searching of the Scripture without bias, and was amazed to find how baseless was the tenet for which in fact I had endured a sort of martyrdom. This, I believe, had a great effect in showing me how little right we have at any time to count on our opinions as final truth, however necessary they may just then be felt to our spiritual life. I was also scandalized to find how little candour or discernment some Evangelical
friends, with whom I communicated, displayed in discussing the subject.

In fact, this opened to me a large sphere of new thought. In the investigation, I had learned, more distinctly than before, that the preceptive code of the Law was an essentially imperfect and temporary system, given "for the hardness of men's hearts." I was thus prepared to enter into the Lectures on Prophecy, by another Oriel Fellow,--Mr. Davison,--in which he traces the successive improvements and developments of religious doctrine, from the patriarchal system onward. I in consequence enjoyed with new zest the epistles of St. Paul, which I read as with fresh eyes; and now understood somewhat better his whole doctrine of "the Spirit," the coming of which had brought the church out of her childish into a mature condition, and by establishing a higher law had abolished that of the letter. Into this view I entered with so eager an interest, that I felt no bondage of the letter in Paul's own words: his wisdom was too much above me to allow free criticism of his weak points. At the same time, the systematic use of the Old Testament by the Puritans, as if it were "the rule of life" to Christians, I saw to be a glaring mistake, intensely opposed to the Pauline doctrine. This discovery, moreover, soon became important to me, as furnishing a ready evasion of objections against the meagre or puerile views of the Pentateuch; for without very minute inquiry how far I must go to make the defence adequate, I gave a general reply, that the New Testament _confessed_ the imperfections of the older dispensation. I still presumed the Old to have been perfect for its own objects and in its own place; and
had not defined to myself how far it was correct or absurd, to imagine morality to change with time and circumstances.

Before long, ground was broken in my mind on a still more critical question, by another Fellow of a College; who maintained that nothing but unbelief could arise out of the attempt to understand _in what way_ and _by what moral right_ the blood of Christ atoned for sins. He said, that he bowed before the doctrine as one of "Revelation," and accepted it reverentially by an act of faith; but that he certainly felt unable to understand _why_ the sacrifice of Christ, any more than the Mosaic sacrifices, should compensate for the punishment of our sins. Could carnal reason discern that human or divine blood, any more than that of beasts, had efficacy to make the sinner as it were sinless? It appeared to him a necessarily inscrutable mystery, into which we ought not to look.--The matter being thus forced on my attention, I certainly saw that to establish the abstract moral _right_ and _justice_ of vicarious punishment was not easy, and that to make out the fact of any "compensation"—(_i.e._ that Jesus really endured on the cross a true equivalent for the eternal sufferings due to the whole human race,)—was harder still. Nevertheless I had difficulty in adopting the conclusions of this gentleman; FIRST, because, in a passage of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the sacred writer, in arguing—"_For_ it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats can take away sins," &c., &c....—seems to expect his readers to see an inherent impropriety in the sacrifices of the Law, and an inherent moral fitness in the sacrifice of Christ. SECONDLY: I had always been accustomed to hear that it was by seeing the
moral fitness of the doctrine of the Atonement, that converts to Christianity were chiefly made: so said the Moravians among the Greenlanders, so Brainerd among the North American Indians, so English missionaries among the negroes at Sierra Leone:--and I could not at all renounce this idea. Indeed I seemed to myself to see this fitness most emphatically; and as for the _forensic_ difficulties, I passed them over with a certain conscious reverence. I was not as yet ripe for deeper inquiry: yet I, about this time, decidedly modified my boyish creed on the subject, on which more will be said below.

Of more immediate practical importance to me was the controversy concerning Infant Baptism. For several years together I had been more or less conversant with the arguments adduced for the practice; and at this time I read Wall's defence of it, which was the book specially recommended at Oxford. The perusal brought to a head the doubts which had at an earlier period flitted over my mind. Wall's historical attempt to trace Infant Baptism up to the apostles seemed to me a clear failure:[1] and if he failed, then who was likely to succeed?

The arguments from Scripture had never recommended themselves to me. Even allowing that they might confirm, they certainly could not suggest and establish the practice. It now appeared that there was no basis at all; indeed, several of the arguments struck me as cutting the other way. "Suffer little children to come unto me," urged as decisive: but it occurred to me that the disciples would not have scolded the little children away, if they had ever been accustomed to baptize them. Wall also, if I remember aright, declares that the children of proselytes were baptized by the Jews; and deduces, that
unless the contrary were stated, we must assume that also Christ's
disciples baptized children: but I reflected that the baptism _of_
John_ was one of "repentance," and therefore could not have been
administered to infants; which (if precedent is to guide us) afforded
the truer presumption concerning _Christian_ baptism. Prepossessions
being thus overthrown, when I read the apostolic epistles with a view
to this special question, the proof so multiplied against the Church
doctrine, that I did not see what was left to be said for it. I talked
much and freely of this, as of most other topics, with equals in age,
who took interest in religious questions; but the more the matters
were discussed, the more decidedly impossible it seemed to maintain
that the popular Church views were apostolic.

Here also, as before, the Evangelical clergy whom I consulted were
found by me a broken reed. The clerical friend whom I had known at
school wrote kindly to me, but quite declined attempting to solve my
doubts; and in other quarters I soon saw that no fresh light was to be
got. One person there was at Oxford, who might have seemed my natural
adviser; his name, character, and religious peculiarities have been so
made public property, that I need not shrink to name him:--I mean
my elder brother, the Rev. John Henry Newman. As a warm-hearted and
generous brother, who exercised towards me paternal cares, I esteemed
him and felt a deep gratitude; as a man of various culture, and
peculiar genius, I admired and was proud of him; but my doctrinal
religion impeded my loving him as much as he deserved, and even
justified my feeling some distrust of him. He never showed any strong
attraction towards those whom I regarded as spiritual persons: on the
contrary, I thought him stiff and cold towards them. Moreover, soon
after his ordination, he had startled and distressed me by adopting
the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration; and in rapid succession worked
out views which I regarded as full-blown "Popery." I speak of the
years 1823-6: it is strange to think that twenty years more had to
pass before he learnt the place to which his doctrines belonged.

In the earliest period of my Oxford residence I fell into uneasy
collision with him concerning Episcopal powers. I had on one occasion
dropt something disrespectful against bishops or a bishop,--something
which, if it had been said about a clergyman, would have passed
unnoticed: but my brother checked and reproved me,--as I thought, very
uninstructively--for "wanting reverence towards Bishops." I knew
not then, and I know not now, why Bishops, _as such_, should be more
reverenced than common clergymen; or Clergymen, _as such_, more than
common men. In the World I expected pomp and vain show and formality
and counterfeits: but of the Church, as Christ's own kingdom, I
demanded reality and could not digest legal fictions. I saw round
me what sort of young men were preparing to be clergymen: I knew the
attractions of family "livings" and fellowships, and of a respectable
position and undefinable hopes of preferment. I farther knew, that
when youths had become clergymen through a great variety of mixed
motives, bishops were selected out of these clergy on avowedly
political grounds; it therefore amazed me how a man of good sense
should be able to set up a duty of religious veneration towards
bishops. I was willing to honour a Lord Bishop as a peer of
Parliament; but his office was to me no guarantee of spiritual
eminence.--To find my brother thus stop my mouth, was a puzzle; and impeded all free speech towards him. In fact, I very soon left off the attempt at intimate religious intercourse with him, or asking counsel as of one who could sympathize. We talked, indeed, a great deal on the surface of religious matters; and on some questions I was overpowered and received a temporary bias from his superior knowledge; but as time went on, and my own intellect ripened, I distinctly felt that his arguments were too fine-drawn and subtle, often elaborately missing the moral points and the main points, to rest on some ecclesiastical fiction; and his conclusions were to me so marvellous and painful, that I constantly thought I had mistaken him. In short, he was my senior by a very few years: nor was there any elder resident at Oxford, accessible to me, who united all the qualities which I wanted in an adviser. Nothing was left for me but to cast myself on Him who is named the Father of Lights, and resolve to follow the light which He might give, however opposed to my own prejudices, and however I might be condemned by men. This solemn engagement I made in early youth, and neither the frowns nor the grief of my brethren can make me ashamed of it in my manhood.

Among the religious authors whom I read familiarly was the Rev. T. Scott, of Aston Sandford, a rather dull, very unoriginal, half-educated, but honest, worthy, sensible, strong-minded man, whose works were then much in vogue among the Evangelicals. One day my attention was arrested by a sentence in his defence of the doctrine of the Trinity. He complained that Anti-Trinitarians unjustly charged Trinitarians with self-contradiction. "If indeed we said" (argued he)
"that God is three _in the same sense_ as that in which He is one, that would be self-refuting; but we hold Him to be _three in one sense, and one in another_." It crossed my mind very forcibly, that, if that was all, the Athanasian Creed had gratuitously invented an enigma. I exchanged thoughts on this with an undergraduate friend, and got no fresh light: in fact, I feared to be profane, if I attempted to understand the subject. Yet it came distinctly home to me, that, whatever the depth of the mystery, if we lay down anything about it _at all_, we ought to understand our own words; and I presently augured that Tillotson had been right in "wishing our Church well rid" of the Athanasian Creed; which seemed a mere offensive blurting out of intellectual difficulties. I had, however, no doubts, even of a passing kind, for years to come, concerning the substantial truth and certainty of the ecclesiastical Trinity.

When the period arrived for taking my Bachelors degree, it was requisite again to sign the 39 Articles, and I now found myself embarrassed by the question of Infant Baptism. One of the articles contains the following words, "The baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained, as most agreeable to the institution of Christ."

I was unable to conceal from myself that I did not believe this sentence; and I was on the point of refusing to take my degree. I overcame my scruples by considering, 1. That concerning this doctrine I had no active _dis_-belief, on which I would take any practical step, as I felt myself too young to make any counterdeclaration: 2. That it had no possible practical meaning to me, since I could not be called on to baptize, nor to give a child for baptism. Thus I
persuaded myself. Yet I had not an easy conscience, nor can I now
defend my compromise; for I believe that my repugnance to Infant
Baptism was really intense, and my conviction that it is unapostolic
as strong then as now. The topic of my "youth" was irrelevant; for,
if I was not too young to subscribe, I was not too young to refuse
subscription. The argument that the article was "unpractical" to me,
goes to prove, that if I were ordered by a despot to qualitively myself
for a place in the Church by solemnly renouncing the first book of
Euclid as false, I might do so without any loss of moral dignity.
Altogether, this humiliating affair showed me what a trap for the
conscience these subscriptions are: how comfortably they are passed
while the intellect is torpid or immature, or where the conscience is
callous, but how they undermine truthfulness in the active thinker,
and torture the sensitiveness of the tenderminded. As long as they
are maintained, in Church or University, these institutions exert a
positive influence to deprave or eject those who ought to be their
most useful and honoured members.

It was already breaking upon me, that I could not fulfil the dreams of
my boyhood as a minister in the Church of England. For, supposing that
with increased knowledge I might arrive at the conclusion that Infant
Baptism was a fore-arranged "development,"--not indeed practised in
the _first_ generation, but expedient, justifiable, and intended
for the _second_, and probably then sanctioned by one still living
apostle,--even so, I foresaw the still greater difficulty of Baptismal
Regeneration behind. For any one to avow that Regeneration took place
in Baptism, seemed to me little short of a confession that he had
never himself experienced what Regeneration is. If I _could_ then have been convinced that the apostles taught no other regeneration, I almost think that even their authority would have snapt under the strain: but this is idle theory; for it was as clear as daylight to me that they held a totally different doctrine, and that the High Church and Popish fancy is a superstitious perversion, based upon carnal inability to understand a strong spiritual metaphor. On the other hand, my brother's arguments that the Baptismal Service of the Church taught "spiritual regeneration" during the ordinance, were short, simple, and overwhelming. To imagine a _twofold_ "spiritual regeneration" was evidently a hypothesis to serve a turn, nor in any of the Church formulas was such an idea broached. Nor could I hope for relief by searching through the Homilies or by drawing deductions from the Articles: for if I there elicited a truer doctrine, it would never show the Baptismal Service not to teach the Popish tenet; it would merely prove the Church-system to contain contradictions, and not to deserve that absolute declaration of its truth, which is demanded of Church ministers. With little hope of advantage, I yet felt it a duty to consult many of the Evangelical clergymen whom I knew, and to ask how _they_ reconciled the Baptismal Service to their consciences. I found (if I remember) three separate theories among them,—all evidently mere shifts invented to avoid the disagreeable necessity of resigning their functions. Not one of these good people seemed to have the most remote idea that it was their duty to investigate the meaning of the formulary with the same unbiased simplicity as if it belonged to the Gallican Church. They did not seek to know what it was written to mean, nor what sense it must carry to every simpleminded hearer; but they solely asked, how they could manage to assign to it a sense
not wholly irreconcilable with their own doctrines and preaching. This was too obviously hollow. The last gentleman whom I consulted, was the rector of a parish, who from week to week baptized children with the prescribed formula: but to my amazement, he told me that _he_ did not like the Service, and did not approve of Infant Baptism; to both of which things he submitted, solely because, as an inferior minister of the Church, it was his duty to obey established authority! The case was desperate. But I may here add, that this clergyman, within a few years from that time, redeemed his freedom and his conscience by the painful ordeal of abandoning his position and his flock, against the remonstrances of his wife, to the annoyance of his friends, and with a young family about him.

Let no reader accept the preceding paragraph as my testimony that the Evangelical clergy are less simpleminded and less honourable in their subscriptions than the High Church. I do not say, and I do not believe this. _All_ who subscribe, labour under a common difficulty, in having to give an absolute assent to formulas that were made by a compromise and are not homogeneous in character. To the High Churchman, the _Articles_ are a difficulty; to the Low Churchman, various parts of the _Liturgy_. All have to do violence to some portion of the system; and considering at how early an age they are entrapped into subscription, they all deserve our sincere sympathy and very ample allowance, as long as they are pleading for the rights of conscience: only when they become overbearing, dictatorial, proud of their chains, and desirous of ejecting others, does it seem right to press them with the topic of inconsistency. There in, besides, in the ministry of
the Established Church a sprinkling of original minds, who cannot
be included in either of the two great divisions; and from these _a
priori_ one might have hoped much good to the Church. But such persons
no sooner speak out, than the two hostile parties hush their strife,
in order the more effectually to overwhelm with just and unjust
imputations those who dare to utter truth that has not yet been
consecrated by Act of Parliament or by Church Councils. Among those
who have subscribed, to attack others is easy, to defend oneself most
arduous. Recrimination is the only powerful weapon; and noble minds
are ashamed to use this. No hope, therefore, shows itself of Reform
from within.--For myself, I feel that nothing saved me from the
infinite distresses which I should have encountered, had I become a
minister of the Episcopal Church, but the very unusual prematurity of
my religious development.

Besides the great subject of Baptismal Regeneration, the entire
Episcopal theory and practice offended me. How little favourably I was
impressed, when a boy, by the lawn sleeves, wig, artificial voice and
manner of the Bishop of London, I have already said: but in six
years more, reading and observation had intensely confirmed my first
auguries. It was clear beyond denial, that for a century after the
death of Edward VI. the bishops were the tools of court-bigotry, and
often owed their highest promotions to base subservience. After the
Revolution, the Episcopal order (on a rough and general view) might be
described as a body of supine persons, known to the public only as a
dead weight against all change that was distasteful to the Government.
In the last century and a half, the nation was often afflicted with
sensual royalty, bloody wars, venal statesmen, corrupt constituencies, bribery and violence at elections, flagitious drunkenness pervading all ranks, and insinuating itself into Colleges and Rectories. The prisons of the country had been in a most disgraceful state; the fairs and waits were scenes of rude debauchery, and the theatres were--still, in this nineteenth century--whispered to be haunts of the most debasing immorality. I could not learn that any bishop had ever taken the lead in denouncing these iniquities; nor that when any man or class of men rose to denounce them, the Episcopal Order failed to throw itself into the breach to defend corruption by at least passive resistance. Neither Howard, Wesley and Whitfield, nor yet Clarkson, Wilberforce, or Romilly, could boast of the episcopal bench as an ally against inhuman or immoral practices. Our oppressions in India, and our sanction to the most cruel superstitions of the natives, led to no outcry from the Bishops. Under their patronage the two old Societies of the Church had gone to sleep until aroused by the Church Missionary and Bible Societies, which were opposed by the Bishops. Their policy seemed to be, to do nothing, until somebody else was likely to do it; upon which they at last joined the movement in order to damp its energy, and get some credit from it. Now what were Bishops for, but to be the originators and energetic organs of all pious and good works? and what were they in the House of Lords for, if not to set a higher tone of purity, justice, and truth? and if they never did this, but weighed down those who attempted it, was not that a condemnation (not, perhaps, of all possible Episcopacy, but) of Episcopacy as it exists in England? If such a thing as a moral argument _for_ Christianity was admitted as valid, surely the above was a moral argument _against_ English Prelacy. It was, moreover, evident at a glance, that this
system of ours neither was, nor could have been, apostolic: for as long as the civil power was hostile to the Church, a Lord bishop nominated by the civil ruler was an impossibility: and this it is, which determines the moral and spiritual character of the English institution, not indeed exclusively, but preeminently.

I still feel amazement at the only defence which (as far as I know) the pretended followers of Antiquity make for the nomination of bishops by the Crown. In the third and fourth centuries, it is well known that every new bishop was elected by the universal suffrage of the laity of the church; and it is to these centuries that the High Episcopalians love to appeal, because they can quote thence out of Cyprian and others in favour of Episcopal authority. When I alleged the dissimilarity in the mode of election, as fatal to this argument in the mouth of an English High Churchman, I was told that "the Crown now represents the Laity!" Such a fiction may be satisfactory to a pettifogging lawyer, but as the basis of a spiritual system is indeed supremely contemptible.

With these considerations on my mind,--while quite aware that some of the bishops were good and valuable men,--I could not help feeling that it would be a perfect misery to me to have to address one of them taken at random as my "Right Reverend Father in God," which seemed like a foul hypocrisy; and when I remembered who had said, "Call no man Father on earth; for one is your Father, who is in heaven."--words, which not merely in the letter, but still more distinctly in the spirit, forbid the state of feeling which suggested
this episcopal appellation,--it did appear to me, as if "Prelacy"
had been rightly coupled by the Scotch Puritans with "Popery" as
antichristian.

Connected inseparably with this, was the form of Ordination, which,
the more I thought of it, seemed the more offensively and outrageously
Popish, and quite opposed to the Article on the same subject. In the
Article I read, that we were to regard such to be legitimate ministers
of the word, as had been duly appointed to this work _by those who
have public authority for the same_. It was evident to me that this
very wide phrase was adapted and intended to comprehend the "public
authorities" of all the Reformed Churches, and could never have been
selected by one who wished to narrow the idea of a legitimate minister
to Episcopalian Orders; besides that we know Lutheran and Calvinistic
ministers to have been actually admitted in the early times of the
Reformed English Church, by the force of that very Article. To this,
the only genuine Protestant view of a Church, I gave my most cordial
adherence: but when I turned to the Ordination Service, I found the
Bishop there, by his authoritative voice, absolutely to bestow on
the candidate for Priesthood the power to forgive or retain
sins!--"Receive ye the Holy Ghost! Whose sins ye forgive, they are
forgiven: whose sins ye retain, they are retained." If the Bishop
really had this power, he of course had it only _as_ Bishop, that is,
by his consecration; thus it was formally transmitted. To allow this,
vested in all the Romish bishops a spiritual power of the highest
order, and denied the legitimate priesthood in nearly all the
Continental Protestant Churches--a doctrine irreconcilable with the
article just referred to and intrinsically to me incredible. That
an unspiritual—and it may be, a wicked—man, who can have no pure
insight into devout and penitent hearts, and no communion with the
Source of holy discernment, could never receive by an outward form the
divine power to forgive or retain sins, or the power of bestowing this
power, was to me then, as now, as clear and certain as any possible
first axiom. Yet if the Bishop had not this power, how profane was
the pretension! Thus again I came into rude collision with English
Prelacy.

The year after taking my degree, I made myself fully master of Paley's
acute and original treatise, the "Horae Paulinae," and realized the
whole life of Paul as never before. This book greatly enlarged my mind
as to the resources of historical criticism. Previously, my sole idea
of criticism was that of the direct discernment of style; but I now
began to understand what powerful argument rose out of combinations:
and the very complete establishment which this work gives to the
narrative concerning Paul in the latter half of the "Acts," appeared
to me to reflect critical honour[3] on the whole New Testament. In the
epistles of this great apostle, notwithstanding their argumentative
difficulties, I found a moral reality and a depth of wisdom
perpetually growing upon me with acquaintance: in contrast to which
I was conscious that I made no progress in understanding the four
gospels. Their first impression had been their strongest: and their
difficulties remained as fixed blocks in my way. Was this possibly
because Paul is a reasoner, (I asked)? hence, with the cultivation
of my understanding, I have entered more easily into the heart of
his views:—while Christ enunciates divine truth dogmatically; consequently insight is needed to understand him? On the contrary, however, it seemed to me, that the doctrinal difficulties of the gospels depend chiefly either on obscure metaphor or on apparent incoherence: and I timidly asked a friend, whether the _dislocation_ of the discourses of Christ by the narrators may not be one reason why they are often obscure: for on comparing Luke with Matthew, it appears that we cannot deny occasional dislocation. If at this period a German divinity professor had been lecturing at Oxford, or German books had been accessible to me, it might have saved me long peregrinations of body and mind.

About this time I had also begun to think that the old writers called _Fathers_ deserved but a small fraction of the reverence which is awarded to them. I had been strongly urged to read Chrysostom's work on the Priesthood, by one who regarded it as a suitable preparation for Holy Orders; and I did read it. But I not only thought it inflated, and without moral depth, but what was far worse, I encountered in it an elaborate defence of falsehood in the cause of the Church, and generally of deceit in any good cause.[4] I rose from the treatise in disgust, and for the first time sympathized with Gibbon; and augured that if he had spoken with moral indignation, instead of pompous sarcasm, against the frauds of the ancient "Fathers," his blows would have fallen far more heavily on Christianity itself.

I also, with much effort and no profit, read the Apostolic Fathers.
Of these, Clement alone seemed to me respectable, and even he to write only what I could myself have written, with Paul and Peter to serve as a model. But for Barnabas and Hermas I felt a contempt so profound, that I could hardly believe them genuine. On the whole, this reading greatly exalted my sense of the unapproachable greatness[5] of the New Testament. The moral chasm between it and the very earliest Christian writers seemed to me so vast, as only to be accounted for by the doctrine in which all spiritual men (as I thought) unhesitatingly agreed,—that the New Testament was dictated by the immediate action of the Holy Spirit. The infatuation of those, who, after this, rested on _the Councils_, was to me unintelligible. Thus the Bible in its simplicity became only the more all-ruling to my judgment, because I could find no Articles, no Church Decrees, and no apostolic individual, whose rule over my understanding or conscience I could bear. Such may be conveniently regarded as the first period of my Creed.

[Footnote 1: It was not until many years later that I became aware, that unbiased ecclesiastical historians, as Neander and others, while approving of the practice of Infant Baptism, freely concede that it is not apostolic. Let this fact be my defence against critics, who snarl at me for having dared, at that age, to come to _any_ conclusion on such a subject. But, in fact, the subscriptions compel young men to it.]

[Footnote 2: I remember reading about that time a sentence in one of his Epistles, in which this same Cyprian, the earliest mouthpiece of
"proud prelacy," claims for the _populace_ supreme right of deposing an unworthy bishop. I quote the words from memory, and do not know the reference. "Pleba summam habet potentatem episcopos seu dignos eligendi seu indignos detrudendi."

[Footnote 3: A critic absurdly complains that I do not account for this. Account for what? I still hold the authenticity of nearly all the Pauline epistles, and that the Pauline Acts are compiled from some valuable source, from chap. xiii. onward; but it was gratuitous to infer that this could accredit the four gospels.]

[Footnote 4: He argues from the Bible, that a victory gained by deceit is more to be esteemed than one obtained by force; and that, provided the end aimed at be good, we ought not to call it _deceit_, but a sort of _admirable management_. A learned friend informs me that in his 45th Homily on Genesis, this father, in his zeal to vindicate Scriptural characters at any cost, goes further still in immorality. My friend adds, "It is really frightful to reflect to what guidance the moral sentiment of mankind was committed for many ages: Chrysostom is usually considered one of the best of the fathers."]

[Footnote 5: I thought that the latter part of this book would sufficiently show how and why I now need to modify this sentiment. I _now_ see the doctrine of the Atonement, especially as expounded in the Epistle of the Hebrews, to deserve no honour. I see false interpretations of the Old Testament to be dogmatically proposed in
the New. I see the moral teaching concerning Patriotism, Property, Slavery, Marriage, Science, and indirectly Fine Art, to be essentially defective, and the threats against unbelief to be a pernicious immorality. See also p. 80. Why will critics use my frankly-stated juvenile opinions as a stone to pelt me with?

CHAPTER II.

STRIVINGS AFTER A MORE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY.

My second period is characterized, partly by the great ascendancy exercised over me by one powerful mind and still more powerful will, partly by the vehement effort which throughout its duration urged me to long after the establishment of Christian Fellowship in a purely Biblical Church as the first great want of Christendom and of the world.

I was already uneasy in the sense that I could not enter the ministry of the Church of England, and knew not what course of life to choose. I longed to become a missionary for Christ among the heathen,--a notion I had often fostered while reading the lives of missionaries: but again, I saw not how that was to be effected. After taking my degree, I became a Fellow of Balliol College; and the next year I accepted an invitation to Ireland, and there became private tutor for fifteen months in the house of one now deceased, whose name I would gladly mention for honour and affection;--but I withhold my pen. While
he repaid me munificently for my services, he behaved towards me as a
father, or indeed as an elder brother, and instantly made me feel as
a member of his family. His great talents, high professional standing,
nobleness of heart and unfeigned piety, would have made him a most
valuable counsellor to me: but he was too gentle, too unassuming, too
modest; he looked to be taught by his juniors, and sat at the feet of
one whom I proceed to describe.

This was a young relative of his,--a most remarkable man,--who rapidly
gained an immense sway over me. I shall henceforth call him "the Irish
clergyman." His "bodily presence" was indeed "weak!" A fallen cheek,
a bloodshot eye, crippled limbs resting on crutches, a seldom shaven
beard, a shabby suit of clothes and a generally neglected person, drew
at first pity, with wonder to see such a figure in a drawing-room.
It was currently reported that a person in Limerick offered him a
halfpenny, mistaking him for a beggar; and if not true, the story was
yet well invented. This young man had taken high honours in Dublin
University and had studied for the bar, where under the auspices of
his eminent kinsman he had excellent prospects; but his conscience
would not allow him to take a brief, lest he should be selling his
talents to defeat justice. With keen logical powers, he had warm
sympathies, solid judgment of character, thoughtful tenderness, and
total self-abandonment. He before long took Holy Orders, and became
an indefatigable curate in the mountains of Wicklow. Every evening
he sallied forth to teach in the cabins, and roving far and wide
over mountain and amid bogs, was seldom home before midnight. By such
exertions his strength was undermined, and he so suffered in his limbs
that not lameness only, but yet more serious results were feared. He did not fast on purpose, but his long walks through wild country and indigent people inflicted on him much severe deprivation: moreover, as he ate whatever food offered itself,—food unpalatable and often indigestible to him, his whole frame might have vied in emaciation with a monk of La Trappe.

Such a phenomenon intensely excited the poor Romanists, who looked on him as a genuine "saint" of the ancient breed. The stamp of heaven seemed to them clear in a frame so wasted by austerity, so superior to worldly pomp, and so partaking in all their indigence. That a dozen such men would have done more to convert all Ireland to Protestantism, than the whole apparatus of the Church Establishment, was ere long my conviction; though I was at first offended by his apparent affectation of a mean exterior. But I soon understood, that in no other way could he gain equal access to the lower and lowest orders, and that he was moved not by asceticism, nor by ostentation, but by a self-abandonment fruitful of consequences. He had practically given up all reading except that of the Bible; and no small part of his movement towards me soon took the form of dissuasion from all other voluntary study.

In fact, I had myself more and more concentrated my religious reading on this one book: still, I could not help feeling the value of a cultivated mind. Against this, my new eccentric friend, (himself having enjoyed no mean advantages of cultivation,) directed his keenest attacks. I remember once saying to him, in defence of worldly station,—"To desire to be rich is unchristian and absurd; but if I
were the father of children, I should wish to be rich enough to secure them a good education." He replied: "If I had children, I would as soon see them break stones on the road, as do any thing else, if only I could secure to them the Gospel and the grace of God." I was unable to say Amen, but I admired his unflinching consistency;--for now, as always, all he said was based on texts aptly quoted and logically enforced. He more and more made me ashamed of Political Economy and Moral Philosophy, and all Science; all of which ought to be "counted dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

For the first time in my life I saw a man earnestly turning into reality the principles which others confessed with their lips only. That the words of the New Testament contained the highest truth accessible to man,--truth not to be taken from nor added to,--all good men (as I thought) confessed: never before had I seen a man so resolved that no word of it should be a dead letter to him. I once said: "But do you really think that _no_ part of the New Testament may have been temporary in its object? for instance, what should we have lost, if St. Paul had never written the verse, 'The cloak which I have left at Troas, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.'" He answered with the greatest promptitude: "_I_ should certainly have lost something; for that is exactly the verse which alone saved me from selling my little library. No! every word, depend upon it, is from the Spirit, and is for eternal service."

A political question was just then exceedingly agitating Ireland, in which nearly everybody took a great interest;--it was, the propriety of admitting Romanist members of Parliament. Those who were favourable
to the measure, generally advocated it by trying to undervalue
the chasm that separates Romish from Protestant doctrine. By such
arguments they exceedingly exasperated the real Protestants, and,
in common with all around me, I totally repudiated that ground of
comprehension. But I could not understand why a broader, more generous
and every way safer argument was not dwelt on; viz. the unearthliness
of the claims of Christianity. When Paul was preaching the kingdom of
God in the Roman empire, if a malicious enemy had declared to a Roman
proconsul that the Christians were conspiring to eject all Pagans out
of the senate and out of the public administration; who can doubt what
Paul would have replied?--The kingdom of God is not of this world: it
is within the heart, and consists in righteousness, peace and joy
in the Holy Ghost. These are our "honours" from God: we ask not the
honours of empire and title. Our King is in heaven; and will in time
return to bring to an end these earthly kingdoms: but until then, we
claim no superiority over you on earth. As the riches of this world,
so the powers of this world belong to another king: we dare not try to
appropriate them in the name of our heavenly King; may, we should
hold it as great a sin to clutch empire for our churches, as to clutch
wealth: God forbid that we covet either!--But what then if the enemy
had had foresight to reply, O proconsul, this Paul talks finely, and
perhaps sincerely: but if so, yet cheat not yourself to think that
his followers will tie themselves to his mild equity and
disinterestedness. Now indeed they are weak: now they profess
unworldliness and unambition: they wish only to be recognised as
peaceable subjects, as citizens and as equals: but if once they grow
strong enough, they will discover that their spears and swords are
the symbol of their Lord's return from heaven; that he now at length
commissions them to eject you, as vile infidels, from all seats of
power,--to slay you with the sword, if you dare to offer sacrifice to
the immortal gods,--to degrade you so, that you shall only not enter
the senate, or the privy council of the prince, or the judgment seat,
but not even the jury-box, or a municipal corporation, or the pettiest
edileship of Italy; nay, you shall not be lieutenants of armies, or
tribunes, or anything above the lowest centurion. You shall become a
plebeian class,--cheap bodies to be exposed in battle or to toil in
the field, and pay rent to the lordly Christian. Such shall be the
fate of _you_, the worshippers of Quirinus and of Jupiter Best and
Greatest, if you neglect to crush and extirpate, during the weakness
of its infancy, this ambitious and unscrupulous portent of a
religion.--Oh, how would Paul have groaned in spirit, at accusations
such as these, hateful to his soul, aspersing to his churches, but
impossible to refute! Either Paul's doctrine was a fond dream, (felt
I,) or it is certain, that he would have protested with all the force
of his heart against the principle that Christians _as such_ have any
claim to earthly power and place; or that they could, when they gained
a numerical majority, without sin enact laws to punish, stigmatize,
exclude, or otherwise treat with political inferiority the Pagan
remnant. To uphold such exclusion, is to lay the axe to the root of
the spiritual Church, to stultify the apostolic preaching, and at this
moment justify Mohammedans in persecuting Christians. For the Sultan
might fairly say,--"I give Christians the choice of exile or death: I
will not allow that sect to grow up here; for it has fully warned me,
that it will proscribe my religion in my own land, as soon as it has
power."
On such grounds I looked with amazement and sorrow at spiritual
Christians who desired to exclude the Romanists from full equality;
and I was happy to enjoy as to this the passive assent of the Irish
clergyman; who, though "Orange" in his connexions, and opposed to
_all_ political action, yet only so much the more deprecated what he
called "political Protestantism."

In spite of the strong revulsion which I felt against some of the
peculiarities of this remarkable man, I for the first time in my life
found myself under the dominion of a superior. When I remember, how
even those bowed down before him, who had been to him in the place of
parents,--accomplished and experienced minds,--I cease to wonder in
the retrospect, that he riveted me in such a bondage. Henceforth I
began to ask: what will _he_ say to this and that? In _his_ reply I
always expected to find a higher portion of God's Spirit, than in any
I could frame for myself. In order to learn divine truth, it became to
me a surer process to consult him, than to search for myself and wait
upon God: and gradually, (as I afterwards discerned,) my religious
thought had merged into the mere process of developing fearlessly
into results all his principles, without any deeper examining of my
foundations. Indeed, but for a few weaknesses which warned me that
he might err, I could have accepted him as an apostle commissioned to
reveal the mind of God.

In his after-course (which I may not indicate) this gentleman has
every where displayed a wonderful power of bending other minds to his
own, and even stamping upon them the tones of his voice and all sorts
of slavish imitation. Over the general results of his action I
have long deeply mourned, as blunting his natural tenderness and
sacrificing his wisdom to the Letter, dwarfing men's understandings,
contracting their hearts, crushing their moral sensibilities, and
setting those at variance who ought to love: yet oh! how specious
was it in the beginning! he _only_ wanted men "to submit their
understandings _to God_" that is, to the Bible, that is, to his
interpretation! From seeing his action and influence I have learnt,
that if it be dangerous to a young man (as it assuredly is) to have
_no_ superior mind to which he may look up with confiding reverence,
it may be even more dangerous to think that he has found such a mind:
for he who is most logically consistent, though to a one-sided theory,
and most ready to sacrifice self to that theory, seems to ardent youth
the most assuredly trustworthy guide. Such was Ignatius Loyola in his
day.

My study of the New Testament at this time had made it impossible for
me to overlook that the apostles held it to be a duty of all disciples
to expect a near and sudden destruction of the earth by fire, and
constantly to be expecting _the return of the Lord from heaven_. It
was easy to reply, that "experience disproved" this expectation; but
to this an answer was ready provided in Peter's 2nd Epistle, which
forewarns us that we shall be taunted by the unbelieving with thin
objection, but bids us, _nevertheless_, continue to look out for
the speedy fulfilment of this great event. In short, the case stood
thus:--If it was not _too soon_ 1800 years ago to stand in daily
expectation of it, it is not too soon now: to say that it is _too late_, is not merely to impute error to the apostles, on a matter which they made of first-rate moral importance, but is to say, that those whom Peter calls "ungodly scoffers, walking after their own lusts"—were right, and he was wrong, on the very point for which he thus vituperated them.

The importance of this doctrine is, that _it totally forbids all working for earthly objects distant in time_: and here the Irish clergyman threw into the same scale the entire weight of his character. For instance; if a youth had a natural aptitude for mathematics, and he asked, ought he to give himself to the study, in hope that he might diffuse a serviceable knowledge of it, or possibly even enlarge the boundaries of the science? my friend would have replied, that such a purpose was very proper, if entertained by a worldly man. Let the dead bury their dead; and let the world study the things of the world: they know no better, and they are of use to the Church, who may borrow and use the jewels of the Egyptians. But such studies cannot be eagerly followed by the Christian, except when he yields to unbelief. In fact, what would it avail even to become a second La Place after thirty years' study, if in five and thirty years the Lord descended from heaven, snatched up all his saints to meet him, and burned to ashes all the works of the earth? Then all the mathematician's work would have perished, and he would grieve over his unwisdom, in laying up store which could not stand the fire of the Lord. Clearly; if we are bound to act _as though_ the end of all earthly concerns may come, "at cockcrowing or at midday," then to work
for distant earthly objects is the part of a fool or of an unbeliever.

I found a wonderful dulness in many persons on this important subject. Wholly careless to ask what was the true apostolic doctrine, they insisted that "Death is to us practically the coming of the Lord," and were amazed at my seeing so much emphasis in the other view. This comes of the abominable selfishness preached as religion. If I were to labour at some useful work for ten years,—say, at clearing forest land, laying out a farm, and building a house,—and were then to die, I should leave my work to my successors, and it would not be lost. Some men work for higher, some for lower, earthly ends; ("in a great house there are many vessels, &c.;") but all the results are valuable, if there is a chance of transmitting them to those who follow us. But if all is to be very shortly burnt up, it is then folly to exert ourselves for such objects. To the dead man, (it is said,) the cases are but one. This is to the purpose, if self absorbs all our heart; away from the purpose, if we are to work for unselfish ends.

Nothing can be clearer, than that the New Testament is entirely pervaded by the doctrine,—sometimes explicitly stated, sometimes unceremoniously assumed,—that earthly things are very speedily to come to an end, and therefore are not worthy of our high affections and deep interest. Hence, when thoroughly imbued with this persuasion, I looked with mournful pity on a great mind wasting its energies on any distant aim of this earth. For a statesman to talk about providing for future generations, sounded to me as a melancholy avowal of unbelief. To devote good talents to write history or investigate
nature, was simple waste: for at the Lord's coming, history and science would no longer be learned by these feeble appliances of ours. Thus an inevitable deduction from the doctrine of the apostles, was, that "we must work for speedy results only." Vitae summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam. I then accepted the doctrine, in profound obedience to the absolutely infallible system of precepts. I now see that the falsity and mischief of the doctrine is one of the very many disproofs of the assumed, but unverified infallibility. However, the hold which the apostolic belief then took of me, subjected my conscience to the exhortations of the Irish clergyman, whenever he inculcated that the highest Christian must necessarily decline the pursuit of science, knowledge, art, history,—except so far as any of these things might be made useful tools for immediate spiritual results.

Under the stimulus to my imagination given by this gentleman's character, the desire, which from a boy I had more or less nourished, of becoming a teacher of Christianity to the heathen, took stronger and stronger hold of me. I saw that I was shut out from the ministry of the Church of England, and knew not how to seek connexion with Dissenters. I had met one eminent Quaker, but was offended by the violent and obviously false interpretations by which he tried to get rid of the two Sacraments; and I thought there was affectation involved in the forms which the doctrine of the Spirit took with him. Besides, I had not been prepossessed by those Dissenters whom I had heard speak at the Bible Society. I remember that one of them talked in pompous measured tones of voice, and with much stereotyped
phraseology, about "the Bible only, the religion of Protestants:"
altogether, it did not seem to me that there was at all so much of
nature and simple truth in them as in Church clergymen. I also had
a vague, but strong idea, that all Dissenting churches assumed some
special, narrow, and sectarian basis. The question indeed arose: "Was
I _at liberty_ to preach to the heathen without ordination?" but I
with extreme ease answered in the affirmative. To teach a Church, of
course needs the sanction of the church: no man can assume pastoral
rights without assent from other parties: but to speak to those
without, is obviously a natural right, with which the Church can have
nothing to do. And herewith all the precedents of the New Testament so
obviously agreed, that I had not a moment's disquiet on this head.

At the same time, when asked by one to whom I communicated my
feelings, "whether I felt that I had _a call_ to preach to the
heathen," I replied: I had not the least consciousness of it, and knew
not what was meant by such language. All that I knew was, that I was
willing and anxious to do anything in my power either to teach, or to
help others in teaching, if only I could find out the way. That after
eighteen hundred years no farther progress should have been made
towards the universal spread of Christianity, appeared a scandalous
reproach on Christendom. Is it not, perhaps, because those who are
in Church office cannot go, and the mass of the laity think it no
business of theirs? If a persecution fell on England, and thousands
were driven into exile, and, like those who were scattered in
Stephen's persecution, "went everywhere preaching the word,"--might
not this be the conversion of the world, as indeed that began the
conversion of the Gentiles? But the laity leave all to the clergy, and
the clergy have more than enough to do.

About this time I heard of another remarkable man, whose name was
already before the public,—Mr. Groves,—who had written a tract
called Christian Devotedness, on the duty of devoting all worldly
property for the cause of Christ, and utterly renouncing the attempt
to amass money. In pursuance of this, he was going to Persia as a
teacher of Christianity. I read his tract, and was inflamed with the
greatest admiration; judging immediately that this was the man whom
I should rejoice to aid or serve. For a scheme of this nature
alone appeared to combine with the views which I had been gradually
consolidating concerning the practical relation of a Christian Church
to Christian Evidences. On this very important subject it is requisite
to speak in detail.

* * * * *

The Christian Evidences are an essential part of the course of
religious study prescribed at Oxford, and they had engaged from an
early period a large share of my attention. Each treatise on the
subject, taken by itself, appeared to me to have great argumentative
force; but when I tried to grasp them all together in a higher act
of thought, I was sensible of a certain confusion, and inability to
reconcile their fundamental assumptions. _One_ either formally
stated, or virtually assumed, that the deepest basis of all
religious knowledge was the testimony of sense to some fact, which is ascertained to be miraculous when examined by the light of Physics or Physiology; and that we must, at least in a great degree, distrust and abandon our moral convictions or auguries, at the bidding of sensible miracle. _Another_ treatise assumed that men's moral feelings and beliefs are, on the whole, the most trustworthy thing to be found; and starting from them as from a known and ascertained foundation, proceeded to glorify Christianity because of its expanding, strengthening, and beautifying all that we know by conscience to be morally right. That the former argument, if ever so valid, was still too learned and scholastic, not for the vulgar only, but for every man in his times of moral trial, I felt instinctively persuaded: yet my intellect could not wholly dispense with it, and my belief in the depravity of the moral understanding of men inclined me to go some way in defending it. To endeavour to combine the two arguments by saying that they were adapted to different states of mind, was plausible; yet it conceded, that neither of the two went to the bottom of human thought, or showed what were the real _fixed points_ of man's knowledge; without knowing which, we are in perpetual danger of mere _argumentum ad hominem_, or, in fact, arguing in a circle;—as to prove miracles from doctrine, and doctrine from miracles. I however conceived that the most logical minds among Christians would contend that there was another solution; which, in 1827, I committed to paper in nearly the following words:

"May it not be doubted whether Leland sees the real circumstance that makes a revelation necessary?"
"No revelation is needed to inform us,—of the invisible power and deity of God; that we are bound to worship Him; that we are capable of sinning against Him and liable to his just Judgment; nay, that we have sinned, and that we find in nature marks of his displeasure against sin; and yet, that He is merciful. St. Paul and our Lord show us that these things are knowable by reason. The ignorance of the heathens is judicial blindness, to punish their obstinate rejection of the true God."

"But a revelation is needed to convey a SPECIAL message, such as this: that God has provided an Atonement for our sins, has deputed his own Son to become Head of the redeemed human family, and intends to raise those who believe in Him to a future and eternal life of bliss. These are external truths, (for 'who can believe, unless one be sent to preach them?') and are not knowable by any reasonings drawn from nature. They transcend natural analogies and moral or spiritual experience. To reveal them, a specific communication must be accorded to us: and on this the necessity for miracle turns."

Thus, in my view, at that time, the materials of the Bible were in theory divisible into two portions: concerning the one, (which I called Natural Religion,) it not only was not presumptuous, but it was absolutely essential, to form an independent judgment; for this was the real basis of all faith: concerning the other, (which I called Revealed Religion,) our business was, not to criticize the message,
but to examine the credentials[1] of the messenger; and,--after the
most unbiased possible examination of these,--then, if they proved
sound, to receive his communication reverently and unquestioningly.

Such was the theory with which I came from Oxford to Ireland; but
I was hindered from working out its legitimate results by the
overpowering influence of the Irish clergyman; who, while pressing
the authority of every letter of the Scripture with an unshrinking
vehemence that I never saw surpassed, yet, with a common
inconsistency, showed more than indifference towards learned
historical and critical evidence on the side of Christianity; and
indeed, unmercifully exposed erudition to scorn, both by caustic
reasoning, and by irrefragable quotation of texts. I constantly had
occasion to admire the power with which be laid hold of the moral
side of every controversy; whether he was reasoning against Romanism,
against the High Church, against learned religion or philosophic
scepticism: and in this matter his practical axiom was, that the
advocate of truth had to address himself to the _conscience_ of the
other party, and if possible, make him feel that there was a moral and
spiritual superiority against him. Such doctrine, when joined with
an inculcation of man's _natural blindness and total depravity_,
was anything but clearing to my intellectual perceptions: in fact,
I believe that for some years I did not recover from the dimness and
confusion which he spread over them. But in my entire inability to
explain away the texts which spoke with scorn of worldly wisdom,
philosophy, and learning, on the one hand; and the obvious certainty,
on the other, that no historical evidence for miracle was possible
except by the aid of learning; I for the time abandoned this side of
Christian Evidence,—not as invalid, but as too unwieldy a weapon
for use,—and looked to direct moral evidence alone. And now rose the
question, How could such moral evidence become appreciable to heathens
and Mohammedans?

I felt distinctly enough, that mere talk could bring no conviction,
and would be interpreted by the actions and character of the speaker.
While nations called Christian are only known to heathens as great
conquerors, powerful avengers, sharp traders,—often lax in morals,
and apparently without religion,—the fine theories of a Christian
teacher would be as vain to convert a Mohammedan or Hindoo to
Christianity, to the soundness of Seneca's moral treatises to convert
me to Roman Paganism. Christendom has to earn a new reputation before
Christian precepts will be thought to stand in any essential or close
relation with the mystical doctrines of Christianity. I could see
no other way to this, but by an entire church being formed of new
elements on a heathen soil:—a church, in which by no means all
should be preachers, but all should be willing to do for all whatever
occasion required. Such a church had I read of among the Moravians in
Greenland and in South Africa. I imagined a little colony, so animated
by primitive faith, love, and disinterestedness, that the collective
moral influence of all might interpret and enforce the words of the
few who preached. Only in this way did it appear to me that preaching
to the heathen could be attended with success. In fact, whatever
success had been attained, seemed to come only after many years, when
the natives had gained experience in the characters of the Christian
family around them.

When I had returned to Oxford, I induced the Irish clergyman to visit the University, and introduced him to many of my equals in age, and juniors. Most striking was it to see how instantaneously he assumed the place of universal father-confessor, as if he had been a known and long-trusted friend. His insight into character, and tenderness pervading his austerity, so opened young men's hearts, that day after day there was no end of secret closetings with him. I began to see the prospect of so considerable a movement of mind, as might lead many in the same direction as myself; and _if_ it was by a collective Church that Mohammedans were to be taught, the only way was for each separately to be led to the same place by the same spiritual influence. As Groves was a magnet to draw me, so might I draw others. In no other way could a pure and efficient Church be formed. If we waited, as with worldly policy, to make up a complete colony before leaving England, we should fail of getting the right men: we should pack them together by a mechanical process, instead of leaving them to be united by vital affinities. Thus actuated, and other circumstances conducing, in September 1830, with some Irish friends, I set out to join Mr. Groves at Bagdad. What I might do there, I knew not. I did not go as a minister of religion, and I everywhere pointedly disowned the assumption of this character, even down to the colour of my dress. But I thought I knew many ways in which I might be of service, and I was prepared to act recording to circumstances.

* * * * *
Perhaps the strain of practical life must in any case, before long, have broken the chain by which the Irish clergyman unintentionally held me; but all possible influence from him was now cut off by separation. The dear companions of my travels no more aimed to guide my thoughts, than I theirs: neither ambition nor suspicion found place in our hearts; and my mind was thus able again without disturbance to develop its own tendencies.

I had become distinctly aware, that the modern Churches in general by no means hold the truth as conceived of by the apostles. In the matter of the Sabbath and of the Mosaic Law, of Infant Baptism, of Episcopacy, of the doctrine of the Lord's return, I had successively found the prevalent Protestantism to be unapostolic. Hence arose in me a conscious and continuous effort to read the New Testament with fresh eyes and without bias, and so to take up the real doctrines of the heavenly and everlasting Gospel.

In studying the narrative of John I was strongly impressed by the fact, that the glory and greatness of the Son of God is constantly ascribed to the will and pleasure of the Father. I had been accustomed to hear this explained of his mediatorial greatness only, but this now looked to me like a make-shift, and to want the simplicity of truth--an impression which grew deeper with closer examination. The emphatic declaration of Christ, "My Father is greater than I," especially arrested my attention. Could I really expound this as
meaning, "My Father, the Supreme God, in greater than I am, _if you
look solely to my human nature?_" Such a truism can scarcely have
deserved such emphasis. Did the disciples need to be taught that God
was greater than man? Surely, on the contrary, the Saviour must have
meant to say: 
"_Divine as I am_, yet my heavenly Father is greater than
I, _even when you take cognizance of my divine nature._" I did not
then know, that my comment was exactly that of the most orthodox
Fathers; I rather thought they were against me, but for them I did not
care much. I reverenced the doctrine of the Trinity as something vital
to the soul; but felt that to love the Fathers or the Athanasian
Creed more than the Gospel of John would be a supremely miserable
superstition. However, that Creed states that there is no inequality
between the Three Persons: in John it became increasingly clear to me
that the divine Son is unequal to the Father. To say that "the Son of
God" meant "Jesus as man," was a preposterous evasion: for there is
no higher title for the Second Person of the Trinity than this very
one--Son of God. Now, in the 5th chapter, when the Jews accused Jesus
"of making himself equal to God," by calling himself Son of God Jesus
even hastens to protest against the inference as a misrepresentation
--beginning with: "The Son can do nothing of himself:" and proceeds
elaborately to ascribe all his greatness to the Father's will. In
fact, the Son is emphatically "he who is sent," and the Father is "he
who sent him:" and all would feel the deep impropriety of trying to
exchange these phrases. The Son who is sent,--sent, not _after_ he was
humbled to become man, but _in order to_ be so humbled,--was NOT EQUAL
TO, but LESS THAN, the Father who sent him. To this I found the whole
Gospel of John to bear witness; and with this conviction, the truth
and honour of the Athanasian Creed fell to the ground. One of its main
tenets was proved false; and yet it dared to utter anathemas on all
who rejected it!

I afterwards remembered my old thought, that we must surely understand
_our own words_, when we venture to speak at all about divine
mysteries. Having gained boldness to gaze steadily on the topic, I
at length saw that the compiler of the Athanasian Creed did _not_
understand his own words. If any one speaks of _three men_, all that
he means is, "three objects of thought, of whom each separately may
be called Man." So also, all that could possibly be meant by _three
gods_, is, "three objects of thought, of whom each separately may be
called God." To avow the last statement, as the Creed does, and yet
repudiate Three Gods, is to object to the phrase, yet confess to
the only meaning which the phrase can convey. Thus the Creed really
teaches polytheism, but saves orthodoxy by forbidding any one to call
it by its true name. Or to put the matter otherwise: it teaches three
Divine Persons, and denies three Gods; and leaves us to guess what
else is a Divine Person but a God, or a God but a Divine Person. Who,
then, can deny that this intolerant creed is a malignant riddle?

That there is nothing in the Scripture about Trinity in Unity and
Unity in Trinity I had long observed; and the total absence of such
phraseology had left on me a general persuasion that the Church had
systematized too much. But in my study of John I was now arrested by
a text, which showed me how exceedingly far from a _Tri-unity_ was the
Trinity of that Gospel,—if trinity it be. Namely, in his last prayer,
Jesus addresses to his Father the words: "This is life eternal, that
they may know _Thee, the only True God_, and Jesus Christ, whom thou
hast sent" I became amazed, as I considered these words more and more
attentively, and without prejudice; and I began to understand how
prejudice, when embalmed with reverence, blinds the mind. Why had I
never before seen what is here so plain, that the _One God_ of Jesus
was not a Trinity, but was _the First Person_ of the ecclesiastical
Trinity?

But on a fuller search, I found this to be Paul's doctrine also: for
in 1 Corinth, viii., when discussing the subject of Polytheism, he
says that "though there be to the heathen many that are called Gods,
yet to us there is but _One God_, the Father, _of_ whom are all
things; and _One Lord_, Jesus Christ, _by_ whom are all things." Thus
he defines Monotheism to consist in holding the person of the Father
to be the One God; although this, if any, should have been the place
for a "Trinity in Unity."

But did I proceed to deny the Divinity of the Son? By no means: I
conceived of him as in the highest and fullest sense divine, short
of being Father and not Son. I now believed that by the phrase "only
begotten Son," John, and indeed Christ himself, meant to teach us that
there was an unpassable chasm between him and all creatures, in that
he had a true, though a derived divine nature; an indeed the Nicene
Creed puts the contrast, he was "begotten, not made." Thus all Divine
glory dwells in the Son, but it is _because_ the Father has willed
it. A year or more afterward, when I had again the means of access
to books, and consulted that very common Oxford book, "Pearson on the
Creed," (for which I had felt so great a distaste that I never before read it)--I found this to be the undoubted doctrine of the great Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers, who laid much emphasis on two statements, which with the modern Church are idle and dead--viz. that "the Son was _begotten_ of his Father _before all worlds_," and that "the Holy Spirit _proceedeth from_ the Father and the Son." In the view of the old Church, the Father alone was the Fountain of Deity,--(and _therefore_ fitly called, The One God,--and, the Only True God)--while the Deity of the other two persons was real, yet derived and subordinate. Moreover, I found in Gregory Nazianzen and others, that to confess this derivation of the Son and Spirit and the underivedness of the Father alone, was in their view quite essential to save Monotheism; the _One_ God being the underived Father.

Although in my own mind all doubt as to the doctrine of John and Paul on the main question seemed to be quite cleared away from the time that I dwelt on their explanation of Monotheism, this in no respect agitated me, or even engaged me in any farther search. There was nothing to force me into controversy, or make this one point of truth unduly preponderant. I concealed none of my thoughts from my companions; and concerning them I will only say, that whether they did or did not feel acquiescence, they behaved towards me with all the affection and all the equality which I would have wished myself to maintain, had the case been inverted. I was, however, sometimes uneasy, when the thought crossed my mind,--"What if we, like Henry Martyn, were charged with Polytheism by Mohammedans, and were forced to defend ourselves by explaining in detail our doctrine of the
Trinity? _Perhaps_ no two of us would explain it alike, and this would expose Christian doctrine to contempt." Then farther it came across me; How very remarkable it is, that the Jews, those strict Monotheists, never seem to have attacked the apostles for polytheism! It would have been so plausible an imputation, one that the instinct of party would so readily suggest, if there had been any external form of doctrine to countenance it. Surely it is transparent that the Apostles did not teach as Dr. Waterland. I had always felt a great repugnance to the argumentations concerning the _Personality_ of the Holy Spirit; no doubt from an inward sense, however dimly confessed, that they were all words without meaning. For the disputant who maintains this dogma, tells us in the very next breath that _Person_ has not in this connexion its common signification; so that he is elaborately enforcing upon us we know not what. That the Spirit of God meant in the New Testament _God in the heart_, had long been to me a sufficient explanation: and who by logic or metaphysics will carry us beyond this?

While we were at Aleppo, I one day got into religious discourse with a Mohammedan carpenter, which left on me a lasting impression. Among other matters, I was peculiarly desirous of disabusing him of the current notion of his people, that our gospels are spurious narratives of late date. I found great difficulty of expression; but the man listened to me with much attention, and I was encouraged to exert myself. He waited patiently till I had done, and then spoke to the following effect: "I will tell you, sir, how the case stands. God has given to you English a great many good gifts. You make fine ships, and
sharp penknives, and good cloth and cottons; and you have rich nobles
and brave soldiers; and you write and print many learned books:
(dictionaries and grammars:) all this is of God. But there is one
thing that God has withheld from you, and has revealed to us; and that
is, the knowledge of the true religion, by which one may be
saved." When he thus ignored my argument, (which was probably quite
unintelligible to him,) and delivered his simple protest, I was
silenced, and at the same time amused. But the more I thought it over,
the more instruction I saw in the case. His position towards me was
exactly that of a humble Christian towards an unbelieving philosopher;
nay, that of the early Apostles or Jewish prophets towards the proud,
cultivated, worldly wise and powerful heathen. This not only showed
the vanity of any argument to him, except one purely addressed to
his moral and spiritual faculties; but it also indicated to me that
Ignorance has its spiritual self-sufficiency as well as Erudition; and
that if there is a Pride of Reason, so is there a Pride of Unreason.
But though this rested in my memory, it was long before I worked out
all the results of that thought.

Another matter brought me some disquiet. An Englishman of rather low
tastes who came to Aleppo at this time, called upon us; and as he
was civilly received, repeated his visit more than once. Being
unencumbered with fastidiousness, this person before long made various
rude attacks on the truth and authority of the Christian religion,
and drew me on to defend it. What I had heard of the moral life of the
speaker made me feel that his was not the mind to have insight into
divine truth; and I desired to divert the argument from external
topics, and bring it to a point in which there might be a chance of touching his conscience. But I found this to be impossible. He returned actively to the assault against Christianity, and I could not bear to hear him vent historical falsehoods and misrepresentations damaging to the Christian cause, without contradicting them. He was a half-educated man, and I easily confuted him to my own entire satisfaction: but he was not either abashed or convinced; and at length withdrew as one victorious.--On reflecting over this, I felt painfully, that if a Moslem had been present and had understood all that had been said, he would have remained in total uncertainty which of the two disputants was in the right: for the controversy had turned on points wholly remote from the sphere of his knowledge or thought. Yet to have declined the battle would have seemed like conscious weakness on my part. Thus the historical side of my religion, though essential to it, and though resting on valid evidence, (as I unhesitatingly believed,) exposed me to attacks in which I might incur virtual defeat or disgrace, but in which, from the nature of the case, I could never win an available victory. This was to me very disagreeable, yet I saw not my way out of the entanglement.

Two years after I left England, a hope was conceived that more friends might be induced to join us; and I returned home from Bagdad with the commission to bring this about, if there were suitable persons disposed for it. On my return, and while yet in quarantine on the coast of England, I received an uncomfortable letter from a most intimate spiritual friend, to the effect, that painful reports had been every where spread abroad against my soundness in the faith.
The channel by which they had come was indicated to me; but my friend expressed a firm hope, that when I had explained myself, it would all prove to be nothing.

Now began a time of deep and critical trial to me and to my Creed; a time hard to speak of to the public; yet without a pretty full notice of it, the rest of the account would be quite unintelligible.

The Tractarian movement was just commencing in 1833. My brother was taking a position, in which he was bound to show that he could sacrifice private love to ecclesiastical dogma; and upon learning that I had spoken at some small meetings of religious people, (which he interpreted, I believe, to be an assuming of the Priest's office,) he separated himself entirely from my private friendship and acquaintance. To the public this may have some interest, as indicating the disturbing excitement which animated that cause: but my reason for naming the fact here is solely to exhibit the practical positions into which I myself was thrown. In my brother's conduct there was not a shade of unkindness, and I have not a thought of complaining of it. My distress was naturally great, until I had fully ascertained from him that I had given no personal offence. But the mischief of it went deeper. It practically cut me off from other members of my family, who were living in his house, and whose state of feeling towards me, through separation and my own agitations of mind, I for some time totally mistook.
I had, however, myself slighted relationship in comparison with Christian brotherhood;—_sectarian_ brotherhood, some may call it;—I perhaps had none but myself to blame: but in the far more painful occurrences which were to succeed one another for many months together, I was blameless. Each successive friend who asked explanations of my alleged heresy, was satisfied,—or at least left me with that impression,—after hearing me: not one who met me face to face had a word to reply to the plain Scriptures which I quoted. Yet when I was gone away, one after another was turned against me by somebody else whom I had not yet met or did not know: for in every theological conclave which deliberates on joint action, the most bigoted scorns always to prevail.

I will trust my pen to only one specimen of details. The Irish clergyman was not able to meet me. He wrote a very desultory letter of grave alarm and inquiry, stating that he had heard that I was endeavouring to sound the divine nature by the miserable plummet of human philosophy,—with much beside that I felt to be mere commonplace which every body might address to every body who differed from him. I however replied in the frankest, most cordial and trusting tone, assuring him that I was infinitely far from imagining that I could "by searching understand God;" on the contrary, concerning his higher mysteries, I felt I knew absolutely nothing but what he revealed to me in his word; but in studying this word, I found John and Paul to declare the Father, and not the Trinity, to be the One God. Referring him to John xvii, 3, 1 Corinth. viii, 5, 6, I fondly believed that one so "subject to the word" and so resolutely renouncing man's authority
in order that he might serve God, would immediately see as I saw.

But I assured him, in all the depth of affection, that I felt how much
fuller insight he had than I into all divine truth; and not he only,
but others to whom I alluded; and that if I was in error, I only
desired to be taught more truly; and either with him, or at his feet,
to learn of God. He replied, to my amazement and distress, in a letter
of much tenderness, but which was to the effect,—that if I allowed
the Spirit of God to be with him rather than with me, it was wonderful
that I set my single judgment against the mind of the Spirit and of
the whole Church of God; and that as for admitting into Christian
communion one who held my doctrine, it had this absurdity, that while
I was in such a state of belief, it was my duty to anathematize them
as idolaters.—Severe as was the shock given me by this letter, I
wrote again most lovingly, humbly, and imploringly: for I still adored
him, and could have given him my right hand or my right eye,—anything
but my conscience. I showed him that if it was a matter of action,
I would submit; for I unfeignedly believed that he had more of the
Spirit of God than I: but over my secret convictions I had no power.
I was shut up to obey and believe God rather than man, and from the
nature of the case, the profoundest respect for my brother's judgment
could not in itself alter mine. As to the whole Church being against
me, I did not know what that meant: I was willing to accept the Nicene
Creed, and this I thought ought to be a sufficient defensive argument
against the Church. His answer was decisive;—he was exceedingly
surprized at my recurring to mere ecclesiastical creeds, as though
they could have the slightest weight; and he must insist on my
acknowledging, that, in the two texts quoted, the word Father meant
the Trinity, if I desired to be in any way recognized as holding the
The Father meant the Trinity!! For the first time I perceived, that so vehement a champion of the sufficiency of the Scripture, so staunch an opposer of Creeds and Churches, was wedded to an extra-Scriptural creed of his own, by which he tested the spiritual state of his brethren. I was in despair, and like a man thunderstruck. I had nothing more to say. Two more letters from the same hand I saw, the latter of which was, to threaten some new acquaintances who were kind to me, (persons wholly unknown to him,) that if they did not desist from sheltering me and break off intercourse, they should, as far as his influence went, themselves everywhere be cut off from Christian communion and recognition. This will suffice to indicate the sort of social persecution, through which, after a succession of struggles, I found myself separated from persons whom I had trustingly admired, and on whom I had most counted for union: with whom I fondly believed myself bound up for eternity; of whom some were my previously intimate friends, while for others, even on slight acquaintance, I would have performed menial offices and thought myself honoured; whom I still looked upon as the blessed and excellent of the earth, and the special favourites of heaven; whose company (though oftentimes they were considerably my inferiors either in rank or in knowledge and cultivation) I would have chosen in preference to that of nobles; whom I loved solely because I thought them to love God, and of whom I asked nothing, but that they would admit me as the meanest and most frail of disciples. My heart was ready to break: I wished for a woman's soul, that I might weep in floods. Oh, Dogma! Dogma! how dost them trample
under foot love, truth, conscience, justice! Was ever a Moloch worse than thou? Burn me at the stake; then Christ will receive me, and saints beyond the grave will love me, though the saints here know me not. But now I am alone in the world: I can trust no one. The new acquaintances who barely tolerate me, and old friends whom reports have not reached, (if such there be,) may turn against me with animosity to-morrow, as those have done from whom I could least have imagined it. Where is union? where is the Church, which was to convert the heathen?

This was not my only reason, yet it was soon a sufficient and at last an overwhelming reason, against returning to the East. The pertinacity of the attacks made on me, and on all who dared to hold by me in a certain connexion, showed that I could no longer be anything but a thorn in the side of my friends abroad; nay, I was unable to predict how they themselves might change towards me. The idea of a Christian Church propagating Christianity while divided against itself was ridiculous. Never indeed had I had the most remote idea, that my dear friends there had been united to me by agreement in intellectual propositions; nor could I yet believe it. I remembered a saying of the noble-hearted Groves: "Talk of loving me while I agree with them! Give me men that will love me when I differ from them and contradict them: those will be the men to build up a true Church." I asked myself,--was I then possibly different from all? With me,--and, as I had thought, with all my Spiritual friends,--intellectual dogma was not the test of spirituality. A hundred times over had I heard the Irish clergyman emphatically enunciate the contrary. Nothing was clearer in his
preaching, talking and writing, than that salvation was a present
real experienced fact; a saving of the soul from the dominion of baser
desires, and an inward union of it in love and homage to Christ, who,
as the centre of all perfection, glory, and beauty, was the revelation
of God to the heart. He who was thus saved, could not help knowing
that he was reconciled, pardoned, beloved; and therefore he rejoiced
in God his Saviour: indeed, to imagine joy without this personal
assurance and direct knowledge, was quite preposterous. But on the
other hand, the soul thus spiritually minded has a keen sense of like
qualities in others. It cannot but discern when another is tender
in conscience, disinterested, forbearing, scornful of untruth and
baseness, and esteeming nothing so much as the fruits of the Spirit:
accordingly, John did not hesitate to say: "We know that we have
passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Our
doctrine certainly had been, that the Church was the assembly of the
saved, gathered by the vital attractions of God's Spirit; that in it
no one was Lord or Teacher, but one was our Teacher, even Christ: that
as long as we had no earthly bribes to tempt men to join us, there was
not much cause to fear false brethren; for if we were heavenly minded,
and these were earthly, they would soon dislike and shun us. Why
should we need to sit in judgment and excommunicate them, except in
the case of publicly scandalous conduct?

It is true, that I fully believed certain intellectual convictions
to be essential to genuine spirituality: for instance, if I had
heard that a person unknown to me did not believe in the Atonement of
Christ, I should have inferred that he had no spiritual life. But if
the person had come under my direct knowledge, my _theory_ was, on no account to reject him on a question of Creed, but in any case to receive all those whom Christ had received, all on whom the Spirit of God had come down, just as the Church at Jerusalem did in regard to admitting the Gentiles, Acts xi. 18. Nevertheless, was not this perhaps a theory pleasant to talk of, but too good for practice? I could not tell; for it had never been so severely tried. I remembered, however, that when I had thought it right to be baptized as an adult, (regarding my baptism as an infant to have been a mischievous fraud,) the sole confession of faith which I made, or would endure, at a time when my "orthodoxy" was unimpeached, was: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God:"[2] to deny which, and claim to be acknowledged as within the pale of the Christian Church, seemed to be an absurdity. On the whole, therefore, it did not appear to me that this Church-theory had been hollow-hearted with _me_ nor unscriptural, nor in any way unpractical; but that _others_ were still infected with the leaven of creeds and formal tests, with which they reproached the old Church.

Were there, then, no other hearts than mine, aching under miserable bigotry, and refreshed only when they tasted in others the true fruits of the Spirit,—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, self-control?"—To imagine this was to suppose myself a man supernaturally favoured, an angel upon earth. I knew there must be thousands in this very point more true-hearted than I: nay, such still might some be, whose names I went over with myself: but I had no heart for more experiments. When such a man as he, the only mortal to whom I had looked up as to an apostle, had
unhesitatingly, unrelentingly, and without one mark that his
conscience was not on his side, flung away all his own precepts,
his own theories, his own magnificent rebukes of Formalism and human
Authority, and had made _himself_ the slave and _me_ the victim of
those old and ever-living tyrants.--whom henceforth could I trust? The
resolution then rose in me, to love all good men from a distance, but
never again to count on permanent friendship with any one who was not
himself cast out as a heretic.

Nor, in fact, did the storm of distress which these events inflicted
on me, subside until I willingly received the task of withstanding it,
as God's trial whether I was faithful. As soon as I gained strength
to say, "O my Lord, I will bear not this only, _but more also_,[3] for
thy sake, for conscience, and for truth,"--my sorrows vanished, until
the next blow and the next inevitable pang. At last my heart had died
within me; the bitterness of death was past; I was satisfied to be
hated by the saints, and to reckon that those who had not yet turned
against me would not bear me much longer.--Then I conceived the
belief, that if we may not make a heaven on earth for ourselves out of
the love of saints, it is in order that we may find a truer heaven in
God's love.

The question about this time much vexed me, what to do about receiving
the Holy Supper of the Lord, the great emblem of brotherhood,
communion, and church connexion. At one time I argued with myself,
that it became an unmeaning form, when not partaken of in mutual
love; that I could never again have free intercourse of heart with any
one;--why then use the rite of communion, where there is no communion?

But, on the other hand, I thought it a mode of confessing Christ, and that permanently to disuse it, was an unfaithfulness. In the Church of England I could have been easy as far as the communion formulary was concerned; but to the entire system I had contracted an incurable repugnance, as worldly, hypocritical, and an evil counterfeit. I desired, therefore, to creep into some obscure congregation, and there wait till my mind had ripened as to the right path in circumstances so perplexing. I will only briefly say, that I at last settled among some who had previously been total strangers to me. To their good will and simple kindness I feel myself indebted: peace be to them! Thus I gained time, and repose of mind, which I greatly needed.

From the day that I had mentally decided on total inaction as to all ecclesiastical questions, I count the termination of my Second Period. My ideal of a spiritual Church had blown up in the most sudden and heartbreaking way; overpowering me with shame, when the violence of sorrow was past. There was no change whatever in my own judgment, yet a total change of action was inevitable: that I was on the eve of a great transition of mind I did not at all suspect. Hitherto my reverence for the authority of the whole and indivisible _Bible_ was overruling and complete. I never really had dared to criticize it; I did not even exact from it self-consistency. If two passages appeared to be opposed, and I could not evade the difficulty by the doctrine of Development and Progress, I inferred that there was _some_ mode of conciliation unknown to me; and that perhaps the depth of truth in divine things could ill be stated in our imperfect language. But from
the man who dared to interpose _a human comment_ on the Scripture, I
most rigidly demanded a clear, single, self-consistent sense. If he
did not know what he meant, why did he not hold his peace? If he did
know, why did he so speak as to puzzle us? It was for this uniform
refusal to allow of self-contradiction, that it was more than once
sadly predicted of me at Oxford that I should become "a Socinian;"
yet I did not apply this logical measure to any compositions but those
which were avowedly "uninspired" and human.

As to moral criticism, my mind was practically prostrate before the
Bible. By the end of this period I had persuaded myself that morality
so changes with the commands of God, that we can scarcely attach any
idea of _immutability_ to it. I am, moreover, ashamed to tell any
one how I spoke and acted against my own common sense under this
influence, and when I was thought a fool, prayed that I might think it
an honour to become a fool for Christ's sake. Against no doctrine did
I dare to bring moral objections, except that of "Reprobation." To
Election, to Preventing Grace, to the Fall and Original Sin of man,
to the Atonement, to Eternal Punishment, I reverently submitted my
understanding; though as to the last, new inquiries had just at this
crisis been opening on me. Reprobation, indeed, I always repudiated
with great vigour, of which I shall presently speak. That was the full
amount of my original thought; and in it I preserved entire reverence
for the sacred writers.

As to miracles, scarcely anything staggered me. I received the
strangest and the meanest prodigies of Scripture, with the same
unhesitating faith, as if I had never understood a proposition of physical philosophy, nor a chapter of Hume and Gibbon.

[Footnote 1: Very unintelligent criticism of my words induces me to add, that "the _credentials_ of Revelation," as distinguished from "the _contents_ of Revelation," are here intended. Whether such a distinction can be preserved is quite another question. The view here exhibited is essentially that of Paley, and was in my day the prevalent one at Oxford. I do not think that the present Archbishop of Canterbury will disown it, any more than Lloyd, and Burton, and Hampden,—bishops and Regius Professors of Divinity.]

[Footnote 2: Borrowed from Acts viii. 37.]

[Footnote 3: Virgil (AEneid vii.) gives the Stoical side of the same thought: Tu ne cede malis, _sed contra audentior ito_.]

CHAPTER III.

CALVINISM ABANDONED.

After the excitement was past, I learned many things from the events which have been named.
First, I had found that the class of Christians with whom I had been
joined had exploded the old Creeds in favour of another of their
own, which was never given me upon authority, and yet was constantly
slipping out, in the words, _Jesus is Jehovah_. It appeared to me
certain that this would have been denounced as the Sabellian heresy
by Athanasias and his contemporaries. I did not wish to run down
Sabellians, much less to excommunicate them, if they would give me
equality; but I felt it intensely unjust when my adherence to the
Nicene Creed was my real offence, that I should be treated as setting
up some novel wickedness against all Christendom, and slandered
by vague imputations which reached far and far beyond my power of
answering or explaining. Mysterious aspersions were made even against
my moral[1] character, and were alleged to me as additional reasons
for refusing communion with me; and when I demanded a tribunal, and
that my accuser would meet me face to face, all inquiry was refused,
on the plea that it was needless and undesirable. I had much reason to
believe that a very small number of persons had constituted themselves
my judges, and used against me all the airs of the Universal Church;
the many lending themselves easily to swell the cry of heresy, when
they have little personal acquaintance with the party attacked.
Moreover, when I was being condemned as in error, I in vain asked
to be told what was the truth. "I accept the Scripture: that is not
enough. I accept the Nicene Creed: that is not enough. Give me then
your formula: where, what is it?" But no! those who thought it their
duty to condemn me, disclaimed the pretensions of "making a Creed"
when I asked for one. They reprobated my interpretation of Scripture
as against that of the whole Church, but would not undertake to
expound that of the Church. I felt convinced, that they could not have
agreed themselves as to what was right: all that they could agree upon
was, that I was wrong. Could I have borne to recriminate, I believed
that I could have forced one of them to condemn another; but, oh! was
divine truth sent us for discord and for condemnation? I sickened at
the idea of a Church Tribunal, where none has any authority to judge,
and yet to my extreme embarrassment I saw that no Church can safely
dispense with judicial forms and other worldly apparatus for defending
the reputation of individuals. At least, none of the national and less
spiritual institutions would have been so very unequitable towards me.

This idea enlarged itself into another,—that spirituality is no
adequate security for sound moral discernment_. These alienated
friends did not know they were acting unjustly, cruelly, crookedly, or
they would have hated themselves for it: they thought they were
doing God service. The fervour of their love towards him was probably
greater than mine; yet this did not make them superior to prejudice,
or sharpen their logical faculties to see that they were idolizing
words to which they attached no ideas. On several occasions I had
distinctly perceived how serious alarm I gave by resolutely refusing
to admit any shiftings and shufflings of language. I felt convinced,
that if I would but have contradicted myself two or three times, and
then have added, "That is the mystery of it," I could have passed
as orthodox with many. I had been charged with a proud and vain
determination to pry into divine mysteries, barely because I would not
confess to propositions the meaning of which was to me doubtful,—or
say and unsay in consecutive breaths. It was too clear, that a
d Doctrine which muddles the understanding perverts also the power of
moral discernment. If I had committed some flagrant sin, they would
have given me a fair and honourable trial; but where they could not
give me a public hearing, nor yet leave me unimpeached, without danger
of (what they called) my infecting the Church, there was nothing left
but to hunt me out unscrupulously.

Unscrupulously! did not this one word characterize _all_ religious
persecution? and then my mind wandered back over the whole melancholy
tale of what is called Christian history. When Archbishop Cranmer
overpowered the reluctance of young Edward VI. to burn to death the
pious and innocent Joan of Kent, who moreover was as mystical and
illogical as heart could wish, was Cranmer not actuated by deep
religious convictions? None question his piety, yet it was an awfully
wicked deed. What shall I say of Calvin, who burned Servetus? Why have
I been so slow to learn, that religion is an impulse which animates
us to execute our moral judgments, but an impulse which may be half
blind? These brethren believe that I may cause the eternal ruin of
others: how hard then is it for them to abide faithfully by the laws
of morality and respect my rights! My rights! They are of course
trampled down for the public good, just as a house is blown up to
stop a conflagration. Such is evidently the theory of all
persecution;--which is essentially founded on _Hatred_. As Aristotle
says, "He who is angry, desires to punish somebody; but he who hates,
desires the hated person not even to exist." Hence they cannot endure
to see me face to face. That I may not infect the rest, they desire
my non-existence; by fair means, if fair will succeed; if not, then by
foul. And whence comes this monstrosity into such bosoms? Weakness of
common sense, dread of the common understanding, an insufficient faith
in common morality, are surely the disease: and evidently, nothing so
exasperates this disease as consecrating religious tenets which forbid
the exercise of common sense.

I now began to understand why it was peculiarly for unintelligible
doctrines like Transubstantiation and the Tri-unity that Christians
had committed such execrable wickednesses. Now also for the first
time I understood what had seemed not frightful only, but
preternatural,—the sensualities and cruelties enacted as a part of
religion in many of the old Paganisms. Religion and fanaticism are in
the embryo but one and the same; to purify and elevate them we want a
cultivation of the understanding, without which our moral code may be
indefinitely depraved. Natural kindness and strong sense are aids and
guides, which the most spiritual man cannot afford to despise.

I became conscious that I _had_ despised "mere moral men," as they
were called in the phraseology of my school. They were merged in the
vague appellation of "the world," with sinners of every class; and it
was habitually assumed, if not asserted, that they were necessarily
Pharisaic, because they had not been born again. For some time after I
had misgivings as to my fairness of judgment towards them, I could not
disentangle myself from great bewilderment concerning their state
in the sight of God: for it was an essential part of my Calvinistic
Creed, that (as one of the 39 Articles states it) the very good works
of the unregenerate "undoubtedly have the nature of sin," as indeed
the very nature with which they were born "deserveth God's wrath and
damnation." I began to mourn over the unlovely conduct into which I had been betrayed by this creed, long before I could thoroughly get rid of the creed that justified it: and a considerable time had to elapse, ere my new perceptions shaped themselves distinctly into the propositions: "Morality is the end. Spirituality is the means: Religion is the handmaid to Morals: we must be spiritual, in order that we may be in the highest and truest sense moral." Then at last I saw, that the deficiency of "mere moral men" is, that their morality is apt to be too external or merely negative, and therefore incomplete: that the man who worships a fiend for a God may be in some sense spiritual, but his spirituality will be a devilish fanaticism, having nothing in it to admire or approve: that the moral man deserves approval or love for all the absolute good that he has attained, though there be a higher good to which he aspires not; and that the truly and rightly spiritual is he who aims at an indefinitely high moral excellence, of which GOD is the embodiment to his heart and soul. If the absolute excellence of morality be denied, there is nothing for spirituality to aspire after, and nothing in God to worship. Years before I saw this as clearly as here stated; the general train of thought was very wholesome, in giving me increased kindliness of judgment towards the common world of men, who do not show any religious development. It was pleasant to me to look on an ordinary face, and see it light up into a smile, and think with myself: "_there_ is one heart that will judge of me by what I am, and not by a Procrustean dogma." Nor only so, but I saw that the saints, without the world, would make a very bad world of it; and that as ballast is wanted to a ship, so the common and rather low interests and the homely principles, rules, and ways of feeling, keep the church
from foundering by the intensity of her own gusts.

Some of the above thoughts took a still more definite shape, as follows. It is clear that A. B. and X. Y. would have behaved towards me more kindly, more justly, and more wisely, if they had consulted their excellent strong sense and amiable natures, instead of following (what they suppose to be) the commands of the word of God. They have misinterpreted that word: true: but this very thing shows, that one may go wrong by trusting one's power of interpreting the book, rather than trusting one's common sense to judge without the book. It startled me to find, that I had exactly alighted on the Romish objection to Protestants, that an infallible book is useless, unless we have an infallible interpreter. But it was not for some time, that, after twisting the subject in all directions to avoid it, I brought out the conclusion, that "to go against one's common sense in obedience to Scripture is a most hazardous proceeding:" for the "rule of Scripture" means to each of us nothing but his own fallible interpretation; and to sacrifice common sense to this, is to mutilate one side of our mind at the command of another side. In the Nicene age, the Bible was in people's hands, and the Spirit of God surely was not withheld: yet I had read, in one of the Councils an insane anathema was passed: "If any one call Jesus God-man, instead of God and man, let him be accursed." Surely want of common sense, and dread of natural reason, will be confessed by our highest orthodoxy to have been the distemper of that day.

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In all this I still remained theoretically convinced, that the
contents of the Scriptures, rightly interpreted, were supreme and
perfect truth; indeed, I had for several years accustomed myself to
speak and think as if the Bible were our sole source of all moral
knowledge: nevertheless, there were practically limits, beyond which
I did not, and could not, even attempt to blind my moral sentiment at
the dictation of the Scripture; and this had peculiarly frightened (as
I afterwards found) the first friend who welcomed me from abroad.
I was unable to admit the doctrine of "reprobation," as apparently
taught in the 9th chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans;--that "God
hardens in wickedness whomever He pleases, in order that He may show
his long-suffering" in putting off their condemnation to a future
dreadful day: and _especially_, that to all objectors it is a
sufficient confutation--"Nay, but O man, who art thou, that repliest
against God?" I told my friend, that I worshipped in God three great
attributes, all independent,--Power, Goodness, and Wisdom: that in
order to worship Him acceptably, I must discern these _as_ realities
with my inmost heart, and not merely take them for granted on
authority: but that the argument which was here pressed upon me was an
effort to supersede the necessity of my discerning Goodness in God:
it bade me simply to _infer_ Goodness from Power,--that is to say,
establish the doctrine, "Might makes Right;" according to which, I
might unawares worship a devil. Nay, nothing so much distinguished
the spiritual truth of Judaism and Christianity from abominable
heathenism, as this very discernment of God's purity, justice, mercy,
truth, goodness; while the Pagan worshipped mere power, and had no
discernment of moral excellence; but laid down the principle,
that cruelty, impurity, or caprice in a God was to be treated
reverentially, and called by some more decorous name. Hence, I said,
it was undermining the very foundation of Christianity itself,
to require belief of the validity of Rom. ix. 14-24, as my friend
understood it. I acknowledged the difficulty of the passage, and of
the whole argument. I was not prepared with an interpretation; but I
revered St. Paul too much, to believe it possible that he could mean
anything so obviously heathenish, as that first-sight meaning.--My
friend looked grave and anxious; but I did not suspect how deeply I
had shocked him, until many weeks after.

At this very time, moreover, ground was broken in my mind on a new
subject, by opening in a gentleman's library a presentation-copy of a
Unitarian treatise against the doctrine of Eternal Punishment. It was
the first Unitarian book of which I had even seen the outside, and I
handled it with a timid curiosity, as if by stealth, I had only time
to dip into it here and there, and I should have been ashamed to
possess the book; but I carried off enough to suggest important
inquiry. The writer asserted that the Greek word [Greek: aionios],
( secular, or, belonging to the ages,) which we translate _everlasting
and eternal_, is distinctly proved by the Greek translation of the Old
Testament often to mean only _distant time_. Thus in Psalm lxxvi. 5,
"I have considered the years of _ancient_ times:" Isaiah lxiii 11, "He
remembered the days _of old_, Moses and his people;" in which, and
in many similar places, the LXX have [Greek: aionios]. One striking
passage is Exodus xv. 18; ("Jehovah shall reign for ever and ever;")
where the Greek has [Greek: ton aiona kai ex aiona kai eti], which
would mean "for eternity and still longer," if the strict rendering
_everlasting_ were enforced. At the same time a suspicion as to
the honesty of our translation presented itself in Micah v. 2, a
controversial text, often used to prove the past eternity of the Son
of God; where the translators give us,"whose goings forth have been
_from everlasting_," though the Hebrew is the same as they elsewhere
render _from days of old_.

After I had at leisure searched through this new question, I found
that it was impossible to make out any doctrine of a philosophical
eternity in the whole Scriptures. The true Greek word for _eternal_
([Greek: aidios]) occurs twice only: once in Rom. i. 20, as applied
to the divine power, and once in Jude 6, of the fire which has been
manifested against Sodom and Gomorrah. The last instance showed that
allowance must be made for rhetoric; and that fire is called _eternal_
or _unquenchable_, when it so destroys as to leave nothing unburnt.
But on the whole, the very vocabulary of the Greek and Hebrew denoted
that the idea of absolute eternity was unformed. The _hills_ are
called everlasting (secular?), by those who supposed them to have
come into existence two or three thousand years before.--Only in two
passages of the Revelations I could not get over the belief that the
writer's energy was misplaced, if absolute eternity of torment was not
intended: yet it seemed to me unsafe and wrong to found an important
doctrine on a symbolic and confessedly obscure book of prophecy.
Setting this aside, I found no proof of any _eternal_ punishment.
As soon as the load of Scriptural authority was thus taken off from me, I had a vivid discernment of intolerable moral difficulties inseparable from the doctrine. First, that every sin is infinite in ill-desert and in result, _because_ it is committed against an infinite Being. Thus the fretfulness of a child is an infinite evil!

I was aghast that I could have believed it. Now that it was no longer laid upon me as a duty to uphold the infinitude of God's retaliation on sin, I saw that it was an immorality to teach that sin was measured by anything else than the heart and will of the agent. That a finite being should deserve infinite punishment, now was manifestly as incredible as that he should deserve infinite reward,—which I had never dreamed.—Again, I saw that the current orthodoxy made Satan eternal conqueror over Christ. In vain does the Son of God come from heaven and take human flesh and die on the cross. In spite of him, the devil carries off to hell the vast majority of mankind, in whom, not misery only, but _Sin_ is triumphant for ever and ever. Thus Christ not only does not succeed in destroying the works of the devil, but even aggravates them.—Again: what sort of _gospel_ or glad tidings had I been holding? Without this revelation no future state at all (I presumed) could be known. How much better no futurity for any, than that a few should be eternally in bliss, and the great majority[2] kept alive for eternal sin as well as eternal misery! My gospel then was bad tidings, nay, the worst of tidings! In a farther progress of thought, I asked, would it not have been better that the whole race of man had never come into existence? Clearly! And thus God was made out to be unwise in creating them. No _use_ in the punishment was imaginable, without setting up Fear, instead of Love, as the ruling
principle in the blessed. And what was the moral tendency of the doctrine? I had never borne to dwell upon it: but I before long suspected that it promoted malignity and selfishness, and was the real clue to the cruelties perpetrated under the name of religion. For he who does dwell on it, must comfort himself under the prospect of his brethren's eternal misery, by the selfish expectation of personal blessedness. When I asked whether I had been guilty of this selfishness, I remembered that I had often mourned, how small a part in my practical religion the future had ever borne. My heaven and my hell had been in the present, where my God was near me to smile or to frown. It had seemed to me a great weakness in my faith, that I never had any vivid imaginations or strong desires of heavenly glory: yet now I was glad to observe, that it had at least saved me from getting so much harm from the wrong side of the doctrine of a future life.

Before I had worked out the objections so fully as here stated, I freely disclosed my thoughts to the friend last named, and to his wife, towards whom he encouraged me to exercise the fullest frankness. I confess, I said nothing about the Unitarian book; for something told me that I had violated Evangelical decorum in opening it, and that I could not calculate how it would affect my friend. Certainly no Romish hierarchy can so successfully exclude heretical books, as social enactment excludes those of Unitarians from our orthodox circles. The bookseller dares not to exhibit their books on his counter: all presume them to be pestilential: no one knows their contents or dares to inform himself. But to return. My friend's wife entered warmly into my new views; I have now no doubt that this exceedingly distressed
him, and at length perverted his moral judgment: he himself examined the texts of the Old Testament, and attempted no answer to them. After I had left his neighbourhood, I wrote to him three affectionate letters, and at last got a reply--of vehement accusation. It can now concern no one to know, how many and deep wounds he planted in me. I forgave; but all was too instructive to forget.

For some years I rested in the belief that the epithet "secular" either solely denoted punishment in a future age, or else only of long duration. This evades the horrible idea of eternal and triumphant Sin, and of infinite retaliation for finite offences. But still, I found my new creed uneasy, now that I had established a practice (if not a right) of considering the moral propriety of punishment. I could not so pare away the vehement words of the Scripture, as really to enable me to say that I thought transgressors deserved the fiery infliction. This had been easy, while I measured their guilt by God's greatness; but when that idea was renounced, how was I to think that a good-humoured voluptuary deserved to be raised from the dead in order to be tormented in fire for 100 years? and what shorter time could be called secular? Or if he was to be destroyed instantaneously, and "secular" meant only "in a future age," was he worth the effort of a divine miracle to bring him to life and again annihilate him? I was not willing to refuse belief to the Scripture on such grounds; yet I felt disquietude, that my moral sentiment and the Scripture were no longer in full harmony.

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In this period I first discerned the extreme difficulty that there
must essentially be, in applying to the Christian Evidences a
principle, which, many years before, I had abstractedly received as
sound, though it had been a dead letter with me in practice. The Bible
(it seemed) contained two sorts of truth. Concerning one sort, man is
bound to judge: the other sort is necessarily beyond his ken, and
is received only by information from without. The first part of the
statement cannot be denied. It would be monstrous to say that we know
nothing of geography, history, or morals, except by learning them from
the Bible. Geography, history, and other worldly sciences, lie beyond
question. As to morals, I had been exceedingly inconsistent and
wavering in my theory and in its application; but it now glaring upon
me, that if man had no independent power of judging, it would have
been venial to think Barabbas more virtuous than Jesus. The hearers of
Christ or Paul could not draw their knowledge of right and wrong from
the New Testament. They had (or needed to have) an inherent power of
discerning that his conduct was holy and his doctrine good. To talk
about the infirmity or depravity of the human conscience is here quite
irrelevant. The conscience of Christ's hearers may have been dim
or twisted, but it was their best guide and only guide, as to the
question, whether to regard him as a holy prophet: so likewise, as
to ourselves, it is evident that we have no guide at all whether
to accept or reject the Bible, if we distrust that inward power of
judging, (whether called common sense, conscience, or the Spirit of
God,)--which is independent of our belief in the Bible. To disparage
the internally vouchsafed power of discerning truth without the Bible
or other authoritative system, is, to endeavour to set up a universal moral scepticism. He who may not criticize cannot approve.--Well! Let it be admitted that we discern moral truth by a something within us, and that then, admiring the truth so glorious in the Scriptures, we are further led to receive them as the word of God, and therefore to believe them absolutely in respect to the matters which are beyond our ken.

But two difficulties could no longer be dissembled: 1. How are we to draw the line of separation? For instance, would the doctrines of Reprobation and of lasting Fiery Torture with no benefit to the sufferers, belong to the moral part, which we freely criticize; or to the extra-moral part, as to which we passively believe? 2. What is to be done, if in the parts which indisputably lie open to criticism we meet with apparent error?--The second question soon became a practical one with me: but for the reader's convenience I defer it until my Fourth Period, to which it more naturally belongs: for in this Third Period I was principally exercised with controversies that do not vitally touch the _authority_ of the Scripture. Of these the most important were matters contested between Unitarians and Calvinists.

When I had found how exactly the Nicene Creed summed up all that I myself gathered from John and Paul concerning the divine nature of Christ, I naturally referred to this creed, as expressing my convictions, when any unpleasant inquiry arose. I had recently gained the acquaintance of the late excellent Dr. Olinthus Gregory, a man of unimpeached orthodoxy; who met me by the frank avowal, that the
Nicene Creed was "a great mistake." He said, that the Arian and the Athanasian difference was not very vital; and that the Scriptural truth lay _beyond_ the Nicene doctrine, which fell short on the same side as Arianism had done. On the contrary, I had learned of an intermediate tenet, called Semi-Arianism, which appeared to me more scriptural than the views of either Athanasius or Arius. Let me bespeak my reader's patience for a little. Arius was judged by Athanasius (I was informed) to be erroneous in two points; 1. in teaching that the Son of God was a creature; _i.e._ that "begotten" and "made" were two words for the same idea: 2. in teaching, that he had an origin of existence in time; so that there was a distant period at which he was not. Of these two Arian tenets, the Nicene Creed condemned _the former_ only; namely, in the words, "begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father." But on _the latter_ question the Creed is silent. Those who accepted the Creed, and hereby condemned the great error of Arius that the Son was of different substance from the Father, but nevertheless agreed with Arius in thinking that the Son had a beginning of existence, were called Semi-Arians; and were received into communion by Athanasius, in spite of this disagreement. To me it seemed to be a most unworthy shuffling with words, to say that the Son _was_ begotten, but was never begotten_. The very form of our past participle is invented to indicate an event in past time. If the Athanasians alleged that the phrase does not allude to "a coming forth" completed at a definite time, but indicates a process at no time begun and at no time complete, their doctrine could not be expressed by our past-perfect tense _begotten_. When they compared the derivation of the Son of God from, the Father to the rays of light which ever flow from the natural
sun, and argued that if that sun had been eternal, its emanations
would be co-eternal, they showed that their true doctrine required the
formula—"always being begotten, and as instantly perishing, in order
to be rebegotten perpetually." They showed a real disbelief in our
English statement "begotten, not made." I overruled the objection,
that in the Greek it was not a participle, but a verbal adjective; for
it was manifest to me, that a religion which could not be proclaimed
in English could not be true; and the very idea of a Creed announcing
that Christ was "not begotten, yet begettive_," roused in me an
unspeakable loathing. Yet surely this would have been Athanasius's
most legitimate form of denying Semi-Arianism. In short, the
Scriptural phrase, _Son of God_, conveyed to us either a literal fact,
or a metaphor. If literal, the Semi-Arians were clearly right, in
saying that sonship implied a beginning of existence. If it was a
metaphor, the Athanasians forfeited all right to press the literal
sense in proof that the Son must be "of the same substance" as the
Father.—Seeing that the Athanasians, in zeal to magnify the Son, had
so confounded their good sense, I was certainly startled to find a
man of Dr. Olinthus Gregory's moral wisdom treat the Nicenists as in
obvious error for not having magnified Christ _enough_. On so many
other sides, however, I met with the new and short creed, "Jesus is
Jehovah," that I began to discern Sabellianism to be the prevalent
view.

A little later, I fell in with a book of an American Professor, Moses
Stuart of Andover, on the subject of the Trinity. Professor Stuart is
a very learned man, and thinks for himself. It was a great novelty to
me, to find him not only deny the orthodoxy of all the Fathers, (which was little more than Dr. Olinthus Gregory had done,) but avow that from the change in speculative philosophy it was simply impossible for any modern to hold the views prevalent in the third and fourth centuries. Nothing (said he) WAS clearer, than that with us the essential point in Deity is, to be unoriginated, underived; hence with us, a derived God is a self-contradiction, and the very sound of the phrase profane. On the other hand, it is certain that the doctrine of Athanasius, equally as of Arius, was, that the Father is the underived or self-existent God, but the Son is the derived subordinate God. This (argued Stuart) turned upon their belief in the doctrine of Emanations; but as we hold no such philosophical doctrine, the religious theory founded on it is necessarily inadmissible. Professor Stuart then develops his own creed, which appeared to me simple and undeniable Sabellianism.

That Stuart correctly represented the Fathers was clear enough to me; but I nevertheless thought that in this respect the Fathers had honestly made out the doctrine of the Scripture; and I did not at all approve of setting up a battery of modern speculative philosophy against Scriptural doctrine. "How are we to know that the doctrine of Emanations is false? (asked I.) If it is legitimately elicited from Scripture, it is true."--I refused to yield up my creed at this summons. Nevertheless, he left a wound upon me: for I now could not help seeing, that we moderns use the word God in a more limited sense than any ancient nations did. Hebrews and Greeks alike said Gods, to mean any superhuman beings; hence derived God did not
sound to them absurd; but I could not deny that in good English it is absurd. This was a very disagreeable discovery: for now, if any one were to ask me whether I believed in the divinity of Christ, I saw it would be dishonest to say simply, _Yes_; for the interrogator means to ask, whether I hold Christ to be the eternal and undetermined Source of life: yet if I said _No_, he would care nothing for my professing to hold the Nicene Creed.

Might not then, after all, Sabellianism be the truth? No: I discerned too plainly what Gibbon states, that the Sabellian, if consistent, is only a concealed Ebionite, or us we now say, a Unitarian, Socinian. As we cannot admit that the Father was slain on the cross, or prayed to himself in the garden, he who will not allow the Father and the Son to be separate persons, but only two names for one person, _must divide the Son of God and Jesus into two persons_, and so fall back on the very heresy of Socinus which he is struggling to escape.

On the whole, I saw, that however people might call themselves Trinitarians, yet if, like Stuart and all the Evangelicals in Church and Dissent, they turn into a dead letter the _generation_ of the Son of God, and _the procession_ of the Spirit, nothing is possible but Sabellianism or Tritheism: or, indeed, Ditheism, if the Spirit's separate personality is not held. The modern creed is alternately the one or the other, as occasion requires. Sabellians would find themselves out to be mere Unitarians, if they always remained Sabellians: but in fact, they are half their lives Ditheists. They do not _aim_ at consistency; would an upholder of the pseudo-Athanasian
creed desire it? Why, that creed teaches, that the height of orthodoxy
is to contradict oneself and protest that one does not. Now, however,
rose on me the question: Why do I not take the Irish clergyman at his
word, and attack him and others as idolaters and worshippers of three
Gods? It was unseemly and absurd in him to try to force me into
what he must have judged uncharitableness; but it was not the less
incumbent on me to find a reply.

I remembered that in past years I had expressly disowned, as obviously
unscriptural and absurd, prayers to the Holy Spirit, on the ground
that the Spirit is evidently _God in the hearts of the faithful_, and
nothing else: and it did not appear to me that any but a few extreme
and rather fanatical persons could be charged with making the Spirit
a third God or object of distinct worship. On the other hand, I could
not deny that the Son and the Father were thus distinguished to the
mind. So indeed John expressly avowed—"truly our fellowship is with
the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." I myself also had prayed
sometimes to God and sometimes to Christ, alternately and confusedly.
Now, indeed, I was better taught! now I was more logical and
consistent! I had found a triumphant answer to the charge of Ditheism,
in that I believed the Son to be derived from the Father, and not to
be the Unoriginated—No doubt! yet, after all, could I seriously think
that morally and spiritually I was either better or worse for this
discovery? I could not pretend that I was.

This showed me, that if a man of partially unsound and visionary mind
made the angel Gabriel a _fourth person_ in the Godhead, it might
cause no difference whatever in the actings of his spirit. The great question would be, whether he ascribed the same moral perfection to Gabriel as to the Father. If so, to worship him would be no degradation to the soul; even if absolute omnipotence were not attributed, nay, nor a past eternal existence. It thus became clear to me, that Polytheism as such is not a moral and spiritual, but at most only an intellectual, error; and that its practical evil consists in worshipping beings whom we represent to our imaginations as morally imperfect. Conversely, one who imputes to God sentiments and conduct which in man he would call capricious or cruel, such a one, even if he be as monotheistic as a Mussulman, admits into his soul the whole virus of Idolatry.

Why then did I at all cling to the doctrine of Christ's superior nature, and not admit it among things indifferent? In obedience to the Scripture, I did actually affirm, that, as for as creed is concerned, a man should be admissible into the Church on the bare confession that Jesus was the Christ. Still, I regarded a belief in his superhuman origin as of first-rate importance, for many reasons, and among others, owing to its connexion with the doctrine of the Atonement; on which there is much to be said.

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The doctrine which I used to read as a boy, taught that a vast sum of punishment was due to God for the sins of men. This vast sum was made
up of all the woes due through eternity to the whole human race, or, as some said, to the elect. Christ on the cross bore this punishment himself and thereby took it away: thus God is enabled to forgive without violating justice.--But I early encountered unanswerable difficulty on this theory, as to the question, whether Christ had borne the punishment of _all_ or of _some_ only. If of all, is it not unjust to inflict any of it on any? If of the elect only, what gospel have you to preach? for then you cannot tell sinners that God has provided a Saviour for them; for you do not know whether those whom you address are elect. Finding no way out of this, I abandoned the fundamental idea of _compensation in quantity_, as untenable; and rested in the vaguer notion, that God signally showed his abhorrence of sin, by laying tremendous misery on the Saviour who was to bear away sin.

I have already narrated, how at Oxford I was embarrassed as to the forensic propriety of transferring punishment at all. This however I received as matter of authority, and rested much on the wonderful exhibition made of the evil of sin, when _such_ a being could be subjected to preternatural suffering as a vicarious sinbearer. To this view, a high sense of the personal dignity of Jesus was quite essential; and therefore I had always felt a great repugnance for Mr. Belsham, Dr. Priestley, and the Unitarians of that school, though I had not read a line of their writings.

A more intimate familiarity with St. Paul and an anxious harmonizing of my very words to the Scripture, led me on into a deviation from the
popular creed, of the full importance of which I was not for some
time aware. I perceived that it is not the _agonies_ of mind or body
endured by Christ, which in the Scriptures are said to take away sin,
but his "death," his "laying down his life," or sometimes even
his _resurrection_. I gradually became convinced, that when his
"suffering," or more especially his "blood," is emphatically spoken
of, nothing is meant but his _violent death_. In the Epistle to the
Hebrews, where the analogy of Sacrifice is so pressed, we see that the
pains which Jesus bore were in order that he might "learn obedience,"
but our redemption is effected by his dying as a voluntary victim: in
which, death by bloodshed, not pain, is the cardinal point. So too
the Paschal lamb (to which, though not properly a sacrifice, the dying
Christ is compared by Paul) was not roasted alive, or otherwise put to
slow torment, but was simply killed. I therefore saw that the doctrine
of "vicarious agonies" was fundamentally unscriptural.

This being fully discerned, I at last became bold to criticize the
popular tenet. What should we think of a judge, who, when a boy had
deserved a stripe which would to him have been a sharp punishment,
laid the very same blow on a strong man, to whom it was a slight
infliction? Clearly this would evade, not satisfy justice. To carry
out the principle, the blow might be laid as well on a giant, an
elephant, or on an inanimate thing. So, to lay our punishment on the
infinite strength of Christ, who (they say) bore in six hours what it
would have taken thousands of millions of men all eternity to bear,
would be a similar evasion.--I farther asked, if we were to fall in
with Pagans, who tortured their victims to death as an atonement, what
idea of God should we think them to form? and what should we reply, if they said, it gave them a wholesome view of his hatred of sin? A second time I shuddered at the notions which I had once imbibed as a part of religion, and then got comfort from the inference, how much better men of this century are than their creed. Their creed was the product of ages of cruelty and credulity; and it sufficiently bears that stamp.

Thus I rested in the Scriptural doctrine, that the _death_ of Christ is our atonement. To say the same of the death of Paul, was obviously unscriptural: it was, then, essential to believe the physical nature of Christ to be different from that of Paul. If otherwise, death was due to Jesus as the lot of nature: how could such death have anything to do with our salvation? On this ground the Unitarian doctrine was utterly untenable: I could see nothing between my own view and a total renunciation of the _authority of the doctrines_ promulgated by Paul and John.

Nevertheless, my own view seemed mere and more unmeaning the more closely it was interrogated. When I ascribed death to Christ, what did death mean? and what or whom did I suppose to die? Was it man that died, or God? If man only, how was that wonderful, or how did it concern us? Besides;--persons die, not natures: a _nature_ is only a collection of properties: if Christ was one person, all Christ died. Did, then, God die, and man remain alive! For God to become non-existent is an unimaginable absurdity. But is this death a mere change of state, a renunciation of earthly life? Still it remains
unclear how the parting with mere human life could be to one who possesses divine life either an atonement or a humiliation. Was it not rather an escape from humiliation, saving only the mode of death?

So severe was this difficulty, that at length I unawares dropt from Semi-Arianism into pure Arianism, by _so_ distinguishing the Son from the Father, as to admit the idea that the Son of God had actually been non-existent in the interval between death and resurrection: nevertheless, I more and more felt, that _to be able to define my own notions on such questions had exceedingly little to do with my spiritual state_. For me it was important and essential to know that God hated sin, and that God had forgiven my sin: but to know one particular manifestation of his hatred of sin, or the machinery by which He had enabled himself to forgive, was of very secondary importance. When He proclaims to me in his word, that He is forgiving to all the penitent, it is not for me to reply, that "I cannot believe that, until I hear how He manages to reconcile such conduct with his other attributes." Yet, I remembered, this was Bishop Beveridge's sufficient refutation of Mohammedism, which teaches no atonement.

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At the same time great progress had been made in my mind towards the overthrow of the correlative dogma of the Fall of man and his total corruption. Probably for years I had been unawares anti-Calvinistic on this topic. Even at Oxford, I had held that human depravity is a _fact_, which it is absurd to argue against; a fact, attested by Thucydides, Polybius, Horace, and Tacitus, almost as strongly as by
St. Paul. Yet in admitting man's total corruption, I interpreted this
of _spiritual_, not of _moral_, perversion: for that there were kindly
and amiable qualities even in the unregenerate, was quite as clear a
fact as any other. Hence in result I did _not_ attribute to man any
great essential depravity, in the popular and moral sense of the word;
and the doctrine amounted only to this, that "_spiritually_, man
is paralyzed, until the grace of God comes freely upon him." How to
reconcile this with the condemnation, and punishment of man for being
unspiritual, I knew not. I saw, and did not dissemble, the difficulty;
but received it as a mystery hereafter to be cleared up.

But it gradually broke upon me, that when Paul said nothing stronger
than heathen moralists had said about human wickedness, it was absurd
to quote his words, any more than theirs, in proof of a _Fall_--that
is, of a permanent degeneracy induced by the first sin of the first
man: and when I studied the 5th chapter of the Romans, I found it was
_death_, not _corruption_, which Adam was said to have entailed. In
short, I could scarcely find the modern doctrine of the "Fall" any
where in the Bible. I then remembered that Calvin, in his Institutes,
complains that all the Fathers are heterodox on this point; the Greek
Fathers being grievously overweening in their estimate of human power;
while of the Latin Fathers even Augustine is not always up to Calvin's
mark of orthodoxy. This confirmed my rising conviction that the tenet
is of rather recent origin. I afterwards heard, that both it and the
doctrine of compensatory misery were first systematized by Archbishop
Anselm, in the reign of our William Rufus: but I never took the pains
to verify this.
For meanwhile I had been forcibly impressed with the following thought. Suppose a youth to have been carefully brought up at home, and every temptation kept out of his way: suppose him to have been in appearance virtuous, amiable, religious: suppose, farther, that at the age of twenty-one he goes out into the world, and falls into sin by the first temptation:—how will a Calvinistic teacher moralize over such a youth? Will he not say: "Behold a proof of the essential depravity of human nature! See the affinity of man for sin! How fair and deceptive was this young man's virtue, while he was sheltered from temptation; but oh! how rotten has it proved itself!"—Undoubtedly, the Calvinist would and must so moralize. But it struck me, that if I substituted the name of _Adam_ for the youth, the argument proved the primitive corruption of Adam's nature. Adam fell by the first temptation: what greater proof of a fallen nature have _I_ ever given? or what is it possible for any one to give?—I thus discerned that there was _a priori_ impossibility of fixing on myself the imputation of _degeneracy_, without fixing the same on Adam. In short, Adam undeniably proved his primitive nature to be frail; so do we all: but as _he_ was nevertheless not primitively corrupt, why should we call ourselves so? Frailty, then, is not corruption, and does not prove degeneracy.

"Original sin" (says one of the 39 Articles) "standeth not in the following of Adam, _as the Pelagians do vainly talk_," &c. Alas, then! was I become a Pelagian? certainly I could no longer see that Adam's first sin affected me more than his second or third, or so much as the
sins of my immediate parents. A father who, for instance, indulges in furious passions and exciting liquors, may (I suppose) transmit violent passions to his son. In this sense I could not wholly reject the possibility of transmitted corruption; but it had nothing to do with the theological doctrine of the "Federal Headship" of Adam. Not that I could wholly give up this last doctrine; for I still read it in the 5th chapter of Romans. But it was clear to me, that whatever that meant, I could not combine it with the idea of degeneracy, nor could I find a proof of it in the _fact_ of prevalent wickedness. Thus I received a shadowy doctrine on mere Scriptural _authority_; it had no longer any root in my understanding or heart.

Moreover, it was manifest to me that the Calvinistic view is based in a vain attempt to acquit God of having created a "sinful" being, while the broad Scriptural fact is, that he did create a being as truly "liable to sin" as any of us. If that needs no exculpation, how more does _our_ state need it? Does it not suffice to say, that "every creature, because he is a creature and not God, must necessarily be frail?" But Calvin intensely aggravates whatever there is of difficulty: for he supposes God to have created the most precious thing on earth in _unstable equilibrium_, so as to tipple over irrecoverably at the first infinitesimal touch, and with it wreck for ever the spiritual hopes of all Adam's posterity. Surely all nature proclaims, that if God planted any spiritual nature at all in man, it was in _stable equilibrium_, able to right itself when deranged.

Lastly, I saw that the Calvinistic doctrine of human degeneracy
teaches, that God disowns my nature (the only nature I ever had) as
not his work, but the devil’s work. He hereby tells me that he is
_not_ my Creator, and he disclaims his right over me, as a father
who disowns a child. To teach this is to teach that I owe him no
obedience, no worship, no trust: to sever the cords that bind the
creature to the Creator, and to make all religion gratuitous and vain.

Thus Calvinism was found by me not only not to be Evangelical, but
not to be logical, in spite of its high logical pretensions, and to
be irreconcilable with any intelligent theory of religion. Of "gloomy
Calvinism" I had often heard people speak with an emphasis,
that annoyed me as highly unjust; for mine had not been a gloomy
religion:--far, very far from it. On the side of eternal punishment,
its theory, no doubt, had been gloomy enough; but human nature has a
notable art of not realizing all the articles of a creed; moreover,
_this_ doctrine is equally held by Arminians. But I was conscious,
that in dropping Calvinism I had lost nothing _Evangelical_: on
the contrary, the gospel which I retained was as spiritual and
deep-hearted as before, only more merciful.

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Before this Third Period of my creed was completed, I made my first
acquaintance with a Unitarian. This gentleman showed much sweetness
of mind, largeness of charity, and a timid devoutness which I had not
expected in such a quarter. His mixture of credulity and incredulity
seemed to me capricious, and wholly incoherent. First, as to his 
incredulity, or rather, boldness of thought. Eternal punishment was a 
notion, which nothing could make him believe, and for which it would 
be useless to quote Scripture to him; for the doctrine (he said) 
darkened the moral character of God, and produced malignity in man. 
That Christ had any higher nature than we all have, was a tenet 
essentially inadmissible; first, because it destroyed all moral 
benefit from his example and sympathy, and next, because no one has 
yet succeeded in even stating the doctrine of the Incarnation without 
contradicting himself. If Christ was but one person, one mind, then 
that one mind could not be simultaneously finite and infinite, nor 
therefore simultaneously God and man. But when I came to hear more 
from this same gentleman, I found him to avow that no Trinitarian 
could have a higher conception than he of the present power and glory 
of Christ. He believed that the man Jesus is at the head of the whole 
moral creation of God; that all power in heaven and earth is given to 
him: that he will be Judge of all men, and is himself raised above all 
judgment. This was to me unimaginable from his point of view. Could 
he really think Jesus to be a mere man, and yet believe him to be 
sinless? On what did that belief rest? Two texts were quoted in 
proof, 1 Pet. ii. 21, and Heb. iv. 15. Of these, the former did not 
necessarily mean anything more than that Jesus was unjustly put to 
death; and the latter belonged to an Epistle, which my new friend had 
already rejected as unapostolic and not of first-rate authority, when 
speaking of the Atonement. Indeed, that the Epistle to the Hebrews 
is not from the hand of Paul, had very long seemed to me an obvious 
certainty,—as long as I had had any delicate feeling of Greek style.
That a human child, born with the nature of other children, and having
to learn wisdom and win virtue through the same process, should grow
up sinless, appeared to me an event so paradoxical, as to need the
most amply decisive proof. Yet what kind of proof was possible?
Neither Apollos, (if he was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrew,)
nor yet Peter, had any power of _attesting_ the sinlessness of Jesus,
as a fact known to themselves personally: they could only learn it by
some preternatural communication, to which, nevertheless, the passages
before us implied no pretension whatever. To me it appeared an
axiom.[3] that if Jesus was in physical origin a mere man, he was,
like myself, a sinful man, and therefore certainly not my Judge,
certainly not an omniscient reader of all hearts; nor on any account
to be bowed down to as Lord. To exercise hope, faith, trust in
him, seemed then an impiety. I did not mean to impute impiety to
Unitarians; still I distinctly believed that English Unitarianism
could never afford me a half hour's resting-place.

Nevertheless, from contact with this excellent person I learned how
much tenderness of spirit a Unitarian may have; and it pleasantly
enlarged my charity, although I continued to feel much repugnance
for his doctrine, and was anxious and constrained in the presence of
Unitarians. From the same collision with him, I gained a fresh insight
into a part of my own mind. I had always regarded the Gospels (at
least the three first) to be to the Epistles nearly as Law to Gospel;
that is, the three gospels dealt chiefly in _precept_, the epistles
in _motives_ which act on the affections. This did not appear to me
dishonourable to the teaching of Christ; for I supposed it to be a
pre-determined development. But I now discovered that there was a
deep distaste in me for the details of the human life of Christ,
than I was previously conscious of—a distaste which I found out, by
a reaction from the minute interest felt in such details by my new
friend. For several years more, I did not fully understand how and why
this was; viz. that my religion had always been Pauline. Christ was
to me the ideal of glorified human nature: but I needed some dimness
in the portrait to give play to my imagination: if drawn too sharply
historical, it sank into something not superhuman, and caused a
revulsion of feeling. As all paintings of the miraculous used to
displease and even disgust me from a boy by the unbelief which they
inspired; so if any one dwelt on the special proofs of tenderness and
love exhibited in certain words or actions of Jesus, it was apt to
call out in me a sense, that from day to day equal kindness might
often be met. The imbecility of preachers, who would dwell on such
words as "Weep not," as if nobody else ever uttered such,—had always
annoyed me. I felt it impossible to obtain a worthy idea of Christ
from studying any of the details reported concerning him. If I
dwelt too much on these, I got a finite object; but I yearned for an
infinite one: hence my preference for John's mysterious Jesus. Thus my
Christ was not the figure accurately painted in the narrative, but one
kindled in my imagination by the allusions and (as it were) poetry of
the New Testament. I did not wish for vivid historical realisation:
relics I could never have valued: pilgrimages to Jerusalem had always
excited in me more of scorn than of sympathy;—and I make no doubt
such was fundamentally Paul's[4] feeling. On the contrary, it began
to appear to me (and I believe not unjustly) that the Unitarian mind
revelled peculiarly in "Christ after the flesh," whom Paul resolved not to know. Possibly in this circumstance will be found to lie the strong and the weak points of the Unitarian religious character, as contrasted with that of the Evangelical, far more truly than in the doctrine of the Atonement. I can testify that the Atonement may be dropt out of Pauline religion without affecting its quality; so may Christ be spiritualized into God, and identified with the Father: but I suspect that a Pauline faith could not, without much violence and convulsion, be changed into devout admiration of a clearly drawn historical character; as though any full and unsurpassable embodiment of God's moral perfections could be exhibited with ink and pen.

A reviewer, who has since made his name known, has pointed to the preceding remarks, as indicative of my deficiency in _imagination_ and my tendency to _romance_. My dear friend is undoubtedly right in the former point; I am destitute of (creative) poetical imagination: and as to the latter point, his insight into character is so great, that I readily believe him to know me better than I know myself, Nevertheless, I think he has mistaken the nature of the preceding argument. I am, on the contrary, almost disposed to say, that those have a tendency to romance who can look at a picture with men flying into the air, or on an angel with a brass trumpet, and dead men rising out of their graves with good stout muscles, and _not_ feel that the picture suggests unbelief. Nor do I confess to romance in my desire of something _more_ than historical and daily human nature in the character of Jesus; for all Christendom, between the dates A.D. 100 to A.D. 1850, with the exception of small eccentric coteries, has held
Jesus to be essentially superhuman. Paul and John so taught concerning him. To believe their doctrine (I agree with my friend) is, in some sense, a weakness of understanding; but it is a weakness to which minds of every class have been for ages liable.

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Such had been the progress of my mind, towards the end of what I will call my Third Period. In it the authority of the Scriptures as to some details (which at length became highly important) had begun to be questioned; of which I shall proceed to speak: but hitherto this was quite secondary to the momentous revolution which lay Calvinism prostrate in my mind, which opened my heart to Unitarians, and, I may say, to unbelievers; which enlarged all my sympathies, and soon set me to practise free moral thought, at least as a necessity, if not as a duty. Yet I held fast an unabated reverence for the moral and spiritual teaching of the New Testament, and had not the most remote conception that anything could ever shatter my belief in its great miracles. In fact, during this period, I many times yearned to proceed to India, whither my friend Groves had transferred his labours and his hopes; but I was thwarted by several causes, and was again and again damped by the fear of bigotry from new quarters. Otherwise, I thought I could succeed in merging as needless many controversies. In all the workings of any mind about Tri-unity, Incarnation, Atonement, the Fall, Resurrection, Immortality, Eternal Punishment, how little had any of these to do with the inward exercises of my soul towards God! He was still the same, immutably glorious: not one feature of his
countenance had altered to my gaze, or could alter. This surely was
the God whom Christ came to reveal, and bring us into fellowship with:
this is that, about which Christians ought to have no controversy, but
which they should unitedly, concordantly, themselves enjoy and exhibit
to the heathen. But oh, Christendom! what dost thou believe and teach?
The heathen cry out to thee,—Physician, heal thyself.

[Footnote 1: I afterwards learned that some of those gentlemen
esteemed boldness of thought "a lust of the mind," and as such, an
immorality. This enables them to persuade themselves that they do not
reject a "heretic" for a matter of _opinion_, but for that which they
have a right to call "_immoral_". What immorality was imputed to me, I
was not distinctly informed.]

[Footnote 2: I really thought it needless to quote proof that but
_few_ will be saved, Matth. vii. 14. I know there is a class of
Christians who believe in Universal salvation, and there are others
who disbelieve eternal torment. They must not be angry with me for
refuting the doctrine of other Christians, which they hold to be
false.]

[Footnote 3: In this (second) edition, I have added an entire chapter
expressly on the subject.]

[Footnote 4: The same may probably be said of all the apostles, and
their whole generation. If they had looked on the life of Jesus with
the same tender and human affection as modern Unitarians and pious Romanists do, the church would have swarmed with holy coats and other relics in the very first age. The mother of Jesus and her little establishment would at once have swelled into importance. This certainly was not the case; which may make it doubtful whether the other apostles dwelt at all more on the human personality of Jesus than Paul did. Strikingly different as James is from Paul, he is in this respect perfectly agreed with him.]

CHAPTER IV.

THE RELIGION OF THE LETTER RENOUNCED.

It has been stated that I had already begun to discern that it was impossible with perfect honesty to defend every tittle contained in the Bible. Most of the points which give moral offence in the book of Genesis I had been used to explain away by the doctrine of Progress; yet every now and then it became hard to deny that God is represented as giving an actual sanction to that which we now call sinful. Indeed, up and down the Scriptures very numerous texts are scattered, which are notorious difficulties with commentators. These I had habitually overruled one by one: but again of late, since I had been forced to act and talk less and think more, they began to encompass me. But I was for a while too full of other inquiries to follow up coherently any of my doubts or perceptions, until my mind became at length nailed down to the definite study of one well-known passage.
This passage may be judged of extremely secondary importance in itself, yet by its remoteness from all properly spiritual and profound questions, it seemed to afford to me the safest of arguments. The _genealogy_ with which the gospel of Matthew opens, I had long known to be a stumbling-block to divines, and I had never been satisfied with their explanations. On reading it afresh, after long intermission, and comparing it for myself with the Old Testament, I was struck with observing that the corruption of the two names Ahaziah and Uzziah into the same sound (Oziah) has been the cause of merging four generations into one; as the similarity of Jehoiakim to Jehoiachin also led to blending them both in the name Jeconiah. In consequence, there ought to be 18 generations where Matthew has given as only 14: yet we cannot call this on error of a transcriber; for it is distinctly remarked, that the genealogy consists of 14 three times repeated. Thus there were but 14 names inserted by Matthew: yet it ought to have been 18: and he was under manifest mistake. This surely belongs to a class of knowledge, of which man has cognizance: it would not be piety, but grovelling superstition, to avow before God that I distrust my powers of counting, and, in obedience to the written word, I believe that 18 is 14 and 14 is 18. Thus it is impossible to deny, that there is cognizable error in the first chapter of Matthew. Consequently, that gospel is not all dictated by the Spirit of God, and (unless we can get rid of the first chapter as no part of the Bible) the doctrine of the verbal infallibility of the whole Bible, or indeed of the New Testament, is demonstrably false.
After I had turned the matter over often, and had become accustomed to the thought, this single instance at length had great force to give boldness to my mind within a very narrow range. I asked whether, if the chapter were now proved to be spurious, that would save the infallibility of the Bible. The reply was: not of the Bible as it is; but only of the Bible when cleared of that _and of all other_ spurious additions. If by independent methods, such as an examination of manuscripts, the spuriousness of the chapter could now be shown, _this would verify the faculty of criticism_ which has already objected to its contents: thus it would justly urge us to apply similar criticism to other passages.

I farther remembered, and now brought together under a single point of view, other undeniable mistakes. The genealogy of the nominal father of Jesus in Luke is inconsistent with that in Matthew, in spite of the flagrant dishonesty with which divines seek to deny this; and neither evangelist gives the genealogy of Mary, which alone is wanted.--In Acts vii. 16, the land which _Jacob_ bought of the children of Hamor,[1] is confounded with that which _Abraham_ bought of Ephron the Hittite. In Acts v. 36, 37, Gamaliel is made to say that Theudas was earlier in time than Judas of Galilee. Yet in fact, Judas of Galilee preceded Theudas; and the revolt of Theudas had not yet taken place when Gamaliel spoke, so the error is not Gamaliel's, but Luke's. Of both the insurgents we have a dear and unimpeached historical account in Josephus.--The slaughter of the infants by Herod, if true, must, I thought, needs have been recorded by the same historian.--So again, in regard to the allusion made by Jesus to Zacharias, son of Barachias,
as _last of the martyrs_, it was difficult for me to shake off the suspicion, that a gross error had been committed, and that the person intended is the "Zacharias son of Baruchus," who, as we know from Josephus, was martyred _within the courts of the temple_ during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, about 40 years after the crucifixion. The well-known prophet Zechariah was indeed son of Berechiah; but he was not last of the martyrs,[2] if indeed he was martyred at all. On the whole, the persuasion stuck to me, that words had been put into the mouth of Jesus, which he could not possibly have used.--The impossibility of settling the names of the twelve apostles struck me as a notable fact.--I farther remembered the numerous difficulties of harmonizing the four gospels; how, when a boy at school, I had tried to incorporate all four into one history, and the dismay with which I had found the insoluble character of the problem.--the endless discrepancies and perpetual uncertainties. These now began to seem to me inherent in the materials, and not to be ascribable to our want of intelligence.

I had also discerned in the opening of Genesis things which could not be literally received. The geography of the rivers in Paradise is inexplicable, though it assumes the tone of explanation. The curse on the serpent, who is to go on his belly--(how else did he go before?)--and eat dust, is a capricious punishment on a race of brutes, one of whom the Devil chose to use as his instrument. That the painfulness of childbirth is caused, not by Eve's sin, but by artificial habits and a weakened nervous system, seems to be proved by the twofold fact, that savage women and wild animals suffer but
little, and tame cattle often suffer as much as human females.--About this time also, I had perceived (what I afterwards learned the Germans to have more fully investigated) that the two different accounts of the Creation are distinguished by the appellations given to the divine Creator. I did not see how to resist the inference that the book is made up of heterogeneous documents, and was not put forth by the direct dictation of the Spirit to Moses.

A new stimulus was after this given to my mind by two short conversations with the late excellent Dr. Arnold at Rugby. I had become aware of the difficulties encountered by physiologists in believing the whole human race to have proceeded in about 6000 years from a single Adam and Eve; and that the longevity (not miraculous, but ordinary) attributed to the patriarchs was another stumbling-block. The geological difficulties of the Mosaic cosmogony were also at that time exciting attention. It was a novelty to me, that Arnold treated these questions as matters of indifference to religion; and did not hesitate to say, that the account of Noah's deluge was evidently mythical, and the history of Joseph "a beautiful poem." I was staggered at this. If all were not descended from Adam, what became of St. Paul's parallel between the first and second Adam, and the doctrine of Headship and Atonement founded on it? If the world was not made in six days, how could we defend the Fourth Commandment as true, though said to have been written in stone by the very finger of God? If Noah's deluge was a legend, we should at least have to admit that Peter did not know this: what too would be said of Christ's allusion to it? I was unable to admit Dr. Arnold's views; but to see a
vigorous mind, deeply imbued with Christian devoutness, so convinced,
both reassured me that I need not fear moral mischiefs from free
inquiry, and indeed laid that inquiry upon me as a duty.

Here, however, was a new point started. Does the question of the
derivation of the human race from two parents belong to things
cognizable by the human intellect, or to things about which we must
learn submissively? Plainly to the former. It would be monstrous to
deny that such inquiries legitimately belong to physiology, or to
proscribe a free study of this science. If so, there was an _a
priori_ possibility, that what is in the strictest sense called
"religious doctrine" might come into direct collision, not merely with
my ill-trained conscience, but with legitimate science; and that this
would call on me to ask: "Which of the two certainties is stronger?
that the religious parts of the Scripture are infallible, or that the
science is trustworthy?" and I then first saw, that while science had
(within however limited a range of thought) demonstration or severe
verifications, it was impossible to pretend to anything so cogent in
favour of the infallibility of any or some part of the Scriptures;
a doctrine which I was accustomed to believe, and felt to be a
legitimate presumption; yet one of which it grew harder and harder
to assign any proof, the more closely I analyzed it. Nevertheless, I
still held it fast, and resolved not to let it go until I was forced.

A fresh strain fell on the Scriptural infallibility, in contemplating
the origin of Death. Geologists assured us, that death went on in
the animal creation many ages before the existence of man. The rocks
formed of the shells of animals testify that death is a phenomenon
thousands of thousand years old: to refer the death of animals to
the sin of Adam and Eve is evidently impossible. Yet, if not, the
analogies of the human to the brute form make it scarcely credible
that man's body can ever have been intended for immortality. Nay, when
we consider the conditions of birth and growth to which it is subject,
the wear and tear essential to life, the new generations intended to
succeed and supplant the old,--so soon as the question is proposed as
one of physiology, the reply is inevitable that death is no accident
introduced by the perverse will of our first parents, nor any way
connected with man's sinfulness; but is purely a result of the
conditions of animal life. On the contrary, St. Paul rests most
important conclusions on the fact, that one man Adam by personal sin
brought death upon all his posterity. If this was a fundamental error,
religious doctrine also is shaken.

In various attempts at compromise,--such as conceding the Scriptural
fallibility in human science, but maintaining its spiritual
perfection,--I always found the division impracticable. At last it
pressed on me, that if I admitted morals to rest on an independent
basis, it was dishonest to shut my eyes to any apparent collisions of
morality with the Scriptures. A very notorious and decisive instance
is that of Jael.--Sisera, when beaten in battle, fled to the tent of
his friend Heber, and was there warmly welcomed by Jael, Heber's wife.
After she had refreshed him with food, and lulled him to sleep, she
killed him by driving a nail into his temples; and for this deed,
(which now-a-days would be called a perfidious murder,) the prophetess
Deborah, in an inspired psalm, pronounces Jael to be "blessed above women," and glorifies her act by an elaborate description of its atrocity. As soon as I felt that I was bound to pass a moral judgment on this, I saw that as regards the Old Testament the battle was already lost. Many other things, indeed, instantly rose in full power upon me, especially the command to Abraham to slay his son. Paul and James agree in extolling Abraham as the pattern of faith; James and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews specify the sacrifice of Isaac as a firstrate fruit of faith: yet if the voice of morality is allowed to be heard, Abraham was (in heart and intention) not less guilty than those who sacrificed their children to Molech.

Thus at length it appeared, that I must choose between two courses. I must EITHER blind my moral sentiment, my powers of criticism, and my scientific knowledge, (such as they were,) in order to accept the Scripture entire; OR I must encounter the problem, however arduous, of adjusting the relative claims of human knowledge and divine revelation. As to the former method, to name it was to condemn it; for it would put every system of Paganism on a par with Christianity. If one system of religion may claim that we blind our hearts and eyes in its favour, so may another; and there is precisely the same reason for becoming a Hindoo in religion as a Christian. We cannot be both; therefore the principle is _demonstrably_ absurd. It is also, of course, morally horrible, and opposed to countless passages of the Scriptures themselves. Nor can the argument be evaded by talking of external evidences; for these also are confessedly moral evidences, to be judged of by our moral faculties. Nay, according to all Christian
advocates, they are God's test of our moral temper. To allege, therefore, that our moral faculties are not to judge, is to annihilate the evidences for Christianity. -- Thus, finally, I was lodged in three inevitable conclusions:

1. The moral and intellectual powers of man must be acknowledged as having a right and duty to criticize the contents of the Scripture:

2. When so exerted, they condemn portions of the Scripture as erroneous and immoral:

3. The assumed infallibility of the _entire_ Scripture is a proved falsity, not merely as to physiology, and other scientific matters, but also as to morals: and it remains for farther inquiry how to discriminate the trustworthy from the untrustworthy within the limits of the Bible itself.

* * * * *

When distinctly conscious, after long efforts to evade it, that this was and must henceforth be my position, I ruminated on the many auguries which had been made concerning me by frightened friends. "You will become a Socinian," had been said of me even at Oxford: "You will become an infidel," had since been added. My present results, I was aware, would seem a sadly triumphant confirmation to the clear-sighted
instinct of orthodoxy. But the animus of such prophecies had always made me indignant, and I could not admit that there was any merit in such clear-sightedness. What! (used I to say,) will you shrink from truth, lest it lead to error? If following truth must bring us to Socinianism, let us by all means become Socinians, or anything else. Surely we do not love our doctrines more than the truth, but because they are the truth. Are we not exhorted to "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good?"--But to my discomfort, I generally found that this (to me so convincing) argument for feeling no alarm, only caused more and more alarm, and gloomier omens concerning me. On considering all this in leisurely retrospect, I began painfully to doubt, whether after all there is much love of truth even among those who have an undeniable strength of religious feeling. I questioned with myself, whether love of truth is not a virtue demanding a robust mental cultivation; whether mathematical or other abstract studies may not be practically needed for it. But no: for how then could it exist in some feminine natures? how in rude and unphilosophical times? On the whole, I rather concluded, that there is in nearly all English education a positive repressing of a young person's truthfulness; for I could distinctly see, that in my own case there was always need of defying authority and public opinion,--not to speak of more serious sacrifices,--if I was to follow truth. All society seemed so to hate novelties of thought, as to prefer the chances of error in the old.--Of course! why, how could it be otherwise, while Test Articles were maintained?

Yet surely if God is truth, none sincerely aspire to him, who dread to
lose their present opinions in exchange for others truer.--I had not
then read a sentence of Coleridge, which is to this effect: "If any
one begins by loving Christianity more than the truth, he will proceed
to love his Church more than Christianity, and will end by loving his
own opinions better than either." A dim conception of this was in my
mind; and I saw that the genuine love of God was essentially connected
with loving truth as truth, and not truth as our own accustomed
thought, truth as our old prejudice; and that the real saint can never
be afraid to let God teach him one lesson more, or unteach him one
more error. Then I rejoiced to feel how right and sound had been our
principle, that no creed can possibly be used as the touchstone
of spirituality: for man morally excels man, as far as creeds are
concerned, not by assenting to true propositions, but by loving them
because they are discerned to be true, and by possessing a faculty
of discernment sharpened by the love of truth. Such are God's true
apostles, differing enormously in attainment and elevation, but all
born to ascend. For these to quarrel between themselves because they
do not agree in opinions, is monstrous. _Sentiment_, surely, not
_opinion_, is the bond of the Spirit; and as the love of God, so the
love of truth is a high and sacred sentiment, in comparison to which
our creeds are mean.

Well, I had been misjudged; I had been absurdly measured by other
men's creed: but might I not have similarly misjudged others, since
I had from early youth been under similar influences? How many of
my seniors at Oxford I had virtually despised because they were not
evangelical! Had I had opportunity of testing their spirituality?
or had I the faculty of so doing? Had I not really condemned them as
unspiritual, barely because of their creed? On trying to reproduce the
past to my imagination, I could not condemn myself quite as sweepingly
as I wished; but my heart smote me on account of one. I had a brother,
with whose name all England was resounding for praise or blame: from
his sympathies, through pure hatred of Popery, I had long since turned
away. What was this but to judge him by his creed? True, his whole
theory was nothing but Romanism transferred to England: but what
then? I had studied with the deepest interest Mrs. Schimmelpenninck's
account of the Portroyalists, and though I was aware that she exhibits
only the bright side of her subject, yet the absolute excellencies of
her nuns and priests showed that Romanism _as such_ was not fatal to
spirituality. They were persecuted: this did them good perhaps, or
certainly exhibited their brightness. So too my brother surely was
struggling after truth, fighting for freedom to his own heart and
mind, against church articles and stagnancy of thought. For this he
deserved both sympathy and love: but I, alas! had not known and seen
his excellence. But now God had taught me more largeness by bitter
sorrow working the peaceable fruit of righteousness; at last then
I might admire my brother. I therefore wrote to him a letter of
contrition. Some change, either in his mind or in his view of my
position, had taken place; and I was happy to find him once more able,
not only to feel fraternally, as he had always done, but to act
also fraternally. Nevertheless, to this day it is to me a painfully
unsolved mystery, how a mind can claim its freedom in order to
establish bondage.
For the _peculiarities_ of Romanism I feel nothing, and I can pretend nothing, but contempt, hatred, disgust, or horror. But this system of falsehood, fraud, unscrupulous and unrelenting ambition, will never be destroyed, while Protestants keep up their insane anathemas against opinion. These are the outworks of the Romish citadel: until they are razed to the ground, the citadel will defy attack. If we are to blind our eyes, in order to accept an article of King Edward VI., or an argument of St. Paul's, why not blind them so far as to accept the Council of Trent? If we are to pronounce that a man "without doubt shall perish everlastingly," unless he believes the self-contradictions of the pseudo-Athanasian Creed, why should we shrink from a similar anathema on those who reject the self-contradictions of Transubstantiation? If one man is cast out of God's favour for eliciting error while earnestly searching after truth, and another remains in favour by passively receiving the word of a Church, of a Priest, or of an Apostle, then to search for truth is dangerous; apathy is safer; then the soul does not come directly into contact with God and learn of him, but has to learn from, and unconvincedly submit to, some external authority. This is the germ of Romanism: its legitimate development makes us Pagans outright.

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But in what position was I now, towards the apostles? Could I admit their inspiration, when I no longer thought them infallible? Undoubtedly. What could be clearer on every hypothesis, than that they were inspired on and after the day of Pentecost, and _yet_ remained
ignorant and liable to mistake about the relation of the Gentiles to
the Jews? The moderns have introduced into the idea of inspiration
that of infallibility, to which either _omniscience_ or _dictation_
is essential. That there was no dictation, (said I,) is proved by
the variety of style in the Scriptural writers; that they were not
omniscient, is manifest. In truth, if human minds had not been left
to them, how could they have argued persuasively? was not the superior
success of their preaching to that of Christ, perhaps due to their
sharing in the prejudices of their contemporaries? An orator is most
persuasive, when he is lifted above his hearers on those points
only on which he is to reform their notions. The apostles were not
omniscient: granted: but it cannot hence be inferred that they did not
know the message given them by God. Their knowledge however perfect,
must yet in a human mind have coexisted with ignorance; and nothing
(argued I) but a perpetual miracle could prevent ignorance from now
and then exhibiting itself in some error. But hence to infer that
they are not inspired, and are not messengers from God, is quite
gratuitous. Who indeed imagines that John or Paul understood astronomy
so well as Sir William Herschel? Those who believe that the apostles
might err in human science, need not the less revere their moral and
spiritual wisdom.

At the same time it became a matter of duty to me, if possible,
to discriminate the authoritative from the unauthoritative in the
Scripture, or at any rate avoid to accept and propagate as true
that which is false, even if it be false only as science and not as
religion. I unawares,—more perhaps from old habit than from distinct
conviction,—started from the assumption that my fixed point of
knowledge was to be found in the sensible or scientific, not in the
moral. I still retained from my old Calvinistic doctrine a way of
proceeding, as if purely moral judgment were my weak side, at least
in criticizing the Scripture: so that I preferred never to appeal
to direct moral and spiritual considerations, except in the most
glaringly necessary cases. Thus, while I could not accept the
panegyricon Jael, and on Abraham's intended sacrifice of his son,
I did not venture unceremoniously to censure the extirpation of
the Canaanites by Joshua: of which I barely said to myself, that it
"certainly needed very strong proof" of the divine command to justify
it. I still went so far in timidity as to hesitate to reject on
internal evidence the account of heroes or giants begotten by
angels, who, enticed by the love of women, left heaven for earth. The
narrative in Gen. vi. had long appeared to me undoubtedly to bear this
sense; and to have been so understood by Jude and Peter (2 Pet. ii.),
as, I believe, it also was by the Jews and early Fathers. I did at
length set it aside as incredible; not however from moral repugnance
to it, (for I feared to trust the soundness of my instinct,) but
because I had slid into a new rule of interpretation,—that _I must
not obtrude miracles on the Scripture narrative_. The writers tell
their story without showing any consciousness that it involves
physiological difficulties. To invent a miracle in order to defend
this, began to seem to me unwarrantable.

It had become notorious to the public, that Geologists rejected the
idea of a universal deluge as physically impossible. Whence could
the water come, to cover the highest mountains? Two replies were attempted: 1. The flood of Noah is not described as universal: 2. The flood was indeed universal, but the water was added and removed by miracle.--Neither reply however seemed to me valid. First, the language respecting the universality of the flood is as strong as any that could be written: moreover it is stated that the tops of the high hills _were all covered_, and after the water subsides, the ark settles on the mountains of Armenia. Now in Armenia, of necessity numerous peaks would be seen, unless the water covered them, and especially Ararat. But a flood that covered Ararat would overspread all the continents, and leave only a few summits above. If then the account in Genesis is to be received, the flood was universal. Secondly: the narrator represents the surplus water to have come from the clouds and perhaps from the sea, and again to drain back into the sea. Of a miraculous _creation and destruction_ of water, he evidently does not dream.

Other impossibilities came forward: the insufficient dimensions of the ark to take in all the creatures; the unsuitability of the same climate to arctic and tropical animals for a full year; the impossibility of feeding them and avoiding pestilence; and especially, the total disagreement of the modern facts of the dispersion of animals, with the idea that they spread anew from Armenia as their centre. We have no right to call in a series of miracles to solve difficulties, of which the writer was unconscious. The ark itself was expressly devised to economize miracle, by making a fresh creation of animals needless.
Different in kind was the objection which I felt to the story, which is told twice concerning Abraham and once concerning Isaac, of passing off a wife as a sister. Allowing that such a thing was barely not impossible, the improbability was so intense, as to demand the strictest and most cogent proof: yet when we asked, Who testifies it? no proof appeared that it was Moses; or, supposing it to be he, what his sources of knowledge were. And this led to the far wider remark, that nowhere in the book of Genesis is there a line to indicate who is the writer, or a sentence to imply that the writer believes himself to write by special information from God. Indeed, it is well known that were are numerous small phrases which denote a later hand than that of Moses. The kings of Israel are once alluded to historically, Gen. xxxvi. 31.

Why then was anything improbable to be believed on the writer's word? as, for instance, the story of Babel and the confusion of tongues? One reply only seemed possible; namely, that we believe the Old Testament in obedience to the authority of the New: and this threw me again to consider the references to the Old Testament in the Christian Scriptures.

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But here, the difficulties soon became manifestly more and more formidable. In opening Matthew, we meet with quotations from the Old
Testament applied in the most startling way. First is the prophecy about the child Immanuel; which in Isaiah no unbiased interpreter would have dreamed could apply to Jesus. Next; the words of Hosea, "Out of Egypt have I called my son," which do but record the history of Israel, are imagined by Matthew to be prophetic of the return of Jesus from Egypt. This instance moved me much; because I thought, that if the text were "spiritualized," so as to make Israel mean _Jesus_, Egypt also ought to be spiritualized and mean _the world_, not retain its geographical sense, which seemed to be carnal and absurd in such a connection: for Egypt is no more to Messiah than Syria or Greece.--One of the most decisive testimonies to the Old Testament which the New contains, is in John x., 35, where I hardly knew how to allow myself to characterize the reasoning. The case stands thus. The 82nd Psalm rebukes _unjust_ governors; and at length says to them: "I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you are children of the most high: but ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes." In other words:--"though we are apt _to think_ of rulers _as if_ they were superhuman, yet they shall meet the lot of common men." Well: how is this applied in John?--Jesus has been accused of blasphemy, for saying that "He and his Father are one;" and in reply, he quotes the verse, "I have said, Ye are gods," as his sufficient justification for calling himself Son of God; for "the Scripture cannot be broken." I dreaded to precipitate myself into shocking unbelief, if I followed out the thoughts that this suggested; and (I know not how) for a long time yet put it off.

The quotations from the Old Testament in St. Paul had always been a
mystery to me. The more I now examined them, the clearer it appeared
that they were based on untenable Rabbinical principles. Nor are those
in the Acts and in the Gospels any better. If we take free leave to
canvass them, it may appear that not one quotation in ten is sensible
and appropriate. And shall we then accept the decision of the New
Testament writers as final, concerning the value and credibility of
the Old Testament, when it is so manifest that they most imperfectly
understood that book?

In fact the appeal to them proved too much. For Jude quotes the book
of Enoch as an inspired prophecy, and yet, since Archbishop Laurence
has translated it from the Ethiopian, we know that book to be a fable
undeserving of regard, and undoubtedly not written by "Enoch, the
seventh from Adam." Besides, it does not appear that any peculiar
divine revelation taught them that the Old Testament is perfect
truth. In point of fact, they only reproduce the ideas on that subject
current in their age. So far as Paul deviates from the common Jewish
view, it is in the direction of disparaging the Law as essentially
imperfect. May it not seem that his remaining attachment to it was
still exaggerated by old sentiment and patriotism?

I farther found that not only do the Evangelists give us no hint that
they thought themselves divinely inspired, or that they had any other
than human sources of knowledge, but Luke most explicitly shows the
contrary. He opens by stating to Theophilus, that since many persons
have committed to writing the things handed down from eye-witnesses,
it seemed good to him also to do the same, since he had “accurately
attended to every thing from its sources ([Greek: anothen])." He could
not possibly have written thus, if he had been conscious of superhuman
aids. How absurd then of us, to pretend that we know more than Luke
knew of his own inspiration!

In truth, the arguments of theologians to prove the inspiration
(i.e. infallibility) of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are sometimes almost
ludicrous. My lamented friend, John Sterling, has thus summed up
Dr. Henderson's arguments about Mark. "Mark was probably inspired,
_because he was an acquaintance of Peter_; and because Dr. Henderson
would be reviled by other Dissenters, if he doubted it."

* * * * *

About this time, the great phenomenon of these gospels,—the casting
out of devils,—pressed forcibly on my attention. I now dared to
look full into the facts, and saw that the disorders described were
perfectly similar to epilepsy, mania, catalepsy, and other known
maladies. Nay, the deaf, the dumb, the hunchbacked, are spoken of as
devil-ridden. I farther knew that such diseases are still ascribed to
evil genii in Mussulman countries: even a vicious horse is believed by
the Arabs to be _majnun_, possessed by a Jin or Genie. Devils also
are cast out in Abyssinia to this day. Having fallen in with Farmer's
treatise on the Demoniacks, I carefully studied it; and found it
to prove unanswerably, that a belief in demoniacal possession is a
superstition not more respectable than that of witchcraft. But Farmer
did not at all convince me, that the three Evangelists do not share
the vulgar error. Indeed, the instant we believe that the imagined
possessions were only various forms of disease, we are forced to draw
conclusions of the utmost moment, most damaging to the credit of the
narrators.[3]

Clearly, they are then convicted of misstating facts, under the
influence of superstitious credulity. They represent demoniacs as
having a supernatural acquaintance with Jesus, which, it now becomes
manifest, they cannot have had. The devils cast out of two demoniacs
(or one) are said to have entered into a herd of swine. This must have
been a credulous fiction. Indeed, the casting out of devils is so very
prominent a part of the miraculous agency ascribed to Jesus, as at
first sight to impair our faith in his miracles altogether.

I however took refuge in the consideration, that when Jesus wrought
one great miracle, popular credulity would inevitably magnify it into
ten; hence the discovery of foolish exaggerations is no disproof of a
real miraculous agency: nay, perhaps the contrary. Are they not a sort
of false halo round a disc of glory,--a halo so congenial to human
nature, that the absence of it might be even wielded as an objection?
Moreover, John tells of no demoniacs: does not this show his freedom
from popular excitement? Observe the great miracles narrated by
John,--the blind man,--and Lazarus--how different in kind from those
on demoniacs! how incapable of having been mistaken! how convincing!
His statements cannot be explained away: their whole tone, moreover,
is peculiar. On the contrary, the three first gospels contain much
that (after we see the writers to be credulous) must be judged legendary.

The two first chapters of Matthew abound in dreams. Dreams? Was indeed the "immaculate conception" merely told to Joseph in a _dream_? a dream which not he only was to believe, but we also, when reported to us by a person wholly unknown, who wrote 70 or 80 years after the fact, and gives us no clue to his sources of information! Shall I reply that he received his information by miracle? But why more than Luke? and Luke evidently was conscious only of human information. Besides, inspiration has not saved Matthew from error about demons; and why then about Joseph's dream and its highly important contents?

In former days, I had never dared to let my thoughts dwell inquisitively on the _star_, which the wise men saw in the East, and which accompanied them, and pointed out the house where the young child was. I now thought of it, only to see that it was a legend fit for credulous ages; and that it must be rejected in common with Herod's massacre of the children,--an atrocity unknown to Josephus. How difficult it was to reconcile the flight into Egypt with the narrative of Luke, I had known from early days: I now saw that it was waste time to try to reconcile them.

But perhaps I might say:--"That the writers should make errors about the _infancy_ of Jesus was natural; they were distant from the time: but that will not justly impair the credit of events, to which they
may possibly have been contemporaries or even eye-witnesses."--How then would this apply to the Temptation, at which certainly none of them were present? Is it accident, that the same three, who abound in the demoniacs, tell also the scene of the Devil and Jesuit on a pinnacle of the temple; while the same John who omits the demoniacs, omits also this singular story? It being granted that the writers are elsewhere mistaken, to criticize the tale was to reject it.

In near connexion with this followed the discovery, that many other miracles of the Bible are wholly deficient in that moral dignity, which is supposed to place so great a chasm between them and ecclesiastical writings. Why should I look with more respect on the napkins taken from Paul's body (Acts xix. 12), than on pocket-handkerchiefs dipped in the blood of martyrs? How could I believe, on this same writer's hearsay, that "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip" (viii. 39), transporting him through the air; as oriental genii are supposed to do? Or what moral dignity was there in the curse on the barren fig-tree,--about which, moreover, we are so perplexingly told, that it was _not_ the time for figs? What was to be said of a cure, wrought by touching the hem of Jesus' garment, which drew physical _virtue_ from him without his will? And how could I distinguish the genius of the miracle of tribute-money in the fish's mouth, from those of the apocryphal gospels? What was I to say of useless miracles, like that of Peter and Jesus walking on the water,--or that of many saints coming out of the graves to show themselves, or of a poetical sympathy of the elements, such as the earthquake and rending of the temple-veil when Jesus died? Altogether,
I began to feel that Christian advocates commit the flagrant sophism
of treating every objection as an isolated "cavil," and overrule each
as obviously insufficient, with the same confidence as if it were the
only one. Yet, in fact, the objections collectively are very
powerful, and cannot be set aside by supercilious airs and by calling
unbelievers "superficial," any more than by harsh denunciations.

Pursuing the same thought to the Old Testament, I discerned there also
no small sprinkling of grotesque or unmoral miracles. A dead man is
raised to life, when his body by accident touches the bones of Elisha:
as though Elisha had been a Romish saint, and his bones a sacred
relic. Uzzah, when the ark is in danger of falling, puts out his hand
to save it, and is struck dead for his impiety! Was this the judgment
of the Father of mercies and God of all comfort? What was I to make
of God's anger with Abimelech (Gen. xx.), whose sole offence was, the
having believed Abraham's lie? for which a miraculous barrenness was
sent on all the females of Abimelech's tribe, and was bought off
only by splendid presents to the favoured deceiver.--Or was it at
all credible that the lying and fraudulent Jacob should have been so
specially loved by God, more than the rude animal Esau?--Or could I
any longer overlook the gross imagination of antiquity, which made
Abraham and Jehovah dine on the same carnal food, like Tantalus with
the gods;--which fed Elijah by ravens, and set angels to bake cakes
for him? Such is a specimen of the flood of difficulties which poured
in, through the great breach which the demoniacs had made in the
credit of Biblical marvels.
While I was in this stage of progress, I had a second time the advantage of meeting Dr. Arnold, and had satisfaction in finding that he rested the main strength of Christianity on the gospel of John. The great similarity of the other three seemed to him enough to mark that they flowed from sources very similar, and that the first gospel had no pretensions to be regarded as the actual writing of Matthew. This indeed had been for some time clear to me, though I now cared little about the author's name, when he was proved to be credulous.--Arnold regarded John's gospel as abounding with smaller touches which marked the eye-witness, and, altogether, to be the vivid and simple picture of a divine reality, undeformed by credulous legend. In this view I was gratified to repose, in spite of a few partial misgivings, and returned to investigations concerning the Old Testament.

For some time back I had paid special attention to the book of Genesis; and I had got aid in the analysis of it from a German volume. That it was based on _at least_ two different documents, technically called the Elohistic and Jehovahistic, soon became clear to me: and an orthodox friend who acknowledged the fact, regarded it as a high recommendation of the book, that it was conscientiously made out of pre-existing materials, and was not a fancy that came from the brain of Moses. My good friend's argument was not a happy one: no written record could exist of things and times which preceded the invention of writing. After analysing this book with great minuteness, I now proceeded to Exodus and Numbers; and was soon assured, that these had not, any more than Genesis, come forth from one primitive witness of the facts. In all these books is found the striking phenomenon of
_duplicate_ or even _triplicate narratives_. The creation of man
is three times told. The account of the Flood is made up out of two
discrepant originals, marked by the names Elohim and Jehovah; of which
one makes Noah take into the ark _seven_ pairs of clean, and _single_
(or double?) pairs of unclean, beasts; while the other gives him
two and two of all kinds, without distinguishing the clean. The two
documents may indeed in this narrative be almost re-discovered by
mechanical separation. The triple statement of Abraham and Isaac
passing off a wife for a sister was next in interest; and here
also the two which concern Abraham are contrasted as Jehovistic
and Elohistic. A similar double account is given of the origin of
circumcision, of the names Isaac, Israel, Bethel, Beersheba. Still
more was I struck by the positive declaration in Exodus (vi. 3)
that _God was_ NOT _known to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob by the name
Jehovah_; while the book of Genesis abounds with the contrary fact.
This alone convinced me beyond all dispute, that these books did not
come from one and the same hand, but are conglomerates formed out of
older materials, unartistically and mechanically joined.

Indeed a fuller examination showed in Exodus and Numbers a twofold
miracle of the quails, of which the latter is so told as to indicate
entire unacquaintance with the former. There is a double description
of the manna, a needless second appointment of Elders of the
congregation: water is twice brought out of the rock by the rod of
Moses, whose faith is perfect the first time and fails the second
time. The name of Meribah is twice bestowed. There is a double promise
of a guardian angel, a double consecration of Aaron and his sons:
indeed, I seemed to find a double or even threefold copy of the Decalogue. Comprising Deuteronomy within my view, I met two utterly incompatible accounts of Aaron's death; for Deuteronomy makes him die _before_ reaching Meribah Kadesh, where, according to Numbers, he sinned and incurred the penalty of death (Num. xx. 24, Deut x. 6: cf Num. xxxiii. 31, 38).

That there was error on a great scale in all this, was undeniable; and I began to see at least one _source_ of the error. The celebrated miracle of "the sun standing still" has long been felt as too violent a derangement of the whole globe to be used by the most High as a means of discomfiting an army: and I had acquiesced in the idea that the miracle was _ocular_ only. But in reading the passage, (Josh. x. 12-14,) I for the first time observed that the narrative rests on the authority of a poetical book which bears the name of Jasher.[5] He who composed--"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon!"--like other poets, called on the Sun and Moon to stand and look on Joshua's deeds; but he could not anticipate that his words would be hardened into fact by a prosaic interpreter, and appealed to in proof of a stupendous miracle. The commentator could not tell what _the Moon_ had to do with it; yet he has quoted honestly.--This presently led me to observe other marks that the narrative has been made up, at least in part, out of old poetry. Of these the most important are in Exodus xv. and Num. xxi., in the latter of which three different poetical fragments are quoted, and one of them is expressly said to be from "the book of the wars of Jehovah," apparently a poem descriptive of the conquest of Canaan by
the Israelites. As for Exodus xv. it appeared to me (in that stage, and after so abundant proof of error,) almost certain that Moses’ song is the primitive authority, out of which the prose narrative of the passage of the Red Sea has been worked up. Especially since, after the song, the writer adds: v. 19. "For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them: but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea." This comment scarcely could have been added, if the detailed account of ch. xiv. had been written previously. The song of Moses _implies no miracle at all_: it is merely high poetry. A later prosaic age took the hyperbolic phrases of v. 8 literally, and so generated the comment of v. 19, and a still later time expanded this into the elaborate 14th chapter.

Other proofs crowded upon me, that cannot here be enlarged upon. Granting then (for argument) that the four first books of the Pentateuch are a compilation, made long after the event, I tried for a while to support the very arbitrary opinion, that Deuteronomy (all but its last chapter) which seemed to be a more homogeneous composition, was alone and really the production of Moses. This however needed some definite proof: for if tradition was not sufficient to guarantee the whole Pentateuch, it could not guarantee to me Deuteronomy alone. I proceeded to investigate the external history of the Pentateuch, and in so doing, came to the story, how the book of the Law was _found_ in the reign of the young king Josiah, nearly at the end of the Jewish monarchy. As I considered the narrative, my eyes were opened. If the book had previously been the received sacred law, it could not
possibly have been so lost, that its contents were unknown, and the
fact of its loss forgotten: it was therefore evidently then first
compiled, or at least then first produced and made authoritative to
the nation.[6] And with this the general course of the history best
agrees, and all the phenomena of the books themselves.

Many of the Scriptural facts were old to me: to the importance of
the history of Josiah I had perhaps even become dim-sighted by
familiarity. Why had I not long ago seen that my conclusions ought to
have been different from those of prevalent orthodoxy?--I found that
I had been cajoled by the primitive assumptions, which though not
clearly stated, are unceremoniously used. Dean Graves, for
instance, always takes for granted, that, until the contrary shall be
demonstrated, it is to be firmly believed that the Pentateuch is
from the pen of Moses. He proceeds to set aside, one by one, as not
demonstrative, the indications that it is of later origin: and when
other means fail, he says that the particular verses remarked on
were added by a later hand! I considered that if we were debating
the antiquity of an Irish book, and in one page of it were found an
allusion to the Parliamentary Union with England, we should at once
regard the whole book, until the contrary should be proved, as the
work of this century; and not endure the reasoner, who, in order
to uphold a theory that it is five centuries old, pronounced that
sentence "evidently to be from a later hand." Yet in this arbitrary
way Dean Graves and all his coadjutors set aside, one by one, the
texts which point at the date of the Pentateuch. I was possessed with
indignation. Oh sham science! Oh false-named Theology!
Yet I waited some eight years longer, lest I should on so grave
a subject write anything premature. Especially I felt that it was
necessary to learn more of what the erudition of Germany had done
on these subjects. Michaelis on the New Testament had fallen into my
hands several years before, and I had found the greatest advantage
from his learning and candour. About this time I also had begun to
get more or less aid from four or five living German divines; but
none produced any strong impression on me but De Wette. The two
grand lessons which I learned from him, were, the greater recency
of Deuteronomy, and the very untrustworthy character of the book of
Chronicles; with which discovery, the true origin of the Pentateuch
becomes still clearer.[7] After this, I heard of Hengstenberg as the
most learned writer on the opposite side, and furnished myself with
his work in defence of the antiquity of the Pentateuch: but it only
showed me how hopeless a cause he had undertaken.

* * * * *

In this period I came to a totally new view of many parts of the
Bible; and not to be tedious, it will suffice here to sum up the
results.
The first books which I looked at as doubtful, were the Apocalypse and
the Epistle to the Hebrews. From the Greek style I felt assured that
the former was not by John,[8] nor the latter by Paul. In Michaelis
I first learnt the interesting fact of Luther having vehemently
repudiated the Apocalypse, so that he not only declared its
spuriousness in the Preface of his Bible, but solemnly charged his
successors not to print his translation of the Apocalypse without
annexing this avowal:--a charge which they presently disobeyed. Such
is the habitual unfairness of ecclesiastical corporations. I was
afterwards confirmed by Neander in the belief that the Apocalypse is
a false prophecy. The only chapter of it which is interpreted,--the
17th,--appears to be a political speculation suggested by the civil
war of Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian; and erroneously opines that
the eighth emperor of Rome is to be the last, and is to be one of the
preceding emperors restored,--probably Nero, who was believed to have
escaped to the kings of the East.--As for the Epistle to the Hebrews,
(which I was disposed to believe Luther had well guessed to be the
production of Apollos,) I now saw quite a different genius in it from
that of Paul, as more artificial and savouring of rhetorical culture.
As to this, the learned Germans are probably unanimous.

Next to these, the Song of Solomon fell away. I had been accustomed to
receive this as a sacred representation of the loves of Christ and the
Church: but after I was experimentally acquainted with the playful and
extravagant genius of man's love for woman, I saw the Song of Solomon
with new eyes, and became entirely convinced that it consists of
fragments of love-songs, some of them rather voluptuous.

After this, it followed that the so-called _Canon_ of the Jews could not guarantee to us the value of the writings. Consequently, such books as Ruth and Esther, (the latter indeed not containing one religious sentiment,) stood forth at once in their natural insignificance. Ecclesiastes also seemed to me a meagre and shallow production. Chronicles I now learned to be not credulous only, but unfair, perhaps so far as to be actually dishonest. Not one of the historical books of the Old Testament could approve itself to me as of any high antiquity or of any spiritual authority; and in the New Testament I found the first three books and the Acts to contain many doubtful and some untrue accounts, and many incredible miracles.

Many persons, after reading thus much concerning me, will be apt to say: "Of course then you gave up Christianity?"--Far from it. I gave up all that was clearly untenable, and clung the firmer to all that still appeared sound. I had found out that the Bible was not to be my religion, nor its perfection any tenet of mine: but what then! Did Paul go about preaching the Bible? nay, but he preached Christ. The New Testament did not as yet exist: to the Jews he necessarily argued from the Old Testament; but that "faith in the book" was no part of Paul's gospel, is manifest from his giving no list of sacred books to his Gentile converts. Twice indeed in his epistles to Timothy, he recommends the Scriptures of the Old Testament; but even in the more striking passage, (on which such exaggerated stress has been laid,) the spirit of his remark is essentially apologetic. "Despise not,
oh Timothy," (is virtually his exhortation) "the Scriptures that you learned as a child. Although now you have the Spirit to teach you, yet that does not make the older writers useless: for "_every divinely inspired writing is also profitable for instruction &c._" In Paul's religion, respect for the Scriptures was a means, not an end. The Bible was made for man, not man for the Bible.

Thus the question with me was: "May I still receive Christ as a Saviour from sin, a Teacher and Lord sent from heaven, and can I find an adequate account of what he came to do or teach?" And my reply was, Yes. The gospel of John alone gave an adequate account of him: the other three, though often erroneous, had clear marks of simplicity, and in so far confirmed the general belief in the supernatural character and works of Jesus. Then the conversion of Paul was a powerful argument. I had Peter's testimony to the resurrection, and to the transfiguration. Many of the prophecies were eminently remarkable, and seemed unaccountable except as miraculous. The origin of Judaism and spread of Christianity appeared to be beyond common experience, and were perhaps fairly to be called supernatural. Broad views such as these did not seem to be affected by the special conclusions at which I had arrived concerning the books of the Bible. I conceived myself to be resting under an Indian Figtree, which is supported by certain grand stems, but also lets down to the earth many small branches, which seem to the eye to prop the tree, but in fact are supported by it. If they were cut away, the tree would not be less strong. So neither was the tree of Christianity weakened by the loss of its apparent props. I might still enjoy its shade, and eat of its fruits,
and bless the hand that planted it.

In the course of this period I likewise learnt how inadequate allowance I had once made for the repulsion produced by my own dogmatic tendency on the sympathies of the unevangelical. I now often met persons of Evangelical opinion, but could seldom have any interchange of religious sentiment with them, because every word they uttered warned me that I could escape controversy only while I kept them at a distance: moreover, if any little difference of opinion led us into amicable argument, they uniformly reasoned by quoting texts. This was now inadmissible with me, but I could only have done mischief by going farther than a dry disclaimer; after which indeed I saw I was generally looked on as "an infidel." No doubt the parties who so came into collision with me, approached me often with an earnest desire and hope to find some spiritual good in me, but withdrew disappointed, finding me either cold and defensive, or (perhaps they thought) warm and disputatious. Thus, as long as artificial tests of spirituality are allowed to exist, their erroneousness is not easily exposed by the mere wear and tear of life. When the collision of opinion is very strong, two good men may meet, and only be confirmed in their prejudices against one another: for in order that one may elicit the spiritual sympathies of the other, a certain liberality is prerequisite. Without this, each prepares to shield himself from attack, or even holds out weapons of offence. Thus "articles of Communion" are essentially articles of Disunion.--On the other hand, if all tests of opinion in a church were heartily and truly done away, then the principles of spiritual affinity and repulsion would
act quite undisturbed. Surely therefore this was the only right method?--Nevertheless, I saw the necessity of one test, "Jesus is the Son of God," and felt unpleasantly that one article tends infallibly to draw another after it. But I had too much, just then to think of in other quarters, to care much about Church Systems.

[Footnote 1: See Gen. xxxiii. 19, and xlix. 29-32, xxiii.]

[Footnote 2: Some say, that Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, named in the Chronicles, is meant; that he is confounded with the prophet, the son of Berechiah, and was supposed to be the last of the martyrs, because the Chronicles are placed last in the Hebrew Bible. This is a plausible view; but it saves the Scripture only by imputing error to Jesus.]

[Footnote 3: My Eclectic Reviewer says (p. 276): "Thus because the evangelists held an erroneous medical theory, Mr. Newman suffered a breach to be made in the credit of the Bible." No; but as the next sentence states, "because they are convicted of misstating facts," under the influence of this erroneous medical theory. Even this reviewer--candid for an orthodox critic, and not over-orthodox either--cannot help garbling me.]

[Footnote 4: I have explained this in my "Hebrew Monarchy." ]
CHAPTER V.

FAITH AT SECOND HAND FOUND TO BE VAIN.

I reckon my fifth period to begin from the time when I had totally abandoned the claim of "the Canon" of Scripture, however curtailed, to be received as the object of faith, as free from error, or as something raised above moral criticism; and looked out for some deeper foundation for my creed than any sacred Letter. But an entirely new inquiry had begun to engage me at intervals, viz., _the essential
logic of these investigations. Ought we in any case to receive moral truth in obedience to an apparent miracle of sense? or conversely, ought we ever to believe in sensible miracles because of their recommending some moral truth? I perceived that the endless jangling which goes on in detailed controversy, is inevitable, while the disputants are unawares at variance with one another, or themselves wavering, as to these pervading principles of evidence. -- I regard my fifth period to come to an end with the decision of this question. Nevertheless, many other important lines of inquiry were going forward simultaneously.

I found in the Bible itself, -- and even in the very same book, as in the Gospel of John, -- great uncertainty and inconsistency on this question. In one place, Jesus reproves[1] the demand of a miracle, and blesses those who believe without[2] miracles; in another, he requires that they will submit to his doctrine because[3] of his miracles. Now, this is intelligible, if blind external obedience is the end of religion, and not Truth and inward Righteousness. An ambitious and unscrupulous _Church_, that desires, by fair means or foul, to make men bow down to her, may say, "Only believe; and all is right. The end being gained, -- Obedience to us, -- we do not care about your reasons." But _God_ cannot speak thus to man; and to a divine teacher we should peculiarly look for aid in getting clear views of the grounds of faith; because it is by a knowledge of these that we shall both be rooted on the true basis, and saved from the danger of false beliefs.

It, therefore, peculiarly vexed me to find so total a deficiency of
clear and sound instruction in the New Testament, and eminently in the
gospel of John, on so vital a question. The more I considered it,
the more it appeared, as if Jesus were solely anxious to have people
believe in Him, without caring on what grounds they believed, although
that is obviously the main point. When to this was added the threat of
"damnation" on those who did not believe, the case became far worse:
for I felt that if such a threat were allowed to operate, I might
become a Mohammedan or a Roman Catholic. Could I in any case
rationally assign this as a ground for believing in Christ,—"because
I am frightened by his threats"—?

Farther thought showed me that a question of _logic_, such as I here
had before me, was peculiarly one on which the propagator of a new
religion could not be allowed to dictate; for if so, every false
system could establish itself. Let Hindooism dictate our logic,—let
us submit to its tests of a divine revelation, and its mode
of applying them,—and we may, perhaps, at once find ourselves
necessitated to "become little children" in a Brahminical school.
Might not then this very thing account for the Bible not enlightening
us on the topic? namely, since Logic, like Mathematics, belongs to the
common intellect,—Possibly so: but still, it cannot reconcile us
to _vacillations_ and _contradictions_ in the Bible on so critical a
point.

Gradually I saw that deeper and deeper difficulties lay at bottom. If
Logic _cannot_ be matter of authoritative revelation, so long as the
nature of the human mind is what it is,—if it appears, as a fact,
that in the writings and speeches of the New Testament the logic is far from lucid,—if we are to compare Logic with Mathematics and other sciences, which grew up with civilization and long time,—we cannot doubt that the apostles imbibed the logic, like the astronomy, of their own day, with all its defects. Indeed, the same is otherwise plain. Paul's reasonings are those of a Gamaliel, and often are indefensible by our logical notions. John, also (as I had been recently learning,) has a wonderful similarity to Philo. This being the case, it becomes of deep interest to us to know,—if we are to accept results _at second hand_ from Paul and John,—_what was the sort of evidence which convinced them?_ The moment this question is put, we see the essential defect to which we are exposed, in not being able to cross-examine them. Paul says that "Christ appeared to him:" elsewhere, that he has "received of the Lord" certain facts, concerning the Holy Supper: and that his Gospel was "given to him by revelation." If any modern made such statements to us, and on this ground demanded our credence, it would be allowable, and indeed obligatory, to ask many questions of him. What does he _mean_ by saying that he has had a "revelation?" Did he see a sight, or hear a sound? or was it an inward impression? and how does he distinguish it as divine?[4] Until these questions are fully answered, we have no materials at all before us for deciding to accept his results: to believe him, merely because he is earnest and persuaded, would be judged to indicate the weakness of inexperience. How then can it be pretended that we have, or can possibly get, the means of assuring ourselves that the apostles held correct principles of evidence and applied them justly, when we are not able to interrogate them?
Farther, it appears that our experience of delusion forces us to enact a very severe test of supernatural revelation. No doubt, we can conceive that which is equivalent to a new sense opening to us; but then it must have verifications connecting it with the other senses. Thus, a particularly vivid sort of dream recurring with special marks, and communicating at once heavenly and earthly knowledge, of which the latter was otherwise verified, would probably be admitted as a valid sort of evidence: but so intense would be the interest and duty to have all unravelled and probed to the bottom, that we should think it impossible to verify the new sense too anxiously, and we should demand the fullest particulars of the divine transaction. On the contrary, it is undeniable that all such severity of research is rebuked in the Scriptures as unbelief. The deeply interesting process of receiving supernatural revelation—a revelation, not of moral principles, but of outward facts and events, supposed to be communicated in a mode wholly peculiar and unknown to common men;—this process, which ought to be laid open and analyzed under the fullest light, if we are to believe the results at second hand, is always and avowedly shrouded in impenetrable darkness. There surely is something here, which denotes that it is dangerous to resign ourselves to the conclusions of the apostles, when their logical notions are so different from ours.

I farther inquired, what sort of miracle I could conceive, that would alter my opinion on a moral question. Hosea was divinely ordered to go and unite himself to an impure woman: could I possibly think that God ordered me to do so, if I heard a voice in the air commanding
it? Should I not rather disbelieve my hearing, than disown my moral perceptions? If not, where am I to stop? I may practise all sorts of heathenism. A man who, in obedience to a voice in the air, kills his innocent wife or child, will either be called mad, and shut up for safety, or will be hanged as a desperate fanatic: do I dare to condemn this modern judgment of him? Would any conceivable miracle justify my slaying my wife? God forbid! It must be morally right, to believe moral rather than sensible perceptions. No outward impressions on the eye or ear can be so valid an assurance to me of God's will, as my inward judgment. How amazing, then, that a Paul or a James could look on Abraham's intention to slay his son, as indicating a praiseworthy faith!—And yet not amazing: It does but show, that apostles in former days, like ourselves, scrutinized antiquity with different eyes from modern events. If Paul had been ordered by a supernatural voice to slay Peter, he would have attributed the voice to the devil, "the prince of the power of the air," and would have despised it. He praises the faith of Abraham, but he certainly would never have imitated his conduct. Just so, the modern divines who laud Joseph's piety towards Mary, would be very differently affected, if events and persons were transported to the present day.

But to return. Let it be granted that no sensible miracle could authorize me so to violate my moral perceptions as to slay (that is, to murder) my innocent wife. May it, nevertheless, authorize me to invade a neighbour country, slaughter the people and possess their cities, although, without such a miracle, the deed would be deeply criminal? It is impossible to say that here, more than in the former
case, miracles can turn aside the common laws of morality. Neither, therefore, could they justify Joshua's war of extermination on the Canaanites, nor that of Samuel on the Amalekites; nor the murder of unbelievers by Elijah and by Josiah. If we are shocked at the idea of God releasing Mohammed from the vulgar law of marriage, we must as little endure relaxation in the great laws of justice and mercy. Farther, if only a _small_ immorality is concerned, shall we then say that a miracle may justify it? Could it authorise me to plait a whip of small cords, and flog a preferment-hunter out of the pulpit? or would it justify me in publicly calling the Queen and her ministers "a brood of vipers, who cannot escape the damnation of hell"[6] Such questions go very deep into the heart of the Christian claims.

I had been accustomed to overbear objections of this sort by replying, that to allow of their being heard would amount to refusing leave to God to give commands to his creatures. For, it seems, if he _did_ command, we, instead of obeying, should discuss whether the command was right and reasonable; and if we thought it otherwise, should conclude that God never gave it. The extirpation of the Canaanites is compared by divines to the execution of a criminal; and it is insisted, that if the voice of society may justify the executioner, much more may the voice of God--But I now saw the analogy to be insufficient and unsound. Insufficient, because no executioner is justified in slaying those whom his conscience tells him to be innocent; and it is a barbarous morality alone, which pretends that he may make himself a passive tool of slaughter. But next, the analogy _assumes_, (what none of my very dictatorial and insolent critics make
even the faintest effort to prove to be a fact,) that God, like man, speaks from without: that what we call Reason and Conscience is _not_ his mode of commanding and revealing his will, but that words to strike the ear, or symbols displayed before the senses, are emphatically and exclusively "Revelation." Besides all this, the command of slaughter to the Jews is not directed against the seven nations of Canaan only, as modern theologians often erroneously assert: it is a _universal_ permission, of avaricious massacre and subjugation of "the cities which are very far off from thee, which are _not_ of the cities of these nations," Deut, xx. 15.

The thoughts which here fill but a few pages, occupied me a long while in working out; because I consciously, with caution more than with timidity, declined to follow them rapidly. They came as dark suspicions or as flashing possibilities; and were again laid aside for reconsideration, lest I should be carried into antagonism to my old creed. For it is clear that great error arises in religion, by the undue ardour of converts, who become bitter against the faith which they have left, and outrun in zeal their new associates. So also successive centuries oscillate too far on the right and on the left of truth. But so happy was my position, that I needed not to hurry: no practical duty forced me to rapid decision, and a suspense of judgment was not an unwholesome exercise. Meanwhile, I sometimes thought Christianity to be to me, like the great river Ganges to a Hindoo. Of its value he has daily experience: he has piously believed that its sources are in heaven, but of late the report has come to him, that it only flows from very high mountains of this earth. What is he to
believe? He knows not exactly: he cares not much: in any case the river is the gift of God to him: its positive benefits cannot be affected by a theory concerning its source.

Such a comparison undoubtedly implies that he who uses it discerns for himself a moral excellence in Christianity, and submits to it only so far as this discernment commands_. I had practically reached this point, long before I concluded my theoretical inquiries as to Christianity itself: but in the course of this fifth period numerous other overpowering considerations crowded upon me which I must proceed to state in outline.

* * * * *

All pious Christians feel, and all the New Testament proclaims, that Faith is a moral act and a test of the moral and spiritual that is within us; so that he who is without faith, (faithless, unfaithful, "infidel," is morally wanting and is cut off from God. To assent to a religious proposition _solely_ in obedience to an outward miracle, would be Belief; but would not be Faith, any more than is scientific conviction. Bishop Butler and all his followers can insist with much force on this topic, when it suits them, and can quote most aptly from the New Testament to the same effect. They deduce, that a really overpowering miraculous proof would have destroyed the moral character of Faith: yet they do not see that the argument supersedes the authoritative force of outward miracles entirely. It had always
appeared to me very strange in these divines, to insist on the
stupendous character and convincing power of the Christian miracles,
and then, in reply to the objection that they were _not_ quite
convincing, to say that the defect was purposely left "to try people's
Faith." Faith in what? Not surely in the confessedly ill-proved
miracle, but in the truth as discernible by the heart _without aid of
miracle._

I conceived of two men, Nathaniel and Demas, encountering a pretender
to miracles, a Simon Magus of the scriptures. Nathaniel is guileless,
sweet-hearted and of strong moral sense, but in worldly matters rather
a simpleton. Demas is a sharp man, who gets on well in the world,
quick of eye and shrewd of wit, hard-headed and not to be imposed upon
by his fellows; but destitute of any high religious aspirations or
deep moral insight. The juggleries of Simon are readily discerned by
Demas, but thoroughly deceive poor Nathaniel: what then is the latter
to do? To say that we are to receive true miracles and reject false
ones, avails not, unless the mind is presumed to be capable of
discriminating the one from the other. The wonders of Simon are as
divine as the wonders of Jesus to a man, who, like Nathaniel, can
account for neither by natural causes. If we enact the rule, that men
are to "submit their understandings" to apparent prodigies, and
that "revelation" is a thing of the outward senses, we alight on the
unendurable absurdity, that Demas has faculties better fitted than
those of Nathaniel for discriminating religious truth and error, and
that Nathaniel, in obedience to eye and ear, which he knows to be very
deceivable organs, is to abandon his moral perceptions.
Nor is the case altered, if instead of Simon in person, a huge thing called a Church is presented as a claimant of authority to Nathaniel. Suppose him to be a poor Spaniard, surrounded by false miracles, false erudition, and all the apparatus of reigning and unopposed Romanism. He cannot cope with the priests in cleverness,—detect their juggleries,—refute their historical falsehoods, disentangle their web of sophistry: but if he is truehearted, he may say: "You bid me not to keep faith with heretics: you defend murder, exile, imprisonment, fines, on men who will not submit their consciences to your authority: this I see to be wicked, though you ever so much pretend that God has taught it you." So, also, if he be accosted by learned clergymen, who undertake to prove that Jesus wrought stupendous miracles, or by learned Moolahs who allege the same of Mohammed or of Menu, he is quite unable to deal with them on the grounds of physiology, physics, or history.—In short, nothing can be plainer, than that _the moral and spiritual sense is the only religious faculty of the poor man_; and that as Christianity in its origin was preached to the poor, so it was to the inward senses that its first preachers appealed, as the supreme arbiters in the whole religious question. Is it not then absurd to say that in the act of conversion the convert is to trust his moral perception, and is ever afterwards to distrust it?

An incident had some years before come to my knowledge, which now seemed instructive. An educated, highly acute and thoughtful person, of very mature age, had become a convert to the Irving miracles, from an inability to distinguish them from those of the Pauline epistles;
or to discern anything of falsity which would justify his rejecting
them. But after several years he totally renounced them as a miserable
delusion. _because_ he found that a system of false doctrine was
growing up and was propped by them. Here was a clear case of a man
with all the advantages of modern education and science, who yet found
the direct judgment of a professed miracle, that was acted before his
senses, too arduous for him! He was led astray while he trusted his
power to judge of miracle: he was brought right by trusting to his
moral perceptions.

When we farther consider, that a knowledge of Natural Philosophy and
Physiology not only does not belong to the poor, but comes later in
time to mankind than a knowledge of morals;--that a Miracle can only
be judged of by Philosophy,--that it is not easy even for philosophers
to define what is a "miracle"--that to discern "a deviation from the
course of nature," implies a previous certain knowledge of what _the
course of nature_ is,--and that illiterate and early ages certainly
have not this knowledge, and often have hardly even the idea,--it
becomes quite a monstrosity to imagine that sensible and external
miracles constitute the necessary process and guarantee of divine
revelation.

Besides, if an angel appeared to my senses, and wrought miracles, how
would that assure me of his moral qualities? Such miracles might prove
his power and his knowledge, but whether malignant or benign, would
remain doubtful, until by purely moral evidence, which no miracles
could give, the doubt should be solved.[7] This is the old difficulty
about diabolical wonders. The moderns cut the knot, by denying that any but God can possibly work real miracles. But to establish their principle, they make their definition and verification of a miracle so strict, as would have amazed the apostles; and after all, the difficulty recurs, that miraculous phenomena will never prove the goodness and veracity of God, if we do not know these qualities in Him without miracle. There is then a deeper and an earlier revelation of God, which sensible miracles can never give.

We cannot distinctly learn what was Paul's full idea of a divine revelation; but I can feel no doubt that he conceived it to be, in great measure, an inward thing. Dreams and visions were not excluded from influence, and nacre or less affected his moral judgment; but he did not, consciously and on principle, beat down his conscience in submission to outward impressions. To do so, is indeed to destroy the moral character of Faith, and lay the axe to the root, not of Christian doctrine only, but of every possible spiritual system.

* * * * *

Meanwhile, new breaches were made in those citadels of my creed which had not yet surrendered.

One branch of the Christian Evidences concerns itself with the history and historical effects of the faith, and among Protestants the efficacy of the Bible to enlighten and convert has been very much
pressed. The disputant, however, is apt to play "fast and loose." He adduces the theory of Christianity when the history is unfavourable, and appeals to the history if the theory is impugned. In this way, just so much is picked out of the mass of facts as suits his argument, and the rest is quietly put aside.

I. In the theory of my early creed, (which was that of the New Testament, however convenient it may be for my critics to deride it as fanatical and _not_ Christian,) cultivation of mind and erudition were classed with worldly things, which might be used where they pre-existed, (as riches and power may subserve higher ends,) but which were quite extraneous and unessential to the spiritual kingdom of Christ. A knowledge of the Bible was assumed to need only an honest heart and God's Spirit, while science, history, and philosophy were regarded as doubtful and dangerous auxiliaries. But soon after the first reflux of my mind took place towards the Common Understanding, as a guide of life legitimately co-ordinate with Scripture, I was impressed with the consideration that _Free Learning_ had acted on a great scale for the improvement of spiritual religion. I had been accustomed to believe that _the Bible_[8] brought about the Protestant Reformation; and until my twenty-ninth year probably it had not occurred to me to question this. But I was first struck with the thought, that the Bible did not prevent the absurd iniquities of the Nicene and Post Nicene controversy, and that the Church, with the Bible in her hands, sank down into the gulf of Popery. How then was the Bible a sufficient explanation of her recovering out of Popery?
Even a superficial survey of the history shows, that the first
improvement of spiritual doctrine in the tenth and eleventh centuries,
came from a study of the moral works of Cicero and Boethius;—a fact
notorious in the common historians. The Latin moralists effected, what
(strange to think!) the New Testament alone could not do.

In the fifteenth century, when Constantinople was taken by the Turks,
learned Greeks were driven out to Italy and to other parts of the
West, and the Roman Catholic world began to read the old Greek
literature. All historians agree, that the enlightenment of mind
hence arising was a prime mover of religious Reformation; and learned
Protestants of Germany have even believed, that the overthrow of
Popish error and establishment of purer truth would have been brought
about more equably and profoundly, if Luther had never lived, and the
passions of the vulgar had never been stimulated against the externals
of Romanism.

At any rate, it gradually opened upon me, that the free cultivation of
the _understanding_, which Latin and Greek literature had imparted to
Europe and our freer public life, were chief causes of our religious
superiority to Greek, Armenian, and Syrian Christians. As the Greeks
in Constantinople under a centralized despotism retained no free
intellect, and therefore the works of their fathers did their souls no
good; so in Europe, just in proportion to the freedom of learning,
has been the force of the result. In Spain and Italy the study
of miscellaneous science and independent thought were nearly
extinguished; in France and Austria they were crippled; in Protestant
countries they have been freest. And then we impute all their effects
to the Bible.[9]

I at length saw how untenable is the argument drawn from the inward
history of Christianity in favour of its superhuman origin. In fact:
this religion cannot pretend to _self-sustaining power._ Hardly was it
started on its course, when it began to be polluted by the heathenism
and false philosophy around it. With the decline of national genius
and civil culture it became more and more debased. So far from being
able to uphold the existing morality of the best Pagan teachers, it
became barbarized itself, and sank into deep superstition and manifold
moral corruption. From ferocious men it learnt ferocity. When civil
society began to coalesce into order, Christianity also turned for the
better, and presently learned to use the wisdom, first of Romans, then
of Greeks: such studies opened men's eyes to new apprehensions of the
Scripture and of its doctrine. By gradual and human means, Europe,
like ancient Greece, grew up towards better political institutions;
and Christianity improved with them,—the Christianity of the more
educated. Beyond Europe, where there have been no such institutions,
there has been no Protestant Reformation:—that is in the Greek,
Armenian, Syrian, Coptic churches. Not unreasonably then do Franks
in Turkey disown the title Nazarene, as denoting _that_ Christianity
which has not been purified by European laws and European learning.
Christianity rises and sinks with political and literary influences:
in so far,[10] it does not differ from other religions.
The same applied to the origin and advance of Judaism. It began in polytheistic and idolatrous barbarism: it cleared into a hard monotheism, with much superstition adhering to it. This was farther improved by successive psalmists and prophets, until Judaism culminated. The Jewish faith was eminently grand and pure; but there is nothing[11] in this history which we can adduce in proof of preternatural and miraculous agency.

II. The facts concerning the outward spread of Christianity have also been disguised by the party spirit of Christians, as though there were something essentially _different in kind_ as to the mode in which it began and continued its conquests, from the corresponding history of other religions. But no such distinction can be made out. It is general to all religions to begin by moral means, and proceed farther by more worldly instruments.

Christianity had a great moral superiority over Roman paganism, in its humane doctrine of universal brotherhood, its unselfishness, its holiness; and thereby it attracted to itself (among other and baser materials) all the purest natures and most enthusiastic temperaments. Its first conquests were noble and admirable. But there is nothing _superhuman_ or unusual in this. Mohammedism in the same way conquers those Pagan creeds which are morally inferior to it. The Seljuk and the Ottoman Turks were Pagans, but adopted the religion of Tartars and Persians whom they subjugated, because it was superior and was blended with a superior civilization; exactly as the German conquerors of the
Western Empire of Rome adopted some form of Christianity.

But if it is true that the sword of Mohammed was the influence which subjected Arabia, Egypt, Syria and Persia to the religion of Islam, it is no less true that the Roman empire was finally conquered to Christianity by the sword. Before Constantine, Christians were but a small fraction of the empire. In the preceding century they had gone on deteriorating in good sense and most probably therefore in moral worth, and had made no such rapid progress in numbers as to imply that by the mere process of conversion they would ever Christianize the empire. That the conversion of Constantine, such as it was, (for he was baptized only just before death,) was dictated by mere worldly considerations, few modern Christians will deny. Yet a great fact is here implied; viz., that Christianity was adopted as a state-religion, because of the great political power accruing from the organization of the churches and the devotion of Christians to their ecclesiastical citizenship. Roman statesmen well knew that a hundred thousand Roman citizens devoted to the interests of Rome, could keep in subjection a population of ten millions who were destitute of any intense patriotism and had no central objects of attachment. The Christian church had shown its immense resisting power and its tenacious union, in the persecution by Galerius; and Constantine was discerning enough to see the vast political importance of winning over such a body; which, though but a small fraction of the whole empire, was the only party which could give coherence to that empire, the only one which had enthusiastic adherents in every province, the only one on whose resolute devotion it was possible for a partizan to rely securely. The
bravery and faithful attachment of Christian regiments was a lesson not lost upon Constantine; and we may say, in some sense, that the Christian soldiers in his armies conquered the empire (that is, the imperial appointments) for Christianity. But Paganism subsisted, even in spite of imperial allurements, until at length the sword of Theodosius violently suppressed heathen worship. So also, it was the spear of Charlemagne which drove the Saxons to baptism, and decided the extirpation of Paganism from Teutonic Europe. There is nothing in all this to distinguish the outward history of Christianity from that of Mohammedism. Barbarous tribes, now and then, venerating the superiority of our knowledge, adopt our religion: so have Pagan nations in Africa voluntarily become Mussulmans. But neither we nor they can appeal to any case, where an old State-religion has yielded without warlike compulsion to the force of heavenly truth,—“charm we never so wisely.” The whole influence which Christianity exerts over the world at large depends on the political history of modern Europe. The Christianity of Asia and Abyssinia is perhaps as pure and as respectable in this nineteenth century as it was in the fourth and fifth, yet no good or great deeds come forth out of it, of such a kind that Christian disputants dare to appeal to them with triumph. The politico-religious and very peculiar history of _European_ Christendom has alone elevated the modern world; and as Gibbon remarks, this whole history has directly depended on the fate of the great battles of Tours between the Moors and the Franks. The defeat of Mohammedism by Christendom certainly has not been effected by spiritual weapons. The soldier and the statesman have done to the full as much as the priest to secure Europe for Christianity, and win a Christendom of which Christians can be proud. As for the Christendom of Asia, the
apologists of Christianity simply ignore it. With these facts, how can it be pretended that the external history of Christianity points to an exclusively divine origin?

The author of the "Eclipse of Faith" has derided me for despatching in two paragraphs what occupied Gibbon's whole fifteenth chapter; but this author, here as always, misrepresents me. Gibbon is exhibiting and developing the deep-seated causes of the spread of Christianity before Constantine, and he by no means exhausts the subject. I am comparing the ostensible and notorious facts concerning the outward conquest of Christianity with those of other religions. To account for the early growth of any religion, Christian, Mussulman, or Mormonite, is always difficult.

III. The moral advantages which we owe to Christianity have been exaggerated by the same party spirit, as if there were in them anything miraculous.

1. We are told that Christianity is the decisive influence which has raised _womankind_: this does not appear to be true. The old Roman matron was, relatively to her husband,[12] morally as high as in modern Italy: nor is there any ground for supposing that modern women have advantage over the ancient in Spain and Portugal, where Germanic have been counteracted by Moorish influences. The relative position of the sexes in Homeric Greece exhibits nothing materially different from the present day. In Armenia and Syria perhaps Christianity has done
the service of extinguishing polygamy: this is creditable, though
nowise miraculous. Judaism also unlearnt polygamy, and made an
unbidden improvement upon Moses. In short, only in countries where
Germanic sentiment has taken root, do we see marks of any elevation
of the female sex superior to that of Pagan antiquity; and as this
elevation of the German woman in her deepest Paganism was already
striking to Tacitus and his contemporaries, it is highly unreasonable
to claim it as an achievement of Christianity.

In point of fact, Christian doctrine, as propounded by Paul, is not at
all so honourable to woman as that which German soundness of heart has
established. With Paul[13] the _sole_ reason for marriage is, that a
man may gratify instinct without sin. He teaches, that _but_ for this
object it would be better not to marry. He wishes that all were in
this respect as free as himself, and calls it a special gift of God.
He does not encourage a man to desire a mutual soul intimately to
share griefs and joys; one in whom the confiding heart can repose,
whose smile shall reward and soften toil, whose voice shall beguile
sorrow. He does not seem aware that the fascinations of woman refine
and chasten society; that virtuous attachment has in it an element of
respect, which abashes and purifies, and which shields the soul, even
when marriage is deferred; nor yet, that the union of two persons
who have no previous affection can seldom yield the highest fruits of
matrimony, but often leads to the severest temptations. How _should_
he have known all this? Courtship before marriage did not exist in the
society open to him: hence he treats the propriety of giving away a
maiden, as one in which _her_ conscience, _her_ likes and dislikes,
are not concerned: 1 Cor. vii. 37, 38. If the law leaves the parent
"power over his own will" and imposes no "necessity" to give her away,
Paul decidedly advises to keep her unmarried.

The author of the Apocalypse, a writer of the first century, who
was received in the second as John the apostle, holds up a yet more
degrading view of the matrimonial relation. In one of his visions he
exhibits 144,000 chosen saints, perpetual attendants of "the Lamb,"
and places the cardinal point of their sanctity in the fact, that
"they were not defiled with women, but were virgins." Marriage,
therefore, is defilement! Protestant writers struggle in vain against
this obvious meaning of the passage. Against all analogy of Scriptural
metaphor, they gratuitously pretend that _women_ mean _idolatrous
religions_: namely, because in the Old Testament the Jewish Church is
personified as a virgin betrothed to God, and an idol is spoken of as
her paramour.

As a result of the apostolic doctrines, in the second, third, and
following centuries, very gross views concerning the relation of the
sexes prevailed, and have been everywhere transmitted where men's
morality is exclusively[14] formed from the New Testament. The
marriage service of the Church of England, which incorporates the
Pauline doctrine is felt by English brides and bridegrooms to contain
what is so offensive and degrading, that many clergymen mercifully
make unlawful omissions. Paul had indeed expressly denounced
_prohibitions_ of marriage. In merely _dissuading_ it, he gave advice,
which, from his limited horizon and under his expectation of the
speedy return of Christ, was sensible and good; but when this advice, with all its reasons, was made on oracle of eternal wisdom, it generated the monkish notions concerning womanhood. If the desire of a wife is a weakness, which the apostle would gladly have forbidden, only that he feared worse consequences, an enthusiastic youth cannot but infer that it is a higher state of perfection _not_ to desire a wife, and therefore aspires to "the crown of virginity." Here at once is full-grown monkery. Hence that debasement of the imagination, which is directed perpetually to the lowest, instead of the highest side of the female nature. Hence the disgusting admiration and invocation of Mary's perpetual virginity. Hence the transcendental doctrine of her immaculate conception from Anne, the "grandmother of God."

In the above my critics have represented me to say that Christianity has done _nothing_ for women. I have not said so, but that what it has done has been exaggerated. I say: If the _theory_ of Christianity is to take credit from the _history_ of Christendom, it must also receive discredit. Taking in the whole system of nuns and celibates, and the doctrine which sustains it, the root of which is apostolic, I doubt whether any balance of credit remains over from this side of Christian history. I am well aware that the democratic doctrine of "the equality of souls" has a _tendency_ to elevate women,--and the poorer orders too; but this is not the whole of actual Christianity, which is a very heterogeneous mass.

2. Again: the modern doctrine, by aid of which West Indian slavery has been exterminated, is often put forward as Christian; but I had always
discerned that it was not Biblical, and that, in respect to this great
triumph, undue credit has been claimed for the fixed Biblical and
authoritative doctrine. As I have been greatly misunderstood in
my first edition, I am induced to expand this topic. Sir George
Stephen,[15] after describing the long struggle in England against the
West Indian interest and other obstacles, says, that, for some time,
"worst of all, we found the people, not actually against us, but
apathetic, lethargic, incredulous, indifferent. It was then, and _not
till then_, that we sounded the right note, and touched a chord that
never ceased to vibrate. _To uphold slavery was a crime against God!_
It was a NOVEL DOCTRINE, but it was a cry that was heard, for it would
be heard. The national conscience was awakened to inquiry, and inquiry
soon produced conviction." Sir George justly calls the doctrine novel.
As developed in the controversy, it laid down the general proposition,
that _men and women are not, and cannot be chattels_; and that all
human enactments which decree this are _morally null and void_, as
sinning against the higher law of nature and of God. And the reason
of this lies in the essential contrast of a moral personality and
chattel. Criminals may deserve to be bound and scourged, but they do
not cease to be persons, nor indeed do even the insane. Since every
man is a person, he cannot be a piece of property, nor has an
"owner" any just and moral claim to his services. Usage, so far from
conferring this claim, increases the total amount of injustice; the
longer an innocent man is _forcibly_ kept in slavery, the greater the
reparation to which he is entitled for the oppressive immorality. This
doctrine I now believe to be irrefutable truth, but I disbelieved it
while I thought the Scripture authoritative; because I found a very
different doctrine there--a doctrine which is the argumentative
stronghold of the American slaveholder. Paul sent back the fugitive
Onesimus to his master Philemon, with kind recommendations and
apologies for the slave, and a tender charge to Philemon, that he
would receive Onesimus as a brother in the Lord, since he had been
converted by Paul in the interval; but this very recommendation,
full of affection as it is, virtually recognizes the moral rights of
Philemon to the services of his slave; and hinting that if Onesimus
stole anything, Philemon should now forgive him, Paul shows perfect
insensibility to the fact that the master who detains a slave in
captivity against his will, is guilty himself of a continual theft.
What says Mrs. Beecher Stowe's Cassy to this? "Stealing!--They who
steal body and soul need not talk to us. Every one of these bills is
stolen--stolen from poor starving, sweating creatures." Now Onesimus,
in the very act of taking to flight, showed that he had been
submitting to servitude against his will, and that the house of his
owner had previously been a prison to him. To suppose that Philemon
has a pecuniary interest in the return of Onesimus to work without
wages, implies that the master habitually steals the slave's earnings;
but if he loses nothing by the flight, he has not been wronged by it.
Such is the modern doctrine, developed out of the fundamental fact
that persons are not chattels; but it is to me wonderful that it
should be needful to prove to any one, that this is _not_ the doctrine
of the New Testament. Paul and Peter deliver excellent charges to
masters in regard to the treatment of their slaves, but without any
hint to them that there is an injustice in claiming them as slaves at
all. That slavery, _as a system_, is essentially immoral, no Christian
of those days seems to have suspected. Yet it existed in its
worst forms under Rome. Whole gangs of slaves were mere tools of
capitalists, and were numbered like cattle, with no moral relationship to the owner; young women of beautiful person were sold as articles of voluptuousness. Of course every such fact was looked upon by Christians as hateful and dreadful; yet, I say, it did not lead them to that moral condemnation of slavery, _as such_, which has won the most signal victory in modern times, and is destined, I trust, to win one far greater.

A friendly reviewer replies to this, that the apathy of the early Christians to the intrinsic iniquity of the slave system rose out of "their expectation of an immediate close of this world's affairs. The only reason why Paul sanctioned contentment with his condition in the converted slave, was, that for so short a time it was not worth while for any man to change his state." I agree to this; but it does not alter my fact: on the contrary, it confirms what I say,--that the Biblical morality is not final truth. To account for an error surely is not to deny it.

Another writer has said on the above: "Let me suppose you animated to go as missionary to the East to preach this (Mr. Newman's) spiritual system: would you, in addition to all this, publicly denounce the social and political evils under which the nations groan? If so, your spiritual projects would soon be perfectly understood, and _summarily dealt with_.--It is vain to say, that, if commissioned by Heaven, and endowed with power of working miracles, you would do so; for you cannot tell under what limitations your commission would be given: it is pretty certain, that _it would leave you to work a moral and
spiritual system by moral and spiritual means, and not allow you to turn the world upside down, and mendaciously tell it that you came only to preach peace, while every syllable you uttered would be an incentive to sedition."--Eclipse of Faith, p. 419.

This writer supposes that he is attacking me, when every line is an attack on Christ and Christianity. Have I pretended power of working miracles? Have I imagined or desired that miracle would shield me from persecution? Did Jesus not publicly denounce the social and political evils of Judaea? was he not "summarily dealt with"? Did he not know that his doctrine would send on earth "not peace, but a sword"? and was he mendacious in saying, "Peace I leave unto you?" or were the angels mendacious in proclaiming, "Peace on earth, goodwill among men"? Was not "every syllable that Jesus uttered" in the discourse of Matth. xxiii., "an incentive to sedition?" and does this writer judge it to be mendacity, that Jesus opened by advising to OBEY the very men, whom he proceeds to vilify at large as immoral, oppressive, hypocritical, blind, and destined to the damnation of hell? Or have I anywhere blamed the apostles because they did not exasperate wicked men by direct attacks? It is impossible to answer such a writer as this; for he elaborately misses to touch what I have said. On the other hand, it is rather too much to require me to defend Jesus from his assault.

Christian preachers did not escape the imputation of turning the world upside down, and at length, in some sense, effected what was imputed. It is matter of conjecture, whether any greater convulsion would
have happened, if the apostles had done as the Quakers in America. No Quaker holds slaves: why not? Because the Quakers teach their members that it is an essential immorality. The slave-holding states are infinitely more alive and jealous to keep up their "peculiar institution," than was the Roman government; yet the Quakers have caused no political convulsion. I confess, to me it seems, that if Paul, and John, and Peter, and James, had done as these Quakers, the imperial administration would have looked on it as a harmless eccentricity of the sect, and not as an incentive[16] to sedition. But be this as it may, I did not say what else the apostles might have succeeded to enforce; I merely pointed out what it was that they actually taught, and that, _as a fact_, they did _not_ declare slavery to be an immorality and the basest of thefts. If any one thinks their course was more wise, he may be right or wrong, but his opinion is in itself a concession of my fact.

As to the historical progress of Christian practice and doctrine on this subject, it is, as usual, mixed of good and evil. The humanity of good Pagan emperors softened the harshness of the laws of bondage, and manumission had always been extremely common amongst the Romans. Of course, the more humane religion of Christ acted still more powerfully in the same direction, especially in inculcating the propriety of freeing _Christian_ slaves. This was creditable, but not peculiar, and is not a fact of such a nature as to add to the exclusive claims of Christianity. To every _proselyting_ religion the sentiment is so natural, that no divine spirit is needed to originate and establish it. Mohammedans also have a conscience against enslaving Mohammedans,
and generally bestow freedom on a slave as soon as he adopts their
religion. But no zeal for _human_ freedom has ever grown out of the
purely biblical and ecclesiastical system, any more than out of the
Mohammedan. In the middle ages, zeal for the liberation of serfs first
rose in the breasts of the clergy, after the whole population had
become nominally Christian. It was not men, but Christians, whom the
clergy desired to make free: it is hard to say, that they thought
Pagans to have any human rights at all, even to life. Nor is it
correct to represent ecclesiastical influences as the sole agency
which overthrew slavery and serfdom. The desire of the kings to raise
up the chartered cities as a bridle to the barons, was that which
chiefly made rustic slavery untenable in its coarsest form; for a
"villain" who escaped into the free cities could not be recovered. In
later times, the first public act against slavery came from republican
France, in the madness of atheistic enthusiasm; when she declared
black and white men to be equally free, and liberated the negroes of
St. Domingo. In Britain, the battle of social freedom has been fought
chiefly by that religious sect which rests least on the letter of
Scripture. The bishops, and the more learned clergy, have consistently
been apathetic to the duty of overthrowing the slave system.--I was
thus led to see, that here also the New Testament precepts must not be
received by me as any final and authoritative law of morality. But I
meet opposition in a quarter from which I had least expected it;--from
one who admits the imperfection of the morality actually attained by
the apostles, but avows that Christianity, as a divine system, is
not to be identified with apostolic doctrine, but with the doctrine
_ultimately developed_ in the Christian Church; moreover, the
ecclesiastical doctrine concerning slavery he alleges to be truer
than mine,—I mean, truer than that which I have expounded as held by modern abolitionists. He approves of the principle of claiming freedom, not for _men_, but for _Christians_. He says: “That Christianity opened its arms at all to the servile class was enough; for in its embrace was the sure promise of emancipation.... Is it imputed as a disgrace, that Christianity put conversion before manumission, and _brought them to God, ere it trusted them with themselves_?... It created the simultaneous obligation to make the Pagan a convert, and the convert free." ... "If our author had made his attack from the opposite side, and contended that its doctrines 'proved too much' against servitude, and _assumed with too little qualification the capacity of each man for self-rule_, we should have felt more hesitation in expressing our dissent."

I feel unfeigned surprize at these sentiments from one whom I so highly esteem and admire; and considering that they were written at first anonymously, and perhaps under pressure of time, for a review, I hope it is not presumptuous in me to think it possible that they are hasty, and do not wholly express a deliberate and final judgment. I must think there is some misunderstanding; for I have made no high claims about capacity for _self-rule_, as if laws and penalties were to be done away. But the question is, shall human beings, who (as all of us) are imperfect, be controlled by public law, or by individual caprice? Was not my reviewer intending to advocate some form of _serfdom_ which is compatible with legal rights, and recognizes the serf as a man; not _slavery_ which pronounces him a chattel? Serfdom and apprenticeship we may perhaps leave to be reasoned down by
economists and administrators; slavery proper is what I attacked as essentially immoral.

Returning then to the arguments, I reason against them as if I did not know their author.--I have distinctly avowed, that the effort to liberate Christian slaves was creditable: I merely add, that in this respect Christianity is no better than Mohammedism. But is it really no moral fault,—is it not a moral enormity,—to deny that Pagans have human rights? "That Christianity opened its arms _at all_ to the servile class, _was enough._" Indeed! Then either unconverted men have no natural right to freedom, or Christians may withhold a natural right from them. Under the plea of "bringing them to God," Christians are to deny by law, to every slave who refuses to be converted, the rights of husband and father, rights of persons, rights of property, rights over his own body. Thus manumission is a bribe to make hypocritical converts, and Christian superiority a plea for depriving men of their dearest rights. Is not freedom older than Christianity? Does the Christian recommend his religion to a Pagan by stealing his manhood and all that belongs to it? Truly, if only Christians have a right to personal freedom, what harm is there in hunting and catching Pagans to make slaves of them? And this was exactly the "development" of thought and doctrine in the Christian church. The same priests who taught that _Christians_ have moral rights to their sinews and skin, to their wives and children, and to the fruit of their labour, which _Pagans_ have not, consistently developed the same fundamental idea of Christian superiority into the lawfulness of making war upon the heathen, and reducing them to the state of domestic animals. If
Christianity is to have credit from the former, it must also take the credit of the latter. If cumulative evidence of its divine origin is found in the fact, that Christendom has liberated Christian slaves, must we forget the cumulative evidence afforded by the assumed right of the Popes to carve out the countries of the heathen, and bestow them with their inhabitants on Christian powers? Both results flow logically out of the same assumption, and were developed by the same school.

But, I am told, a man must not be freed, until we have ascertained his capacity for self-rule! This is indeed a tyrannical assumption: _vindicioe secundum servitutem_. Men are not to have their human rights, until we think they will not abuse them! Prevention is to be used against the hitherto innocent and injured! The principle involves all that is arrogant, violent, and intrusive, in military tyranny and civil espionage. Self-rule? But abolitionists have no thought of exempting men from the penalties of common law, if they transgress the law; we only desire that all men shall be equally subjected to the law, and equally protected by it. It is truly a strange inference, that because a man is possibly deficient in virtue, therefore he shall not be subject to public law, but to private caprice: as if this were a school of virtue, and not eminently an occasion of vice. Truer far is Homer's morality, who says, that a man loses half his virtue on the day he is made a slave. As to the pretence that slaves are not fit for freedom, those Englishmen who are old enough to remember the awful predictions which West Indian planters used to pour forth about the bloodshed and confusion which would ensue, if they were hindered
by law from scourging black men and violating black women, might, I think, afford to despise the danger of _enacting_ that men and women shall be treated as men and women, and not made tools of vice end victims of cruelty. If ever sudden emancipation ought to have produced violences and wrong from the emancipated, it was in Jamaica, where the oppression and ill-will was so great; yet the freed blacks have not in fifteen years inflicted on the whites as much lawless violence as they suffered themselves in six months of apprenticeship. It is the _masters_ of slaves, not the slaves, who are deficient in self-rule; and slavery is doubly detestable, because it depraves the masters.

What degree of "worldly moderation and economical forethought" is needed by a practical statesman in effecting the liberation of slaves, it is no business of mine to discuss. I however feel assured, that no constitutional statesman, having to contend against the political votes of numerous and powerful slave-owners, who believe their fortunes to be at stake, will ever be found to undertake the task _at all_, against the enormous resistance of avarice and habit, unless religious teachers pierce the conscience of the nation by denouncing slavery as an essential wickedness. Even the petty West Indian interests--a mere fraction of the English empire--were too powerful, until this doctrine was taught. Mr. Canning in parliament spoke emphatically against slavery, but did not dare to bring in a bill against it. When such is English experience, I cannot but expect the same will prove true in America.

In replying to objectors, I have been carried beyond my narrative,
and have written from my present point of view; I may therefore here complete this part of the argument, though by anticipation.

The New Testament has beautifully laid down Truth and Love as the culminating virtues of man; but it has imperfectly discerned that Love is impossible where Justice does not go first. Regarding this world as destined to be soon burnt up, it despaired of improving the foundations of society, and laid down the principle of Non-resistance, even to Injurious force, in terms so unlimited, as practically to throw its entire weight into the scale of tyranny. It recognises individuals who call themselves kings or magistrates (however tyrannical and usurping), as Powers ordained of God: it does not recognize nations as Communities ordained of God, or as having any power and authority whatsoever, as against pretentious individuals. To obey a king, is strenuously enforced; to resist a usurping king, in a patriotic cause, is not contemplated in the New Testament as under any circumstances an imaginable duty. Patriotism has no recognised existence in the Christian records. I am well aware of the cause of this; I do not say that it reflects any dishonour on the Christian apostles: I merely remark on it as a calamitous fact, and deduce that their precepts cannot and must not be made the sufficient rule of life, or they will still be (as they always have hitherto been) a mainstay of tyranny. The rights of Men and of Nations are wholly ignored in the New Testament, but the authority of Slave-owners and of Kings is very distinctly recorded for solemn religious sanction. If it had been wholly silent, no one could have appealed to its decision: but by consecrating mere Force, it has promoted
Injustice, and in so far has made that Love impossible, which it
desired to establish.

It is but one part of this great subject, that the apostles absolutely
command a slave to give obedience to his master in nil things, "as
to the Lord." It is in vain to deny, that _the most grasping of_
slave-owners asks nothing more of abolitionists than that they would
all adopt Paul's creed_: viz., acknowledge the full authority of
owners of slaves, tell them that they are responsible to God alone,
and charge them to use their power righteously and mercifully.

3. LASTLY: it is a lamentable fact, that not only do superstitions
about Witches, Ghosts, Devils, and Diabolical Miracles derive a strong
support from the Bible, (and in fact have been exploded by nothing
but the advance of physical philosophy,)--but what is far worse, the
Bible alone has nowhere sufficed to establish an enlightened religious
toleration. This is at first seemingly unintelligible: for the
apostles certainly would have been intensely shocked at the thought of
punishing men, in body, purse, or station, for not being Christians
or not being orthodox. Nevertheless, not only does the Old Testament
justify bloody persecution, but the New teaches[18] that God will
visit men with fiery vengeance _for holding an erroneous creed_:--that
vengeance indeed is his, not ours; but that still the punishment
is deserved. It would appear, that wherever this doctrine is held,
possession of power for two or three generations inevitably converts
men into persecutors; and in so far, we must lay the horrible
desolations which Europe has suffered from bigotry, at the doors, not
indeed of the Christian apostles themselves, but of that Bibliolatry
which has converted their earliest records into a perfect and eternal
law.

IV. "Prophecy" is generally regarded as a leading evidence of the
divine origin of Christianity. But this also had proved itself to me
a more and more mouldering prop, whether I leant on those which
concerned Messiah, those of the New Testament, or the miscellaneous
predictions of the Old Testament.

1. As to the Messianic prophecies, I began to be pressed with the
difficulty of proving against the Jews that "Messiah was to suffer."
The Psalms generally adduced for this purpose can in no way be fixed
on Messiah. The prophecy in the 9th chapter of Daniel looks specious
in the authorized English version, but has evaporated in the Greek
translation and is not acknowledged in the best German renderings.
I still rested on the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, as alone fortifying me
against the Rabbis: yet with an unpleasantly increasing perception
that the system of "double interpretation" in which Christians
indulge, is a playing fast and loose with prophecy, and is essentially
dishonest _No one dreams of a "second" sense until the primary sense
proves false_: all false prophecy may be thus screened. The three
prophecies quoted (Acts xiii. 33--35) in proof of the resurrection
of Jesus, are simply puerile, and deserve no reply.--I felt there was
something unsound in all this.
2. The prophecies of the New Testament are not many. First, we have that of Jesus in Matt xxiv. concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. It is marvellously exact, down to the capture of the city and miserable enslavement of the population; but at this point it becomes clearly and hopelessly false: namely, it declares, that "immediately after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, &c. &c., and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect," &c. This is a manifest description of the Great Day of Judgment: and the prophecy goes on to add: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." When we thus find a prediction to break down suddenly in the middle, we have the well-known mark of its earlier part being written after the event: and it becomes unreasonable to doubt that the detailed annunciations of this 24th chapter of Matthew, were first composed very soon after the war of Titus, and never came from the lips of Jesus at all. Next: we have the prophecies of the Apocalypse. Not one of these can be interpreted certainly of any human affairs, except one in the 17th chapter, which the writer himself has explained to apply to the emperors of Rome: and that is proved false by the event.—Farther, we have Paul's prophecies concerning the apostacy of the Christian Church. These are very striking, as they indicate his deep insight into the moral tendencies of the community in which he moved. They are high testimonies to the prophetic soul of Paul; and as such, I cannot have any desire to weaken their force. But there is nothing in them that can establish the theory of supernaturalism, in
the face of his great mistake as to the speedy return of Christ from heaven.

3. As for the Old Testament, if all its prophecies about Babylon and Tyre and Edom and Ishmael and the four Monarchies were both true and supernatural, what would this prove? That God had been pleased to reveal something of coming history to certain eminent men of Hebrew antiquity. That is all. We should receive this conclusion with an otiose faith. It could not order or authorize us to submit our souls and consciences to the obviously defective morality of the Mosaic system in which these prophets lived; and with Christianity it has nothing to do.

At the same time I had reached the conclusion that large deductions must be made from the credit of these old prophecies.

First, as to the Book of Daniel: the 11th chapter is closely historical down to Antiochus Epiphanes, after which it suddenly becomes false; and according to different modern expositors, leaps away to Mark Antony, or to Napoleon Buonaparte, or to the Papacy. Hence we have a _prima facie_ presumption that the book was composed in the reign of that Antiochus; nor can it be proved to have existed earlier: nor is there in it one word of prophecy which can be shown to have been fulfilled in regard to any later era. Nay, the 7th chapter also is confuted by the event; for the great Day of Judgment has not followed upon the fourth[19] Monarchy.
Next, as to the prophecies of the Pentateuch. They abound, as to the
times which precede the century of Hezekiah; higher than which we
cannot trace the Pentateuch.[20] No prophecy of the Pentateuch can be
proved to have been fulfilled, which had not been already fulfilled
before Hezekiah's day.

Thirdly, as to the prophecies which concern various nations,—some of
them are remarkably verified, as that against Babylon; others failed,
as those of Ezekiel concerning Nebuchadnezzar's wars against Tyre
and Egypt. The fate predicted against Babylon was delayed for five
centuries, so as to lose all moral meaning as a divine infliction on
the haughty city.—On the whole, it was clear to me, that it is a vain
attempt to forge polemical weapons out of these old prophets, for the
service of modern creeds.[21]

V. My study of John's gospel had not enabled me to sustain Dr.
Arnold's view, that it was an impregnable fortress of Christianity.

In discussing the Apocalypse, I had long before felt a doubt whether
we ought not rather to assign that book to John the apostle in
preference to the Gospel and Epistles: but this remained only as a
doubt. The monotony also of the Gospel had often excited my _wonder_. But
I was for the first time _offended_, on considering with a fresh mind an
old fact,—the great similarity of the style and phraseology in the third
chapter, in the testimony of the Baptist, as well as in Christ's
address to Nicodemus, that of John's own epistle. As the three first
gospels have their family likeness, which enables us on hearing a text
to know that it comes out of one of the three, though we perhaps know
not which; so is it with the Gospel and Epistles of John. When a verse
is read, we know that it is either from an epistle of John, or
else from the Jesus of John; but often we cannot tell which. On
contemplating the marked character of this phenomenon, I saw it
infallibly[22] to indicate that John has made both the Baptist and
Jesus speak, as John himself would have spoken; and that we cannot
trust the historical reality of the discourses in the fourth gospel.

That narrative introduces an entirely new phraseology, with a
perpetual discoursing about the Father and the Son; of which there is
barely the germ in Matthew:--and herewith a new doctrine concerning
the heaven-descended personality of Jesus. That the divinity of Christ
cannot be proved from the three first gospels, was confessed by the
early Church, and is proved by the labouring arguments of the modern
Trinitarians. What then can be dearer, than that John has put into the
mouth of Jesus the doctrines of half a century later, which he desired
to recommend?

When this conclusion pressed itself first on my mind, the name of
Strauss was only beginning to be known in England, and I did not read
his great work until years after I had come to a final opinion on this
whole subject. The contemptuous reprobation of Strauss in which it is
fashionable for English writers to indulge, makes it a duty to express
my high sense of the lucid force with which he unanswerably shows that
the fourth gospel (whoever the author was) is no faithful exhibition of the discourses of Jesus. Before I had discerned this so vividly in all its parts, it had become quite certain to me that the secret colloquy with Nicodemus, and the splendid testimony of the Baptist to the Father and the Son, were wholly modelled out of John's own imagination. And no sooner had I felt how severe was the shock to John's general veracity, than a new and even graver difficulty rose upon me.

The stupendous and public event of Lazarus's resurrection,—the circumstantial cross-examination of the man born blind and healed by Jesus,—made those two miracles, in Dr. Arnold's view, grand and unassailable bulwarks of Christianity. The more I considered them, the mightier their superiority seemed to those of the other gospels. They were wrought at Jerusalem, under the eyes of the rulers, who did their utmost to detect them, and could not; but in frenzied despair, plotted to kill Lazarus. How different from the frequently vague and wholesale statements of the other gospels concerning events which happened where no enemy was watching to expose delusion! many of them in distant and uncertain localities.

But it became the more needful to ask; How was it that the other writers omitted to tell of such decisive exhibitions? Were they so dull in logic, as not to discern the superiority of these? Can they possibly have known of such miracles, wrought under the eyes of the Pharisees, and defying all their malice, and yet have told in preference other less convincing marvels? The question could not
be long dwelt on, without eliciting the reply: "It is necessary to
believe, at least until the contrary shall be proved, that the
three first writers either had never heard of these two miracles, or
disbelieved them." Thus the account rests on the unsupported evidence
of John, with a weighty presumption against its truth.

When, where, and in what circumstances did John write? It is agreed,
that he wrote half a century after the events; when the other
disciples were all dead; when Jerusalem was destroyed, her priests
and learned men dispersed, her nationality dissolved, her coherence
annihilated;--he wrote in a tongue foreign to the Jews of Palestine,
and for a foreign people, in a distant country, and in the bosom of
an admiring and confiding church, which was likely to venerate him the
more, the greater marvels he asserted concerning their Master. He
told them miracles of firstrate magnitude, which no one before had
recorded. Is it possible for me to receive them _on his word_, under
circumstances so conducive to delusion, and without a single check to
ensure his accuracy? Quite impossible; when I have already seen how
little to be trusted is his report of the discourses and doctrine of
Jesus.

But was it necessary to impute to John conscious and wilful deception?
By no means absolutely necessary;--as appeared by the following
train[23] of thought. John tells us that Jesus promised the Comforter,
_to bring to their memory_ things that concerned him; oh that one
could have the satisfaction of cross-examining John on this subject!
Let me suppose him put into the witness-box; and I will speak to him
thus: "O aged Sir, we understand that you have two memories, a natural and a miraculous one: with the former you retain events as other men; with the latter you recall what had been totally forgotten. Be pleased to tell us now. Is it from your natural or from your supernatural memory that you derive your knowledge of the miracle wrought on Lazarus and the long discourses which you narrate?" If to this question John were frankly to reply, "It is solely from my supernatural memory,--from the special action of the Comforter on my mind:" then should I discern that he was perfectly truehearted. Yet I should also see, that he was liable to mistake a reverie, a meditation, a day-dream, for a resuscitation of his memory by the Spirit. In short, a writer who believes such a doctrine, and does not think it requisite to warn us how much of his tale comes from his natural, and how much from his supernatural memory, forfeits all claim to be received as an historian, witnessing by the common senses to external fact. His work may have religious value, but it is that of a novel or romance, not of a history. It is therefore superfluous to name the many other difficulties in detail which it contains.

Thus was I flung back to the three first gospels, as, with all their defects,—their genealogies, dreams, visions, devil-miracles, and prophecies written after the event,—yet on the whole, more faithful as a picture of the true Jesus, than that which is exhibited in John.

And now my small root of supernaturalism clung the tighter to Paul, whose conversion still appeared to me a guarantee, that there was at least some nucleus of miracle in Christianity, although it had not
pleased God to give us any very definite and trustworthy account. Clearly it was an error, to make miracles our _foundation_; but might we not hold them as a result? Doctrine must be our foundation; but perhaps we might believe the miracles for the sake of it. --And in the epistles of Paul I thought I saw various indications that he took this view. The practical soundness of his eminently sober understanding had appeared to me the more signal, the more I discerned the atmosphere of erroneous philosophy which he necessarily breathed. But he also proved a broken reed, when I tried really to lean upon him as a main support.

1. The first thing that broke on me concerning Paul, was, that his moral sobriety of mind was no guarantee against his mistaking extravagances for miracle. This was manifest to me in his treatment of _the gift of tongues_.

So long ago as in 1830, when the Irving "miracles" commenced in Scotland, my particular attention had been turned to this subject, and the Irvingite exposition of the Pauline phenomena appeared to me so correct, that I was vehemently predisposed to believe the miraculous tongues. But my friend "the Irish clergyman" wrote me a full account of what he heard with his own ears; which was to the effect--that none of the sounds, vowels or consonants, were foreign;--that the strange words were moulded after the Latin grammar, ending in -abus, -obus, -ebat, -avi, &c., so as to denote poverty of invention rather than spiritual agency;--and _that there was no interpretation_. The last point decided me, that any belief which I had in it must be for the present unpractical. Soon after, a friend of mine applied by letter
for information as to the facts to a very acute and pious Scotchman, who had become a believer in these miracles. The first reply gave us no facts whatever, but was a declamatory exhortation to believe. The second was nothing but a lamentation over my friend's unbelief, because he asked again for the facts. This showed me, that there was excitement and delusion: yet the general phenomena appeared so similar to those of the church of Corinth, that I supposed the persons must unawares have copied the exterior manifestations, if, after all, there was no reality at bottom.

Three years sufficed to explode these tongues; and from time to time I had an uneasy sense, how much discredit they cast on the Corinthian miracles. Meander's discussion on the 2nd Chapter of the Acts first opened to me the certainty, that Luke (or the authority whom he followed) has exaggerated into a gift of languages what cannot have been essentially different from the Corinthian, and in short from the Irvingite, tongues. Thus Luke's narrative has transformed into a splendid miracle, what in Paul is no miracle at all. It is true that Paul speaks of _interpretation of tongues_ as possible, but without a hint that any verification was to be used. Besides, why should a Greek not speak Greek in an assembly of his own countrymen? Is it credible, that the Spirit should inspire one man to utter unintelligible sounds, and a second to interpret these, and then give the assembly endless trouble to find out whether the interpretation was pretence or reality, when the whole difficulty was gratuitous? We grant that there _may_ be good reasons for what is paradoxical, but we need the stronger proof that it is a reality. Yet what in fact is there? and
why should the gift of tongues in Corinth, as described by Paul, be
treated with more respect than in Newman Street, London? I could
find no other reply, than that Paul was too sober-minded: yet his own
description of the tongues is that of a barbaric jargon, which makes
the church appear as if it "were mad," and which is only redeemed from
contempt by miraculous interpretation. In the Acts we see that this
phenomenon pervaded all the Churches; from the day of Pentecost onward
it was looked on as the standard mark of "the descent of the Holy
Spirit;" and in the conversion of Cornelius it was the justification
of Peter for admitting uncircumcised Gentiles: yet not once is
"interpretation" alluded to, except in Paul's epistle. Paul could not
go against the whole Church. He held a logic too much in common with
the rest, to denounce the tongues as _mere_ carnal excitement; but he
does anxiously degrade them as of lowest spiritual value, and wholly
prohibits them where there is "no interpreter." To carry out this
rule, would perhaps have suppressed them entirely.

This however showed me, that I could not rest on Paul's practical
wisdom, as securing him against speculative hallucinations in the
matter of miracles; for indeed he says: "I thank my God, that I speak
with tongues _more than ye all_."

2. To another broad fact I had been astonishingly blind, though the
truth of it flashed upon me as soon as I heard it named;--that Paul
shows total unconcern to the human history and earthly teaching of
Jesus, never quoting his doctrine or any detail of his actions. The
Christ with whom Paul held communion was a risen, ascended, exalted
Lord, a heavenly being, who reigned over arch-angels, and was about to appear as Judge of the world: but of Jesus in the flesh Paul seems to know nothing beyond the bare fact that he _did_ [24] "humble himself" to become man, and "pleased not himself." Even in the very critical controversy about meat and drink, Paul omits to quote Christ's doctrine, "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man," &c. He surely, therefore, must have been wholly and contentedly ignorant of the oral teachings of Jesus.

3. This threw a new light on the _independent_ position of Paul. That he anxiously refused to learn from the other apostles, and "conferred not with flesh and blood,"--not having received his gospel of many but by the revelation of Jesus Christ--had seemed to me quite suitable to his high pretensions. Any novelties which might be in his doctrine, I had regarded as mere developments, growing out of the common stem, and guaranteed by the same Spirit. But I now saw that this independence invalidated his testimony. He may be to us a supernatural, but he certainly is not a natural, witness to the truth of Christ's miracles and personality. It avails not to talk of the _opportunities_ which he had of searching into the truth of the resurrection of Christ, for we see that he did not choose to avail himself of the common methods of investigation. He learned his gospel _by an internal revelation_. [25] He even recounts the appearance of Christ to him, years after his ascension, as evidence co-ordinate to his appearance to Peter and to James, and to 500 brethren at once. 1 Cor. xv. Again the thought is forced on us,—how different was his logic from ours!
To see the full force of the last remark, we ought to conceive how many questions a Paley would have wished to ask of Paul; and how many details Paley himself, if he had had the sight, would have felt it his duty to impart to his readers. Had Paul ever seen Jesus when alive? How did he recognize the miraculous apparition to be the person whom Pilate had crucified? Did he see him as a man in a fleshly body, or as a glorified heavenly form? Was it in waking, or sleeping, and if the latter, how did he distinguish his divine vision from a common dream? Did he see only, or did he also handle? If it was a palpable man of flesh, how did he assure himself that it was a person risen from the dead, and not an ordinary living man?

Now as Paul is writing specially to convince the incredulous or to confirm the wavering, it is certain that he would have dwelt on these details, if he had thought them of value to the argument. As he wholly suppresses them, we must infer that he held them to be immaterial; and therefore that the evidence with which he was satisfied, in proof that a man was risen from the dead, was either totally different in kind from that which we should now exact, or exceedingly inferior in rigour. It appears, that he believed in the resurrection of Christ, first, on the ground of prophecy: secondly, (I feel it is not harsh or bold to add,) on very loose and wholly unsifted testimony. For since he does not afford to us the means of sifting and analyzing his testimony, he cannot have judged it our duty so to do; and therefore is not likely himself to have sifted very narrowly the testimony of others.
Conceive farther how a Paley would have dealt with so astounding a fact, so crushing an argument as the appearance of the risen Jesus to 500 brethren at once. How would he have extravagated and revelled in proof! How would he have worked the topic, that “this could have been no dream, no internal impression, no vain fancy, but a solid indubitable fact!” How he would have quoted his authorities, detailed their testimonies, and given their names and characters! Yet Paul dispatches the affair in one line, gives no details and no special declarations, and seems to see no greater weight in this decisive appearance, than in the vision to his single self. He expects us to take his very vague announcement of the 500 brethren as enough, and it does not seem to occur to him that his readers (if they need to be convinced) are entitled to expect fuller information. Thus if Paul does not intentionally supersede human testimony, he reduces it to its minimum of importance.

How can I believe _at second hand_, from the word of one whom I discern to hold so lax notions of evidence? Yet _who_ of the Christian teachers was superior to Paul? He is regarded as almost the only educated man of the leaders. Of his activity of mind, his moral sobriety, his practical talents, his profound sincerity, his enthusiastic self-devotion, his spiritual insight, there is no question: but when his notions of evidence are infected with the errors of his age, what else can we expect of the eleven, and of the multitude?
4. Paul's neglect of the earthly teaching of Jesus might in part be imputed to the nonexistence of written documents and the great difficulty of learning with certainty what he really had taught. This agreed perfectly well with what I already saw of the untrustworthiness of our gospels; but it opened a chasm between the doctrine of Jesus and that of Paul, and showed that Paulinism, however good in itself, is not assuredly to be identified with primitive Christianity.

Moreover, it became clear, why James and Paul are so contrasted. James retains with little change the traditionary doctrine of the Jerusalem Christians; Paul has superadded or substituted a gospel of his own. This was, I believe, pointedly maintained 25 years ago by the author of "Not Paul, but Jesus;" a book which I have never read.

VII. I had now to ask,--Where are _the twelve men_ of whom Paley talks, as testifying to the resurrection of Christ? Paul cannot be quoted as a witness, but only as a believer. Of the twelve we do not even know the names, much less have we their testimony. Of James and Jude there are two epistles, but it is doubtful whether either of these is of the twelve apostles; and neither of them declare themselves eyewitnesses to Christ's resurrection. In short, Peter and John are the only two. Of these however, Peter does not attest the _bodily_ but only the _spiritual_, resurrection of Jesus; for he says that Christ was[28] "put to death in flesh, but made alive in spirit,"

1 Pet iii. 18: yet if this verse had been lost, his opening address (i. 3) would have seduced me into the belief that Peter taught the bodily resurrection of Jesus. So dangerous is it to believe miracles, on the authority of words quoted from a man whom we cannot
cross-examine! Thus, once more, John is left alone in his testimony; and how insufficient that is, has been said.

The question also arose, whether Peter's testimony to the transfiguration (2 Pet. i. 18), was an important support. A first objection might be drawn from the sleep ascribed to the three disciples in the gospels; if the narrative were at all trustworthy. But a second and greater difficulty arises in the doubtful authenticity of the second Epistle of Peter.

Neander positively decides against that epistle. Among many reasons, the similarity of its second chapter to the Epistle of Jude is a cardinal fact. Jude is supposed to be original; yet his allusions show him to be post-apostolic. If so, the second Epistle of Peter is clearly spurious.--Whether this was certain, I could not make up my mind: but it was manifest that where such doubts may be honestly entertained, no basis exists to found a belief of a great and significant miracle.

On the other hand, both the Transfiguration itself, and the fiery destruction of Heaven and Earth prophesied in the third chapter of this epistle, are open to objections so serious, as mythical imaginations, that the name of Peter will hardly guarantee them to those with whom the general evidence for the miracles in the gospels has thoroughly broken down.
On the whole, one thing only was clear concerning Peter's faith;—that he, like Paul, was satisfied with a kind of evidence for the resurrection of Jesus which fell exceedingly short of the demands of modern logic: and that it is absurd in us to believe, barely _because_ they believed.

[Footnote 1: Matt. xii. 39, xvi. 4.]

[Footnote 2: John xx. 29.]

[Footnote 3: John xiv, 11. In x. 37, 38, the same idea seems to be intended. So xv. 24.]

[Footnote 4: A reviewer erroneously treats this as inculcating a denial of the possibility of inward revelation. It merely says, that _some answer_ in needed to these questions; and _none in given_. We can make out (in my opinion) that dreams and inward impressions were the form of suggestion trusted to; but we do not learn what precautions were used against foolish credulity.]

[Footnote 5: If miracles were vouchsafed on the scale of a _new sense_, it is of course conceivable that they would reveal new masses of fact, tending to modify our moral judgments of particular actions: but nothing of this can be made out in Judaism or Christianity.]
Footnote 6: A friendly reviewer derides this passage as a very feeble objection to the doctrine of the Absolute Moral perfections of Jesus. It in here rather feebly _stated_., because at that period I had not fully worked out the thought. He seems to have forgotten that I am narrating.]

Footnote 7: An ingenious gentleman, well versed in history, has put forth a volume called "The Restoration of Faith," in which he teaches that _I have no right to a conscience or to a God_, until I adopt his historical conclusions. I leave his co-religionists to confute his portentous heresy; but in fact it is already done more than enough in a splendid article of the "Westminster Review," July, 1852.

Footnote 8: I seem to have been understood now to say that a knowledge of the Bible was not a pre-requisite of the Protestant Reformation. What I say is, that at this period I learned the study of the Classics to have caused and determined that it should then take place; moreover, I say that a free study of _other books than sacred ones_ is essential, and always was, to conquer superstition.

Footnote 9: I am asked why _Italy_ witnessed no improvement of spiritual doctrine. The reply is, that _she did_. The Evangelical movement there was quelled only by the Imperial arms and the Inquisition. I am also asked why Pagan Literature did not save the ancient church from superstition. I have always understood that
the vast majority of Christian teachers during the decline were unacquainted with Pagan literature, and that the Church at an early period _forbade_ it.

[Footnote 10: My friend James Martineau, who insists that "a self-sustaining power" in a religion is a thing _intrinsically inconceivable_, need not have censured me for coming to the conclusion that it does not exist in Christianity. In fact, I entirely agree with him; but at the time of which I here write, I had only taken the first step in his direction; and I barely drew a negative conclusion, to which he perfectly assents. To my dear friend's capacious and kindling mind, all the thought here expounded are prosaic and common; being to him quite obvious, so far as they are true. He is right in looking down upon them; and, I trust, by his aid, I have added to my wisdom since the time of which I write. Yet they were to me discoveries once, and he must not be displeased at my making much of them in this connexion.]

[Footnote 11: It is the fault of my critics that I am forced to tell the reader this is exhibited in my "Hebrew Monarchy."]

[Footnote 12: It in not to the purpose to urge the _political_ minority of the Roman wife. This was a mere inference from the high power of the bond of the husband. The father had right of death over his son, and (as the lawyers stated the case), the wife was on the level of one of the children.]
[Footnote 13: 1 Cor. vii. 2-9]

[Footnote 14: Namely, in the Armenian, Syrian, and Greek churches, and in the Romish church in exact proportion as Germanic and poetical influences have been repressed; that is, in proportion as the hereditary Christian doctrine has been kept pure from modern innovations.]

[Footnote 15: In a tract republished from the _Northampton Mercury_ Longman, 1853.]

[Footnote 16: The Romans practised fornication at pleasure, and held it ridiculous to blame them. If Paul had claimed authority to hinder them, they might have been greatly exasperated; but they had not the least objection to his denouncing fornication as immoral to Christians. Why not slavery also?]

[Footnote 17: I fear it cannot be denied that the zeal for Christianity which began to arise in our upper classes sixty years ago, was largely prompted by a feeling that its precepts repress all speculations concerning the rights of man. A similar cause now influences despots all over Europe. The _Old_ Testament contains the elements which they dread, and those gave a political creed to our Puritans.]
[Footnote 18: More than one critic flatly denies the fact. It is sufficient for me here to say, that such is the obvious interpretation, and such _historically has been_ the interpretation of various texts,—for instance, 2 Thess. i. 7: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed... in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them _that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel_; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction," &c. Such again is the sense which all popular minds receive and must receive from Heb, x. 25-31.—I am willing to change _teaches_ into _has always been understood to teach_, if my critics think anything is gained by it.]

[Footnote 19: The four monarchies in chapters ii. and vii, are, probably, the Babylonian, the Median, the Persian, the Macedonian. Interpreters however blend the Medes and Persians into one, and then pretend that the Roman empire is _still in existence_.]

[Footnote 20: The first apparent reference is by Micah (vi. 5) a contemporary of Hezekiah; which proves that an account contained in our Book of Numbers was already familiar.]

[Footnote 21: I have had occasion to discuss most of the leading prophecies of the Old Testament in my "Hebrew Monarchy." ]

[Footnote 22: A critic is pleased to call this a mere _suspicion_ of
my own; in so writing, people simply evade my argument. I do not ask
them to adopt my conviction; I merely communicate it as mine, and wish
them to admit that it is _my duty_ to follow my own conviction. It
is with me no mere "suspicion," but a certainty. When they cannot
possibly give, or pretend, any _proof_ that the long discourses of
the fourth gospel have been accurately reported, they ought to be less
supercilious in their claims of unlimited belief. If it is right for
them to follow their judgment on a purely literary question, let them
not carp at me for following mine.]

[Footnote 23: I am told that this defence of John is fanciful. It
satisfies me provisionally; but I do not hold myself bound to satisfy
others, or to explain John's delusiveness.]

[Footnote 24: Phil. ii. 5-8; Rom. xv. 3. The last suggests it was from
the Psalms (viz from Ps. lxix. 9) that Paul learned the _fact_ that
Christ pleased not himself.]

[Footnote 25: Here, again, I have been erroneously understood to say
that there cannot be _any_ internal revelation of _anything_. Internal
truth may be internally communicated, though even so it does not
become authoritative, or justify the receiver in saying to other men,
"Believe, _for_ I guarantee it." But a man who, on the strength of an
internal revelation believes an _external event_ (past, present, or
future,) is not a valid witness of it. Not Paley only, nor Priestley,
but James Martineau also, would disown his pretence to authority;
and the more so, the more imperious his claim that we believe on his word.]

[Footnote 26: This appears in v. 2, "by which ye are saved,—unless ye have believed in vain_" &c. So v. 17-19.]

[Footnote 27: 1 Cor. xv. "He rose again the third day _according to the Scriptures_." This must apparently be a reference to Hosea vi. 2, to which the margin of the Bible refers. There is no other place in the existing Old Testament from which we can imagine him to have elicited the rising _on the third day_. Some refer to the type of Jonah. Either of the two suggests how marvellously weak a proof satiated him.]

[Footnote 28: Such is the most legitimate translation. That in the received version is barely a possible meaning. There is no such distinction of prepositions as _in_ and _by_ in this passage.]

CHAPTER VI.

HISTORY DISCOVERED TO BE NO PART OF RELIGION.

After renouncing any "Canon of Scripture" or Sacred Letter at the end of my fourth period, I had been forced to abandon all "Second-hand Faith" by the end of my fifth. If asked _why_ I believed this or that,
I could no longer say, "Because Peter, or Paul, or John believed,
and I may thoroughly trust that they cannot mistake." The question now
pressed hard, whether this was equivalent to renouncing Christianity.

Undoubtedly, my positive belief in its miracles had evaporated; but
I had not arrived at a positive dis-belief. I still felt the actual
benefits and comparative excellencies of this religion too remarkable
a phenomenon to be scored for defect of proof. In Morals likewise
it happens, that the ablest practical expounders of truth may make
strange blunders as to the foundations and ground of belief: why was
this impossible as to the apostles? Meanwhile, it did begin to appear
to myself remarkable, that I continued to love and have pleasure in so
much that I certainly disbelieved. I perused a chapter of Paul or of
Luke, or some verses of a hymn, and although they appeared to me to
abound with error, I found satisfaction and profit in them. Why
was this? was it all fond prejudice,—an absurd clinging to old
associations?

A little self-examination enabled me to reply, that it was no
ill-grounded feeling or ghost of past opinions; but that my religion
always had been, and still was, a _state of sentiment_ toward God, far
less dependent on articles of a creed, than once I had unhesitatingly
believed. The Bible is pervaded by a sentiment,[1] which is implied
everywhere,—viz. _the intimate sympathy of the Pure and Perfect God
with the heart of each faithful worshipper_. This is that which is
wanting in Greek philosophers, English Deists, German Pantheists, and
all formalists. This is that which so often edifies me in Christian
writers and speakers, when I ever so much disbelieve the letter of
their sentences. Accordingly, though I saw more and more of moral and
spiritual imperfection in the Bible, I by no means ceased to regard it
as a quarry whence I might dig precious metal, though the ore needed a
refining analysis: and I regarded this as the truest essence and most
vital point in Christianity,—to sympathize with the great souls from
whom its spiritual eminence has flowed;—to love, to hope, to rejoice,
to trust with them;—and _not_, to form the same interpretations of an
ancient book and to take the same views of critical argument.

My historical conception of Jesus had so gradually melted into
dimness, that he had receded out of my practical religion, I knew not
exactly when I believe that I must have disused any distinct prayers
to him, from a growing opinion that he ought not to be the _object_ of
worship, but only the _way_ by whom we approach to the Father; and
as in fact we need no such “way” at all, this was (in the result) a
change from practical Ditheism to pure Theism. His “mediation” was to
me always a mere name, and, as I believe, would otherwise have been
mischievous.[2]—Simultaneously a great uncertainty had grown on me,
how much of the discourses put into the mouth of Jesus was really
uttered by him; so that I had in no small measure to form him anew to
my imagination.

But if religion is addressed to, and must be judged by, our moral
faculties, how could I believe in that painful and gratuitous
personality,—The Devil?—He also had become a waning phantom to
me, perhaps from the time that I saw the demoniacal miracles to be
fictions, and still more when proofs of manifold mistake in the New Testament rose on me. This however took a solid form of positive _disbelief_, when I investigated the history of the doctrine.--I forget exactly in what stage. For it is manifest, that the old Hebrews believed only in evil spirits sent _by God_ to do _his bidding_, and had no idea of a rebellious Spirit that rivalled God. That idea was first imbibed in the Babylonish captivity, and apparently therefore must have been adopted from the Persian Ahriman, or from the "Melek Taous," the "Sheitan" still honoured by the Yezidi with mysterious fear. That _the serpent_ in the early part of Genesis denoted the same Satan, is probable enough; but this only goes to show, that that narrative is a legend imported from farther East; since it is certain that the subsequent Hebrew literature has no trace of such an Ahriman. The Book of Tobit and its demon show how wise in these matters the exiles in Nineveh were beginning to be. The Book of Daniel manifests, that by the time of Antiochus Epiphanes the Jews had learned each nation to have its guardian spirit, good or evil; and that the fates of nations depend on the invisible conflict of these tutelary powers. In Paul the same idea is strongly brought out. Satan is the prince of the power of the air; with principalities and powers beneath him; over all of whom Christ won the victory on his cross. In the Apocalypse we read the Oriental doctrine of the "_seven angels_ who stand before God." As the Christian tenet thus rose among the Jews from their contact with Eastern superstition, and was propagated and expanded while prophecy was mute, it cannot be ascribed to "divine supernatural revelation" as the source. The ground of it is dearly seen in infant speculations on the cause of moral evil and of national calamities.
Thus Christ and the Devil, the two poles of Christendom, had faded away out of my spiritual vision; there were left the more vividly, God and Man. Yet I had not finally renounced the _possibility_, that Jesus might have had a divine mission to stimulate all our spiritual faculties, and to guarantee to us a future state of existence. The abstract arguments for the immortality of the soul had always appeared to me vain trifling; and I was deeply convinced that nothing could _assure_ us of a future state but a divine communication. In what mode this might be made, I could not say _a priori_: might not this really be the great purport of Messiahship? was not this, if any, a worthy ground for a divine interference? On the contrary, to heal the sick did not seem at all an adequate motive for a miracle; else, why not the sick of our own day? Credulity had exaggerated, and had represented Jesus to have wrought miracles: but that did not wholly _disprove_ the miracle of resurrection (whether bodily or of whatever kind), said to have been wrought by God _upon_ him, and of which so very intense a belief so remarkably propagated itself. Paul indeed believed it[3] from prophecy; and, as we see this to be a delusion, resting on Rabbinical interpretations, we may perhaps _account_ thus for the belief of the early church, without in any way admitting the fact.--Here, however, I found I had the clue to my only remaining discussion, the primitive Jewish controversy. Let us step back to an earlier stage than John's or Paul's or Peter's doctrine. We cannot doubt that Jesus claimed to be Messiah: what then was Messiah to be? and, did Jesus (though misrepresented by his disciples) truly fulfil his own claims?
The really Messianic prophecies appeared to me to be far fewer than is commonly supposed. I found such in the 9th and 11th of Isaiah, the 5th of Micah, the 9th of Zechariah, in the 72nd Psalm, in the 37th of Ezekiel, and, as I supposed, in the 50th and 53rd of Isaiah. To these nothing of moment could be certainly added; for the passage in Dan. ix. is ill-translated in the English version, and I had already concluded that the Book of Daniel is a spurious fabrication. From Micah and Ezekiel it appeared, that Messiah was to come from Bethlehem and either be David himself, or a spiritual David: from Isaiah it is shown that he is a rod out of the stem of Jesse.--It is true, I found no proof that Jesus did come from Bethlehem or from the stock of David; for the tales in Matthew and Luke refute one another, and have clearly been generated by a desire to verify the prophecy. But genealogies for or against Messiahship seemed to me a mean argument; and the fact of the prophets demanding a carnal descent in Messiah struck me as a worse objection than that Jesus had not got it.--if this could be ever proved. The Messiah of Micah, however, was not Jesus; for he was to deliver Israel from _the Assyrians_, and his whole description is literally warlike. Micah, writing when the name of Sennacherib was terrible, conceived of a powerful monarch on the throne of David who was to subdue him: but as this prophecy was not verified, the imaginary object of it was looked for as "Messiah,"

even after the disappearance of the formidable Assyrian power. This undeniable vanity of Micah's prophecy extends itself also to that in the 9th chapter of his contemporary Isaiah,--if indeed that splendid passage did not really point at the child Hezekiah. Waiving this doubt, it is at any rate clear that the marvellous child on the throne
of David was to break the yoke of the oppressive Assyrian; and none of
the circumstantials are at all appropriate to the historical Jesus.

In the 37th of Ezekiel the (new) David is to gather Judah and Israel
"from the heathen whither they be gone" and to "make them one nation
_in the land, on the mountains of Israel_:" and Jehovah adds, that
they shall "dwell in the land _which I gave unto Jacob my servant,
wherein your fathers dwelt_: and they shall dwell therein, they and
their children and their children's children for ever: and my servant
David shall be their prince for ever." It is trifling to pretend that
_the land promised to Jacob, and in which the old Jews dwelt_, was
a spiritual, and not the literal Palestine; and therefore it is
impossible to make out that Jesus has fulfilled any part of this
representation. The description however that follows (Ezekiel xl.
&c.) of the new city and temple, with the sacrifices offered by
"the priests the Levites, of the seed of Zadok," and the gate of the
sanctuary for the prince (xliv. 3), and his elaborate account of
the borders of the land (xlviii. 13-23), place the earnestness of
Ezekiel's literalism in still clearer light.

The 72nd Psalm, by the splendour of its predictions concerning the
grandeur of some future king of Judah, earns the title of Messianic,
_because_ it was never fulfilled by any historical king. But it is
equally certain, that it has had no appreciable fulfilment in Jesus.

But what of the 11th of Isaiah? Its portraiture is not so much that of
a king, as of a prophet endowed with superhuman power. "He shall smite
the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips
he shall slay the wicked." A Paradisiacal state is to follow.--This
general description _may_ be verified by Jesus _hereafter_; but we
have no manifestation, which enables us to call the fulfilment a fact.
Indeed, the latter part of the prophecy is out of place for a time so
late as the reign of Augustus; which forcibly denotes that Isaiah was
predicting only that which was his immediate political aspiration: for
in this great day of Messiah, Jehovah is to gather back his dispersed
people from Assyria, Egypt, and other parts; he is _to reconcile Judah
and Ephraim_, (who had been perfectly reconciled centuries before
Jesus was born,) and as a result of this Messianic glory, the people
of Israel "shall fly upon the shoulders of the _Philistines_ towards
the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay
their hand on _Edom_ and _Moab_, and the children of _Ammon_ shall
obey them." But Philistines, Moab and Ammon, were distinctions
entirely lost before the Christian era.--Finally, the Red Sea is to be
once more passed miraculously by the Israelites, returning (as would
seem) to their fathers' soil. Take all these particulars together,
and the prophecy is neither fulfilled in the past nor possible to be
fulfilled in the future.

The prophecy which we know as Zechariah ix.-xi. is believed to be
really from a prophet of uncertain name, contemporaneous with Isaiah.
It was written while Ephraim was still a people, i.e. before the
capture of Samaria by Shalmanezer; and xi. 1-3 appears to howl over
the recent devastations of Tiglathpilezer. The prophecy is throughout
full of the politics of that day. No part of it has the most remote or imaginable similarity to the historical life of Jesus, except that he once rode into Jerusalem on an ass; a deed which cannot have been peculiar to him, and which Jesus moreover appears to have planned with the express purpose of assimilating himself to the lowly king here described. Yet such an isolated act is surely a carnal and beggarly fulfilment. To ride on an ass is no mark of humility in those who must ordinarily go on foot. The prophet clearly means that the righteous king is not to ride on a warhorse and trust in cavalry, as Solomon and the Egyptians, (see Ps. xx. 7. Is. xxxi. 1-3, xxx. 16,) but is to imitate the lowliness of David and the old judges, who rode on young asses; and is to be a lover of peace.

Chapters 50 and 53 of the pseudo-Isaiah remained; which contain many phrases so aptly descriptive of the sufferings of Christ, and so closely knit up with our earliest devotional associations, that they were the very last link of my chain that snapt. Still, I could not conceal from myself, that no exactness in this prophecy, however singular, could avail to make out that Jesus was the Messiah of Hezekiah's prophets. There must be _some_ explanation; and if I did not see it, that must probably arise from prejudice and habit.—In order therefore to gain freshness, I resolved to peruse the entire prophecy of the pseudo-Isaiah in Lowth's version, from ch. xl. onward, at a single sitting.

This prophet writes from Babylon, and has his vision full of the approaching restoration of his people by Cyrus, whom he addresses by
name. In ch. xliii. he introduces to us an eminent and "chosen
servant of God," whom he invests with all the evangelical virtues, and
declares that he is to be a light to the Gentiles. In ch. xliv. (v.
1--also v. 21) he is named as "_Jacob_ my servant, and _Israel_ whom
I have chosen." The appellations recur in xlv. 4: and in a far more
striking passage, xlix. 1-12, which is eminently Messianic to the
Christian ear, _except_ that in v. 3, the speaker distinctly declares
himself to be (not Messiah, but) Israel. The same speaker continues in
ch. l., which is equally Messianic in sound. In ch. lii. the prophet
speaks _of_ him, (vv. 13-15) but the subject of the chapter is
_restoration from Babylon_; and from this he runs on into the
celebrated ch. liii.

It is essential to understand the _same_ "elect servant" all along.

He is many times called Israel, and is often addressed in a tone quite
inapplicable to Messiah, viz. as one needing salvation himself; so in
ch. xliii. Yet in ch. xlix. this elect Israel is distinguished from
Jacob and Israel at large: thus there is an entanglement. Who can be
called on to risk his eternal hopes on his skilful unknotting of it?

It appeared however to me most probable, that as our high Churchmen
distinguish "mother Church" from the individuals who compose the
Church, so the "Israel" of this prophecy is the idealizing of
the Jewish Church; which I understood to be a current Jewish
interpretation. The figure perhaps embarrasses us, only because of the
male sex attributed to the ideal servant of God; for when "Zion"
is spoken of by the same prophet in the same way, no one finds
difficulty, or imagines that a female person of superhuman birth and
qualities must be intended.

It still remained strange that in Isaiah liii. and Pss. xxii. and lxix. there should be _coincidences_ so close with the sufferings of Jesus: but I reflected, that I had no proof that the narrative had not been strained by credulity,[6] to bring it into artificial agreement with these imagined predictions of his death. And herewith my last argument in favour of views for which I once would have laid down my life, seemed to be spent.

Nor only so: but I now reflected that the falsity of the prophecy in Dan. vii. (where the coming of "a Son of Man" to sit in universal judgment follows immediately upon the break-up of the Syrian monarchy,)--to say nothing of the general proof of the spuriousness of the whole Book of Daniel.--ought perhaps long ago to have been seen by me as of more cardinal importance. For if we believe anything at all about the discourses of Christ, we cannot doubt that he selected "_Son of Man_" as his favourite title; which admits no interpretation so satisfactory, as, that he tacitly refers to the seventh chapter of Daniel, and virtually bases his pretensions upon it. On the whole, it was no longer defect of proof Which presented itself, but positive disproof of the primitive and fundamental claim.

I could not for a moment allow weight to the topic, that "it is dangerous to _dis_believe wrongly;" for I felt, and had always felt, that it gave a premium to the most boastful and tyrannizing
superstition:--as if it were not equally dangerous to _believe_
wrongly! Nevertheless, I tried to plead for farther delay, by asking:
Is not the subject too vast for me to decide upon?--Think how many
wise and good men have fully examined, and have come to a contrary
conclusion. What a grasp of knowledge and experience of the human mind
it requires! Perhaps too I have unawares been carried away by a love
of novelty, which I have mistaken for a love of truth.

But the argument recoiled upon me. Have I not been 25 years a reader
of the Bible? have I not full 18 years been a student of Theology?
have I not employed 7 of the best years of my life, with ample
leisure, in this very investigation;--without any intelligible earthly
bribe to carry me to my present conclusion, against all my interests,
all my prejudices and all my education? There are many far more
learned men than I,--many men of greater power of mind; but there are
also a hundred times as many who are my inferiors; and if I have been
seven years labouring in vain to solve this vast literary problem, it
is an extreme absurdity to imagine that the solving of it is imposed
by God on the whole human race. Let me renounce my little learning;
let me be as the poor and simple: what then follows? Why, then, _still
the same thing follows_, that difficult literary problems concerning
distant history cannot afford any essential part of my religion.

It is with hundreds or thousands a favourite idea, that "they have an
inward witness of the truth of (_the historical and outward facts of_) Christianiry." Perhaps the statement would bring its own refutation
to them, if they would express it clearly. Suppose a biographer of Sir
Isaac Newton, after narrating his sublime discoveries and ably stating some of his most remarkable doctrines, to add, that Sir Isaac was a great magician, and had been used to raise spirits by his arts, and finally was himself carried up to heaven one night, while he was gazing at the moon; and that this event had been foretold by Merlin:--it would surely be the height of absurdity to dilate on the truth of the Newtonian theory as "the moral evidence" of the truth of the miracles and prophecy. Yet this is what those do, who adduce the excellence of the precepts and spirituality of the general doctrine of the New Testament, as the "moral evidence" of its miracles and of its fulfilling the Messianic prophecies. But for the ambiguity of the word _doctrine_, probably such confusion of thought would have been impossible. "Doctrines" are either spiritual truths, or are statements of external history. Of the former we may have an inward witness:--that is their proper evidence:--but the latter must depend upon adequate testimony and various kinds of criticism.

How quickly might I have come to my conclusion,--how much weary thought and useless labour might I have spared,--if at an earlier time this simple truth had been pressed upon me, that since the religious faculties of the poor and half-educated cannot investigate Historical and Literary questions, _therefore_ these questions cannot constitute an essential part of Religion.--But perhaps I could not have gained this result by any abstract act of thought, from want of freedom to think: and there are advantages also in expanding slowly under great pressure, if one _can_ expand, and is not crushed by it.
I felt no convulsion of mind, no emptiness of soul, no inward practical change: but I knew that it would be said, this was only because the force of the old influence was as yet unspent, and that a gradual declension in the vitality of my religion must ensue. More than eight years have since past, and I feel I have now a right to contradict that statement. To any "Evangelical" I have a right to say, that while he has a _single_, I have a _double_ experience; and I know, that the spiritual fruits which he values, have no connection whatever with the complicated and elaborate creed, which his school imagines, and I once imagined, to be the roots out of which they are fed. That they depend directly on _the heart's belief in the sympathy of God with individual man_,[7] I am well assured: but that doctrine does not rest upon the Bible or upon Christianity; for it is a postulate, from which every Christian advocate is forced to start. If it be denied, he cannot take a step forward in his argument. He talks to men about Sin and Judgment to come, and the need of Salvation, and so proceeds to the Saviour. But his very first step,--the idea of Sin,--_assumes_ that God concerns himself with our actions, words, thoughts; _assumes_ therefore that sympathy of God with every man, which (it seems) can only be known by an infallible Bible.

I know that many Evangelicals will reply, that I never can have had "the true" faith; else I could never have lost it: and as for my not being conscious of spiritual change, they will accept this as confirming their assertion. Undoubtedly I cannot prove that I ever felt as they now feel: perhaps they love their present opinions _more than_ truth, and are careless to examine and verify them; with that
I claim no fellowship. But there are Christians, and Evangelical
Christians, of another stamp, who love their creed, only because
they believe it to be true, but love truth, as such, and truthfulness,
more than any creed: with these I claim fellowship. Their love to God
and man, their allegiance to righteousness and true holiness, will
not be in suspense and liable to be overturned by new discoveries in
geology and in ancient inscriptions, or by improved criticism of texts
and of history, nor have they any imaginable interest in thwarting
the advance of scholarship. It is strange indeed to undervalue that
Faith, which alone is purely moral and spiritual, alone rests on
a basis that cannot be shaken, alone lifts the possessor above the
conflicts of erudition, and makes it impossible for him to fear the
increase of knowledge.

I fully expected that reviewers and opponents from the evangelical
school would laboriously insinuate or assert, that I never was
a Christian and do not understand anything about Christianity
spiritually. My expectations have been more than fulfilled; and the
course which my assailants have taken leads me to add some topics to
the last paragraph. I say then, that if I had been slain at the age of
twenty-seven, when I was chased by a mob of infuriated Mussulmans
for selling New Testaments, they would have trumpeted me as an
eminent saint and martyr. I add, that many circumstances within easy
possibility might have led to my being engaged as an official teacher
of a congregation at the usual age, which would in all probability
have arrested my intellectual development, and have stereotyped my
creed for many a long year; and then also they would have acknowledged
me as a Christian. A little more stupidity, a little more worldliness, a little more mental dishonesty in me, or perhaps a little more kindness and management in others, would have kept me in my old state, which was acknowledged and would still be acknowledged as Christian. To try to disown me now, is an impotent superciliousness.

At the same time, I confess to several moral changes, as the result of this change in my creed, the principal of which are the following.

1. I have found that my old belief narrowed my affections. It taught me to bestow peculiar love on "the people of God," and it assigned an intellectual creed as one essential mark of this people. That creed may be made more or less stringent; but when driven to its minimum, it includes a recognition of the historical proposition, that "the Jewish teacher Jesus fulfilled the conditions requisite to constitute him the Messiah of the ancient Hebrew prophets." This proposition has been rejected by very many thoughtful and sincere men in England, and by tens of thousands in France, Germany, Italy, Spain. To judge rightly about it, is necessarily a problem of literary criticism; which has both to interpret the Old Scriptures and to establish how much of the biography of Jesus in the New is credible. To judge wrongly about it, may prove one to be a bad critic but not a less good and less pious man. Yet my old creed enacted an affirmative result of this historical inquiry, as a test of one's spiritual state, and ordered me to think harshly of men like Marcus Aurelius and Lessing, because they did not adopt the conclusion which the professedly uncritical have established. It possessed me with a general gloom concerning
Mohammedans and Pagans, and involved the whole course of history and prospects of futurity in a painful darkness from which I am relieved.

2. Its theory was one of selfishness. That is, it inculcated that my first business must be, to save my soul from future punishment, and to attain future happiness; and it bade me to chide myself, when I thought of nothing but about doing present duty and blessing God for present enjoyment.

In point of fact, I never did look much to futurity, nor even in prospect of death could attain to any vivid anticipations or desires, much less was troubled with fears. The evil which I suffered from my theory, was not (I believe) that it really made me selfish--other influences of it were too powerful:--but it taught me to blame myself for unbelief, because I was not sufficiently absorbed in the contemplation of my vast personal expectations. I certainly here feel myself delivered from the danger of factitious sin.

The selfish and self-righteous texts come principally from the three first gospels, and are greatly counteracted by the deeper spirituality of the apostolic epistles. I therefore by no means charge this tendency indiscriminately on the New Testament.

3. It laid down that "the time is short; THE LORD IS AT HAND: the things of this world pass away, and deserve not our affections: the only thing worth spending one's energies on, is, the forwarding of
men's salvation." It bade me "watch perpetually, not knowing whether my Lord would return at cockcrowing or at midday."

While I believed this, (which, however disagreeable to modern Christians, is the clear doctrine of the New Testament,) I acted an eccentric and unprofitable part. From it I was saved against my will, and forced into a course in which the doctrine, having been laid to sleep, awoke only now and then to reproach and harass me for my unfaithfulness to it. This doctrine it is, which makes so many spiritual persons lend active or passive aid to uphold abuses and perpetuate mischief in every department of human life. Those who stick closest to the Scripture do not shrink from saying, that "it is not worth while trying to mend the world," and stigmatize as "political and worldly" such as pursue an opposite course. Undoubtedly, if we are to expect our Master at cockcrowing, we shall not study the permanent improvement of this transitory scene. To teach the certain speedy destruction of earthly things, _as the New Testament does_, is to cut the sinews of all earthly progress; to declare war against Intellect and Imagination, against Industrial and Social advancement.

There was a time when I was distressed at being unable to avoid exultation in the worldly greatness of England. My heart would, in spite, of me, swell with something of pride, when a Turk or Arab asked what was my country: I then used to confess to God this pride as a sin. I still see that that was a legitimate deduction from the Scripture. "The glory of this world passeth away," and I had professed to be "dead with Christ" to it. The difference is this. I am now as
“dead” as then to all of it which my conscience discerns to be sinful, but I have not to torment myself in a (fundamentally ascetic) struggle against innocent and healthy impulses. I now, with deliberate approval, “love the world and the things of the world.” I can feel patriotism, and take the deepest interest in the future prospects of nations, and no longer reproach myself. Yet this is quite consistent with feeling the spiritual interests of men to be of all incomparably the highest.

Modern religionists profess to be disciples of Christ, and talk high of the perfect morality of the New Testament, when they certainly do not submit their understanding to it, and are no more like to the first disciples than bishops are like the penniless apostles. One critic tells me that _I know_ that the above is _not_ the true interpretation of the apostolic doctrine. Assuredly I am aware that we may rebuke “the world” and “worldliness,” in a legitimate and modified sense, as being the system of _selfishness_: true,—and I have avowed this in another work; but it does not follow that Jesus and the apostles did not go farther: and manifestly they did. The true disciple, who would be perfect as his Master, was indeed ordered to sell all, give to the poor and follow him; and when that severity was relaxed by good sense, it was still taught that things which lasted to the other side of the grave alone deserved our affection or our exertion. If any person thinks me ignorant of the Scriptures for being of this judgment, let him so think; but to deny that I am sincere in my avowal, is a very needless insolence.
4. I am sensible how heavy a clog on the exercise of my judgment has been taken off from me, since I unlearned that Bibliolatry, which I am disposed to call the greatest religious evil of England.

Authority has a place in religious teaching, as in education, but it is provisional and transitory. Its chief use is to guide action, and assist the formation of habits, before the judgment is ripe. As applied to mere opinion, its sole function is to guide inquiry. So long as an opinion is received on authority only, it works no inward process upon us: yet the promulgation of it by authority, is not therefore always useless, since the prominence thus given to it may be a most important stimulus to thought. While the mind is inactive or weak, it will not wish to throw off the yoke of authority: but as soon as it begins to discern error in the standard proposed to it, we have the mark of incipient original thought, which is the thing so valuable and so difficult to elicit; and which authority is apt to crush. An intelligent pupil seldom or never gives too little weight to the opinion of his teacher: a wise teacher will never repress the free action of his pupils' minds, even when they begin to question his results. "Forbidding to think" is a still more fatal tyranny than "forbidding to marry:" it paralyzes all the moral powers.

In former days, if any moral question came before me, I was always apt to turn it into the mere lawyerlike exercise of searching and interpreting my written code. Thus, in reading how Henry the Eighth treated his first queen, I thought over Scripture texts in order to
judge whether he was right, and if I could so get a solution, I left
my own moral powers unexercised. All Protestants see, how mischievous
it is to a Romanist lady to have a directing priest, whom she every
day consults about everything; so as to lay her own judgment to
sleep. We readily understand, that in the extreme case such women may
gradually lose all perception of right and wrong, and become a mere
machine in the hands of her director. But the Protestant principle of
accepting the Bible as the absolute law, acts towards the same end;
and only fails of doing the same amount of mischief, because a book
can never so completely answer all the questions asked of it, as a
living priest can. The Protestantism which pities those as "without
chart and compass" who acknowledge no infallible written code, can
mean nothing else, than that "the less occasion we have to trust our
moral powers, the better;" that is, it represents it as of all things
most desirable to be able to benumb conscience by disuse, under the
guidance of a mind from without. Those who teach this need not marvel
to see their pupils become Romanists.

But Bibliolatry not only paralyzes the moral sense; it also corrupts
the intellect, and introduces a crooked logic, by setting men to the
duty of extracting absolute harmony out of discordant materials. All
are familiar with the subtlety of lawyers, whose task it is to elicit
a single sense out of a heap of contradictory statutes. In their case
such subtlety may indeed excite in us impatience or contempt; but
we forbear to condemn them, when it is pleaded that practical
convenience, not truth, is their avowed end. In the case of
theological ingenuity, where truth is the professed and sacred
object, a graver judgment is called for. When the Biblical interpreter struggles to reconcile contradictions, or to prove that wrong is right, merely because he is bound to maintain the perfection of the Bible; when to this end he condescends to sophistry and pettifogging evasions; it is difficult to avoid feeling disgust as well as grief.

Some good people are secretly conscious that the Bible is not an infallible book; but they dread the consequences of proclaiming this "to the vulgar." Alas! and have they measured the evils which the fostering of this lie is producing in the minds, not of the educated only, but emphatically of the ministers of religion?

Many who call themselves Christian preachers busily undermine moral sentiment, by telling their hearers, that if they do not believe the Bible (or the Church), they can have no firm religion or morality, and will have no reason to give against following brutal appetite.

This doctrine it is, that so often makes men atheists in Spain, and profligates in England, as soon as they unlearn the national creed: and the school which have done the mischief, moralize over the wickedness of human nature when it comes to pass instead of blaming the falsehood which they have themselves inculcated.

[Footnote 1: A critic presses me with the question, how I can doubt that doctrine so holy _comes from God_. He professes to review my book on the Soul; yet, apparently became he himself _dis_believes the doctrine of the Holy Spirit taught alike in the Psalms and Prophets and in the New Testament,—he cannot help forgetting that I profess to believe it. He is not singular in his dulness. That the sentiment
above is necessarily independent of Biblical _authority_, see p. 133.]

[Footnote 2: I do not here enlarge on this, as it is discussed in my treatise on The Soul 2nd edition, p. 76, or 3rd edition, p. 52.]

[Footnote 3: 1 Cor. xv. 3. Compare Acts xii. 33, 34, 35 also Acts ii. 27, 34.]

[Footnote 4: I need not except the _potter_ and the thirty pieces of silver (Zech. xi. 13), for the _potter_ is a mere absurd error of text or translation. The Septuagint has the _foundry_, De Wette has the _treasury_, with whom Hitzig and Ewald agree. So Winer (Simoni's Lexicon).]

[Footnote 5: Some of my critics are very angry with me for saying this; but Matthew himself (xxi. 4) almost says it:--"_All this was done, that it might be fulfilled_," &c. Do my critics mean to tell me that Jesus _was not aware_ of the prophecy? or if Jesus did know of the prophecy, will they tell me _that he was not designing_ to fulfil it? I feel such carping to be little short of hypocrisy.]

[Footnote 6: Apparently on these words of mine, a reviewer builds up the inference that I regard "the Evangelical narrative as a mythical fancy-piece imitated from David and Isaiah." I feel this to be a great caricature. My words are carefully limited to a few petty details of
one part of the narrative.] [Footnote 7: I did not calculate that
any assailant would be so absurd as to lecture me on the topic, that
God has no sympathy with our sins and follies. Of course what I
mean is, that he has complacency in our moral perfection. See p. 125
above.]

[Footnote 8: This was at Aintab, in the north of Syria. One of my
companions was caught by the mob and beaten (as they probably thought)
to death. But he recovered very similarly to Paul, in Acts xiv. 20,
after long lying senseless.]

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE MORAL PERFECTION OF JESUS.

Let no reader peruse this chapter, who is not willing to enter into
a discussion, as free and unshrinking, concerning the personal
evellencies and conduct of Jesus, as that of Mr. Grote concerning
Socrates. I have hitherto met with most absurd rebuffs for my
scrupulosity. One critic names me as a principal leader in a school
which extols and glorifies the character of Jesus; after which
he proceeds to reproach me with inconsistency, and to insinuate
dishonesty. Another expresses himself as deeply wounded that, in
renouncing the belief that Jesus is more than man, I suggest to
compare him to a clergyman whom I mentioned as eminently holy and
perfect in the picture of a partial biographer; such a comparison
is resented with vivid indignation, as a blurring out of something "unspeakably painful." Many have murmured that I do _not_ come forward to extol the excellencies of Jesus, but appear to prefer Paul. More than one taunt me with an inability to justify my insinuations that Jesus, after all, was not really perfect; one is "extremely disappointed" that I have not attacked him; in short, it is manifest that many would much rather have me say out my whole heart, than withhold anything. I therefore give fair warning to all, not to read any farther, or else to blame themselves if I inflict on them "unspeakable pain," by differing from their judgment of a historical or unhistorical character. As for those who confound my tenderness with hypocrisy and conscious weakness, if they trust themselves to read to the end, I think they will abandon that fancy.

But how am I brought into this topic? It is because, after my mind had reached the stage narrated in the last chapter, I fell in with a new doctrine among the Unitarians,—that the evidence of Christianity is essentially popular and spiritual, consisting in _the Life of Christ_, who is a perfect man and the absolute moral image of God,—therefore fitly called "God manifest in the flesh," and, as such, Moral Head of the human race. Since this view was held in conjunction with those at which I had arrived myself concerning miracles, prophecy, the untrustworthiness of Scripture as to details, and the essential unreasonableness of imposing dogmatic propositions as a creed, I had to consider why I could not adopt such a modification, or (as it appeared to me) reconstruction, of Christianity; and I gave reasons in the first edition of this book, which, avoiding direct treatment of
the character of Jesus, seemed to me adequate on the opposite side.

My argument was reviewed by a friend, who presently published the review with his name, replying to my remarks on this scheme. I thus find myself in public and avowed controversy with one who is endowed with talents, accomplishments, and genius, to which I have no pretensions. The challenge has certainly come from myself. Trusting to the goodness of my cause, I have ventured it into an unequal combat; and from a consciousness of my admired friend's high superiority, I do feel a little abashed at being brought face to face against him. But possibly the less said to the public on these personal matters, the better.

I have to give reasons why I cannot adopt that modified scheme of Christianity which is defended and adorned by James Martineau; according to which it is maintained that though the Gospel Narratives are not to be trusted in detail, there can yet be no reasonable doubt _what_ Jesus _was_; for this is elicited by a "higher moral criticism," which (it is remarked) I neglect. In this theory, Jesus is avowed to be a man born like other men; to be liable to error, and (at least in some important respects) mistaken. Perhaps no general proposition is to be accepted _merely_ on the word of Jesus; in particular, he misinterpreted the Hebrew prophecies. "He was not _less_ than the Hebrew Messiah, but _more_." No moral charge is established against him, until it is shown, that in applying the old prophecies to himself, he was _conscious_ that they did not fit. His error was one of mere fallibility in matters of intellectual and
literary estimate. On the other hand, Jesus had an infallible moral perception, which reveals itself to the true-hearted reader, and is testified by the common consciousness of Christendom. It has pleased the Creator to give us one sun in the heavens, and one Divine soul in history, in order to correct the aberrations of our individuality, and unite all mankind into one family of God. Jesus is to be presumed to be perfect until he is shown to be imperfect. Faith in Jesus, is not reception of propositions, but reverence for a person; yet this is _not_ the condition of salvation or essential to the Divine favour.

Such is the scheme, abridged from the ample discussion of my eloquent friend. In reasoning against it, my arguments will, to a certain extent, be those of an orthodox Trinitarian;[1] since we might both maintain that the belief in the absolute divine morality of Jesus is not tenable, when the belief in _every other_ divine and superhuman quality is denied. Should I have any "orthodox" reader, my arguments may shock his feelings less, if he keeps this in view. In fact, the same action or word in Jesus may be consistent or inconsistent with moral perfection, according to the previous assumptions concerning his person.

I. My friend has attributed to me a "prosaic and embittered view of human nature," apparently because I have a very intense belief of Man's essential imperfection. To me, I confess, it is almost a first principle of thought, that as all sorts of perfection coexist in God, so is no sort of perfection possible to man. I do not know how for a moment to imagine an Omniscient Being who is not Almighty, or
an Almighty who is not All-Righteous. So neither do I know how to conceive of Perfect Holiness anywhere but in the Blessed and only Potentate.

Man is finite and crippled on all sides; and frailty in one kind causes frailty in another. Deficient power causes deficient knowledge, deficient knowledge betrays him into false opinion, and entangles him into false positions. It may be a defect of my imagination, but I do not feel that it implies any bitterness, that even in the case of one who abides in primitive lowliness, to attain even negatively an absolutely pure goodness seems to me impossible; and much more, to exhaust all goodness, and become a single Model-Man, unparalleled, incomparable, a standard for all other moral excellence. Especially I cannot conceive of any human person rising out of obscurity, and influencing the history of the world, unless there be in him forces of great intensity, the harmonizing of which is a vast and painful problem. Every man has to subdue himself first, before he preaches to his fellows; and he encounters many a fall and many a wound in winning his own victory. And as talents are various, so do moral natures vary, each having its own weak and strong side; and that one man should grasp into his single self the highest perfection of every moral kind, is to me at least as incredible as that one should preoccupy and exhaust all intellectual greatness. I feel the prodigy to be so peculiar, that I must necessarily wait until it is overwhelmingly proved, before I admit it. No one can without unreason urge me to believe, on any but the most irrefutable arguments, that a man, finite in every other respect, is infinite in moral perfection.
My friend is "at a loss to conceive in what way a superhuman physical
nature could tend in the least degree to render moral perfection more
credible." But I think he will see, that it would entirely obviate the
argument just stated, which, from the known frailty of human nature
in general, deduced the indubitable imperfection of an individual. The
reply is then obvious and decisive: "This individual is _not_ a mere
man; his origin is wholly exceptional; therefore his moral perfection
may be exceptional; your experience of _man's_ weakness goes for
nothing in his case." If I were already convinced that this person was
a great Unique, separated from all other men by an impassable chasm in
regard to his physical origin, I (for one) should be much readier to
believe that he was Unique and Unapproachable in other respects: for
all God's works have an internal harmony. It could not be for nothing
that this exceptional personage was sent into the world. That he was
intended as head of the human race, in one or more senses, would be
a plausible opinion; nor should I feel any incredulous repugnance
against believing his morality to be if not divinely perfect, yet
separated from that of common men so far, that he might be a God to
us, just as every parent is to a young child.

This view seems to my friend a weakness; be it so. I need not press
it. What I do press, is,--whatever _might_ or might _not_ be conceded
concerning one in human form, but of superhuman origin,--at any
rate, one who is conceded to be, out and out, of the same nature as
ourselves, is to be judged of by our experience of that nature, and is
therefore to be _assumed_ to be variously imperfect, however eminent
and admirable in some respects. And no one is to be called an imaginer of deformity, because he takes for granted that one who is Man has imperfections which were not known to those who compiled memorials of him. To impute to a person, without specific evidence, some definite frailty or fault, barely because he is human, would be a want of good sense; but not so, to have a firm belief that every human being is finite in moral as well as in intellectual greatness.

We have a very imperfect history of the apostle James; and I do not know that I could adduce any fact specifically recorded concerning him in disproof of his absolute moral perfection, if any of his Jerusalem disciples had chosen to set up this as a dogma of religion. Yet no one would blame me, as morose, or indisposed to acknowledge genius and greatness, if I insisted on believing James to be frail and imperfect, while admitting that I knew almost nothing about him. And why?--Singly and surely, because we know him to be _a man_: that suffices. To set up James or John or Daniel as my Model, and my Lord; to be swallowed up in him and press him upon others for a Universal Standard, would be despised as a self-degrading idolatry and resented as an obtrusive favouritism. Now why does not the same equally apply, if the name Jesus is substituted for these? Why, in defect of all other knowledge than the bare fact of his manhood, are we not unhesitatingly to take for granted that he does _not_ exhaust all perfection, and is at best only one among many brethren and equals?

II. My friend, I gather, will reply, "because so many thousands of minds in all Christendom attest the infinite and unapproachable
goodness of Jesus." It therefore follows to consider, what is the weight of this attestation. Manifestly it depends, first of all, on the independence of the witnesses: secondly, on the grounds of their belief. If all those, who confess the moral perfection of Jesus, confess it as the result of unbiassed examination of his character; and if of those acquainted with the narrative, none espouse the opposite side; this would be a striking testimony, not to be despised. But in fact, few indeed of the "witnesses" add any weight at all to the argument. No Trinitarian can doubt that Jesus is morally perfect, without doubting fundamentally every part of his religion. He believes it, _because_ the entire system demands it, and _because_ various texts of Scripture avow it: and this very fact makes it morally impossible for him to enter upon an unbiassed inquiry, whether that character which is drawn for Jesus in the four gospels, is, or is not, one of absolute perfection, deserving to be made an exclusive model for all times and countries. My friend never was a Trinitarian, and seems not to know how this operates; but I can testify, that when I believed in the immaculateness of Christ's character, it was not from an unbiassed criticism, but from the pressure of authority, (the authority of _texts_,) and from the necessity of the doctrine to the scheme of Redemption. Not merely strict Trinitarians, but all who believe in the Atonement, however modified, --all who believe that Jesus will be the future Judge, --_must_ believe in his absolute perfection: hence the fact of their belief is no indication whatever that they believe on the ground which my friend assumes, --viz. an intelligent and unbiassed study of the character itself, as exhibited in the four narratives.
I think we may go farther. We have no reason for thinking that _this_ was the sort of evidence which convinced the apostles themselves, and first teachers of the gospel;--if indeed in the very first years the doctrine was at all conceived of. It cannot be shown that any one believed in the moral perfection of Jesus, who had not already adopted the belief that he was Messiah, and _therefore_ Judge of the human race. My friend makes the pure immaculateness of Jesus (discernible by him in the gospels) his foundation, and deduces _from_ this the quasi-Messiahship: but the opposite order of deduction appears to have been the only one possible in the first age. Take Paul as a specimen. He believed the doctrine in question; but not from reading the four gospels,—for they did not exist. Did he then believe it by hearing Ananias (Acts ix. 17) enter into details concerning the deeds and words of Jesus? I cannot imagine that any wise or thoughtful person would so judge, which after all would be a gratuitous invention. The Acts of the Apostles give us many speeches which set forth the grounds of accepting Jesus as Messiah; but they never press his absolute moral perfection as a fact and a fundamental fact. "He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil," is the utmost that is advanced on this side: prophecy is urged, and his resurrection is asserted, and the inference is drawn that "Jesus is the Christ." Out of this flowed the farther inferences that he was Supreme Judge,—and moreover, was Paschal Lamb, and Sacrifice, and High Priest, and Mediator; and since every one of these characters demanded a belief in his moral perfections, that doctrine also necessarily followed, and was received before our present gospels existed. My friend therefore cannot abash me by the _argumentum ad verecundiam_;
(which to me seems highly out of place in this connexion;) for the
opinion, which is, as to this single point, held by him in common with
the first Christians, was held by them on transcendental reasons which
he totally discards; and all after generations have been confirmed
in the doctrine by Authority, _i.e._ by the weight of texts or church
decisions: both of which he also discards. If I could receive
the doctrine, merely because I dared not to differ from the whole
Christian world, I might aid to swell odium against rejectors, but I
should not strengthen the cause at the bar of reason. I feel therefore
that my friend must not claim Catholicity as on his side. Trinitarians
and Arians are alike useless to his argument: nay, nor can he claim
more than a small fraction of Unitarians; for as many of the them
believe that Jesus is to be the Judge of living and dead (as the late
Dr. Lant Carpenter did) must as _necessarily_ believe his immaculate
perfection as if they were Trinitarians.

The New Testament does not distinctly explain on what grounds this
doctrine was believed; but we may observe that in 1 Peter i. 19 and 2
Cor. v. 21, it is coupled with the Atonement, and in 1 Peter ii. 21,
Romans xv. 3, it seems to be inferred from prophecy. But let us turn
to the original Eleven, who were eye and ear witnesses of Jesus, and
consider on what grounds they can have believed (if we assume that
they did all believe) the absolute moral perfection of Jesus. It is
too ridiculous to imagine then studying the writings of Matthew in
order to obtain conviction,—if any of that school, whom alone I now
address, could admit that written documents were thought of before
the Church outstept the limits of Judea. If the Eleven believed
the doctrine for some transcendental reason,—as by a Supernatural
Revelation, or on account of Prophecy, and to complete the Messiah's
character,—then their attestation is useless to my friend's argument:
will it then gain anything, if we suppose that they _believed_ Jesus
to be perfect, because they _saw_ him to be perfect? To me this would
seem no attestation worth having, but rather a piece of impertinent
ignorance. If I attest that a person whom I have known was an
eminently good man, I command a certain amount of respect to my
opinion, and I do him honour. If I celebrate his good deeds and report
his wise words, I extend his honour still farther. But if I proceed
to assure people, _on the evidence of my personal observation of him_,
that he was immaculate and absolutely perfect, was the pure Moral
Image of God, that he deserves to be made the Exclusive Model of
imitation, and is the standard by which every other man's morality
is to be corrected,—I make myself ridiculous; my panegyrics lose all
weight, and I produce far less conviction than when I praised within
human limitations. I do not know how my friend will look on this
point, (for his judgment on the whole question perplexes me, and the
views which I call _sober_ he names _prosaic_,) but I cannot resist
the conviction that universal common-sense would have rejected the
teaching of the Eleven with contempt, if they had presented, as the
basis of the gospel their _personal testimony_ to the godlike and
unapproachable moral absolutism of Jesus. But even if such a basis
was possible to the Eleven, it was impossible to Paul and Silvanus and
Timothy and Barnabas and Apollos, and the other successful preachers
to the Gentiles. High moral goodness, within human limitations, was
undoubtedly announced as a fact of the life of Jesus; but upon this
followed the supernatural claims, and the argument of prophecy;
without which my friend desires to build up his view,—I have thus
developed why I think he has no right to claim Catholicity for his
judgment. I have risked to be tedious, because I find that when I
speak concisely, I am enormously misapprehended. I close this topic
by observing, that, the great animosity with which my very mild
intimations against the popular view have been met from numerous
quarters, show me that Christians do not allow this subject to be
calmly debated, end have not come to their own conclusion as the
result of a calm debate. And this is amply corroborated by my own
consciousness of the past I never dared, nor could have dared, to
criticize coolly and simply the pretensions of Jesus to be an absolute
model of morality, until I had been delivered from the weight of
authority and miracle, oppressing my critical powers.

III. I have been asserting, that he who believes Jesus to be mere man,
ought at once to believe his moral excellence finite and comparable
to that of other men; and, that our judgment to this effect cannot be
reasonably overborne by the "universal consent" of Christendom.--Thus
far we are dealing _a priori_, which here fully satisfies me: in such
an argument I need no _a posteriori_ evidence to arrive at my own
conclusion. Nevertheless, I am met by taunts and clamour, which are
not meant to be indecent, but which to my feeling are such. My critics
point triumphantly to the four gospels, and demand that I will make a
personal attack on a character which they revere, even when they know
that I cannot do so without giving great offence. Now if any one were
to call my old schoolmaster, or my old parish priest, a perfect and
universal Model, and were to claim that I would entitle him Lord, and
think of him as the only true revelation of God; should I not be
at liberty to say, without disrespect, that “I most emphatically
deprecate such extravagant claims for him”? Would this justify an
outcry, that I will publicly avow _what_ I judge to be his defects of
character, and will _prove_ to all his admirers that he was a sinner
like other men? Such a demand would be thought, I believe, highly
unbecoming and extremely unreasonable. May not my modesty, or my
regard for his memory, or my unwillingness to pain his family,
be accepted as sufficient reasons for silence? or would any one
scoffingly attribute my reluctance to attack him, to my conscious
inability to make good my case against his being “God manifest in
the flesh”? Now what, if one of his admirers had written panegyrical
memorials of him; and his character, therein described, was so
faultless, that a stranger to him was not able to descry any moral
defeat whatever in it? Is such a stranger bound to believe him to be
the Divine Standard of morals, unless he can put his finger on certain
passages of the book which imply weaknesses and faults? And is it
insulting a man, to refuse to worship him? I utterly protest against
every such pretence. As I have an infinitely stronger conviction
that Shakespeare was not in _intellect_ Divinely and Unapproachably
perfect, than that I can certainly point out in him some definite
intellectual defect; as, moreover, I am vastly more sure that Socrates
was _morally_ imperfect, than that I am able to censure him rightly;
so also, a disputant who concedes to me that Jesus is a mere man, has
no right to claim that I will point out some moral flaw in him, or
else acknowledge him to be a Unique Unparalleled Divine Soul. It is
true, I do see defects, and very serious ones, in the character of
Jesus, as drawn by his disciples; but I cannot admit that my right to
disown the pretensions made for him turns on my ability to define his frailties. As long as (in common with my friend) I regard Jesus as a man, so long I hold with _dogmatic_ and _intense conviction_ the inference that he was morally imperfect, and ought not to be held up as unapproachable in goodness; but I have, in comparison, only _a modest_ belief that I am able to show his points of weakness.

While therefore in obedience to this call, which has risen from many quarters, I think it right not to refuse the odious task pressed upon me.--I yet protest that my conclusion does not depend upon it. I might censure Socrates unjustly, or at least without convincing my readers, if I attempted that task; but my failure would not throw a feather's weight into the argument that Socrates was a Divine Unique and universal Model. If I write note what is painful to readers, I beg them to remember that I write with much reluctance, and that it is their own fault if they read.

In approaching this subject, the first difficulty is, to know how much of the four gospels to accept as _fact_. If we could believe the whole, it would be easier to argue; but my friend Martineau (with me) rejects belief of many parts: for instance, he has but a very feeble conviction that Jesus ever spoke the discourses attributed to him in John's gospel. If therefore I were to found upon these some imputation of moral weakness, he would reply, that we are agreed in setting these aside, as untrustworthy. Yet he perseveres in asserting that it is beyond all reasonable question _what_ Jesus _was_; as though proven inaccuracies in all the narratives did not make the results uncertain.
He says that even the poor and uneducated are fully impressed with "the majesty and sanctity" of Christ's mind; as if _this_ were what I am fundamentally denying; and not, only so far as would transcend the known limits of human nature: surely "majesty and sanctity" are not inconsistent with many weaknesses. But our judgment concerning a man's motives, his temper, and his full conquest over self, vanity and impulsive passion, depends on the accurate knowledge of a vast variety of minor points; even the curl of the lip, or the discord of eye and mouth, may change our moral judgment of a man; while, alike to my friend and me it is certain that much of what is stated is untrue. Much moreover of what he holds to be untrue does not seem so to any but to the highly educated. In spite therefore of his able reply, I abide in my opinion that he is unreasonably endeavouring to erect what is essentially a piece of doubtful biography and difficult literary criticism into first-rate religious importance.

I shall however try to pick up a few details which seem, as much as any, to deserve credit, concerning the pretensions, doctrine and conduct of Jesus.

_First_, I believe that he habitually spoke of himself by the title "_Son of Man_"--a fact which pervades all the accounts, and was likely to rivet itself on his hearers. Nobody but he himself ever calls him Son of Man.

_Secondly_ I believe that in assuming this title he tacitly alluded
to the viith chapter of Daniel, and claimed for himself the throne of
judgment over all mankind.--I know no reason to doubt that he actually
delivered (in substance) the discourse in Matth. xxv. "When the Son
of Man shall come in his glory,... before him shall be gathered all
nations,... and he shall separate them, &c. &c.": and I believe that
by _the Son of Man_ and _the King_ he meant himself. Compare Luke xii.
40, ix. 56.

_Thirdly_, I believe that he habitually assumed the authoritative
dogmatic tone of one who was a universal Teacher in moral and
spiritual matters, and enunciated as a primary duty of men to learn
submissively of his wisdom and acknowledge his supremacy. This element
in his character, _the preaching of himself_ is enormously expanded in
the fourth gospel, but it distinctly exists in Matthew. Thus in Matth.
xxiii 8: "Be not ye called Rabbi [_teacher_], for one is your Teacher,
even Christ; and all ye are brethren"... Matth. x. 32: "Whosoever
shall confess ME before men, him will I confess before my Father which
is in heaven... He that loveth father or mother more than ME is not
_worthy of_ ME, &c."... Matth. xi. 27: "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; and he to whomsoever _the
Son will reveal him._ Come unto ME, all ye that labour,... and _I_
will give you rest. Take MY yoke upon you, &c."

My friend, I find, rejects Jesus as an authoritative teacher,
distinctly denies that the acceptance of Jesus in this character is
any condition of salvation and of the divine favour, and treats of
my "demand of an oracular Christ," as inconsistent with my own
principles. But this is mere misconception of what I have said. I find
Jesus himself to set up oracular claims. I find an assumption
of pre-eminence and unapproachable moral wisdom to pervade every
discourse from end to end of the gospels. If I may not believe that
Jesus assumed an oracular manner, I do not know what moral peculiarity
in him I am permitted to believe. I do not _demand_ (as my friend
seems to think) that _he shall be_ oracular, but in common with all
Christendom, I open my eyes and see that _he is_; and until I had read
my friend's review of my book, I never understood (I suppose through
my own prepossessions) that he holds Jesus _not_ to have assumed the
oracular style.

If I cut out from the four gospels this peculiarity, I must cut out,
not only the claim of Messiahship, which my friend admits to have
been made, but nearly every moral discourse and every controversy: and
_why_? except in order to make good a predetermined belief that Jesus
was morally perfect. What reason can be given me for not believing
that Jesus declared: "If any one deny ME before men, _him will I deny_
before my Father and his angels?" or any of the other texts which
couple the favour of God with a submission to such pretensions of
Jesus? I can find no reason whatever for doubting that he preached
HIMSELF to his disciples, though in the three first gospels he is
rather timid of doing this to the Pharisees and to the nation at
large. I find him uniformly to claim, sometimes in tone, sometimes in
distinct words, that we will sit at his feet as little children and
learn of him. I find him ready to answer off-hand, all difficult
questions, critical and lawyer-like, as well as moral. True, it is no
tenet of mine that intellectual and literary attainment is essential
in an individual person to high spiritual eminence. True, in another
book I have elaborately maintained the contrary. Yet in that book I
have described men's spiritual progress as often arrested at a certain
stage by a want of intellectual development; which surely would
indicate that I believed even intellectual blunders and an infinitely
perfect exhaustive morality to be incompatible. But our question here
(or at least _my_ question) is not, whether Jesus might misinterpret
prophecy, and yet be morally perfect; but whether, _after assuming
to be an oracular teacher_, he can teach some fanatical precepts, and
advance dogmatically weak and foolish arguments, without impairing our
sense of his absolute moral perfection.

I do not think it useless here to repeat (though not for my friend)
concise reasons which I gave in my first edition against admitting
dictatorial claims for Jesus. _First_, it is an un plausible opinion
that God would deviate from his ordinary course, in order to give us
anything so undesirable as an authoritative Oracle would be;--which
would paralyze our moral powers, exactly as an infallible church does,
in the very proportion in which we succeeded in eliciting responses
from it. It is not needful here to repeat what has been said to that
effect in p. 138. _Secondly_, there is no imaginable criterion, by
which we can establish that the wisdom of a teacher _is_ absolute and
illimitable. All that we can possibly discover, is the relative
fact, that another is _wiser than we_; and even this is liable to
be overturned on special points, as soon as differences of judgment
arise. _Thirdly_, while it is by no means clear what are the new truths, for which we are to lean upon the decisions of Jesus, it is certain that we have no genuine and trustworthy account of his teaching. If God had intended us to receive the authoritative _dicta_ of Jesus, he would have furnished us with an unblemished record of those dicta. To allow that we have not this, and that we must disentangle for ourselves (by a most difficult and uncertain process) the "true" sayings of Jesus, is surely self-refuting. _Fourthly_, if I _must_ sit in judgment on the claims of Jesus to be the true Messiah and Son of God, how can I concentrate all my free thought into that one act, and thenceforth abandon free thought? This appears a moral suicide, whether Messiah or the Pope is the object whom we _first_ criticize, in order to instal him over us, and _then_, for ever after, refuse to criticize. In short, _we cannot build up a system of Oracles on a basis of Free Criticism_. If we are to submit our judgment to the dictation of some other,—whether a church or an individual,—we must be first subjected to that other by some event from without, as by birth; and not by a process of that very judgment which is henceforth to be sacrificed. But from this I proceed to consider more in detail, some points in the teaching and conduct of Jesus, which do not appear to me consistent with absolute perfection.

The argument of Jesus concerning the tribute to Caesar is so dramatic, as to strike the imagination and rest on the memory; and I know no reason for doubting that it has been correctly reported. The book of Deuteronomy (xvii. 15) distinctly forbids Israel to set over himself as king any who is not a native Israelite; which appeared to be a
religious condemnation of submission to Caesar. Accordingly, since Jesus assumed the tone of unlimited wisdom, some of Herod's party asked him, whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Caesar. Jesus replied: "Why tempt ye me, hypocrites? Show me the tribute money."

When one of the coins was handed to him, he asked: "Whose image and superscription is this?" When they replied: "Caesar's," he gave his authoritative decision: "Render _therefore_ to Caesar _the things that are Caesar's_."

In this reply not only the poor and uneducated, but many likewise of the rich and educated, recognize "majesty and sanctity:" yet I find it hard to think that my strong-minded friend will defend the justness, wisdom and honesty of it. To imagine that because a coin bears Caesar's head, _therefore_ it is Caesar's property, and that he may demand to have as many of such coins as he chooses paid over to him, is puerile, and notoriously false. The circulation of foreign coin of every kind was as common in the Mediterranean then as now; and everybody knew that the coin was the property of the _holder_, not of him whose head it bore. Thus the reply of Jesus, which pretended to be a moral decision, was unsound and absurd: yet it is uttered in a tone of dictatorial wisdom, and ushered in by a grave rebuke, "Why tempt ye me, hypocrites?" He is generally understood to mean, "Why do you try to implicate me in a political charge?" and it is supposed that he prudently _evaded_ the question. I have indeed heard this interpretation from high Trinitarians; which indicates to me how dead is their moral sense in everything which concerns the conduct of Jesus. No reason appears why he should not have replied, that Moses
forbade Israel voluntarily to place himself under a foreign
king, but did not inculcate fanatical and useless rebellion against
overwhelming power. But such a reply, which would have satisfied a
more commonplace mind, has in it nothing brilliant and striking. I
cannot but think that Jesus shows a vain conceit in the cleverness
of his answer: I do not think it so likely to have been a conscious
evasion. But neither does his rebuke of the questioners at all commend
itself to me. How can any man assume to be an authoritative teacher,
and then claim that men shall not put his wisdom to the proof? Was it
not their duty to do so? And when, in result, the trial has proved
the defect of his wisdom, did they not perform a useful public
service? In truth, I cannot see the Model Man in his rebuke.--Let
not my friend say that the error was merely intellectual: blundering
self-sufficiency is a moral weakness.

I might go into detail concerning other discourses, where error and
arrogance appear to me combined. But, not to be tedious.--in general
I must complain that Jesus purposely adopted an enigmatical and
pretentious style of teaching, unintelligible to his hearers,
and needing explanation in private. That this was his systematic
procedure, I believe, because, in spite of the great contrast of the
fourth gospel to the others, it has this peculiarity in common
with them. Christian divines are used to tell us that this mode was
peculiarly instructive to the vulgar of Judaea; and they insist on
the great wisdom displayed in his choice of the lucid parabolical
style. But in Matth. xiii. 10-15, Jesus is made confidentially to avow
precisely the opposite reason, viz. that he desires the vulgar not_
to understand him, but only the select few to whom he gives private explanations. I confess I believe the Evangelist rather than the modern Divine. I cannot conceive how so strange a notion could ever have possessed the companions of Jesus, if it had not been true. If really this parabolical method had been peculiarly intelligible, what could make them imagine the contrary? Unless they found it very obscure themselves, whence came the idea that it was obscure to the multitude? As a fact, it _is_ very obscure, to this day. There is much that I most imperfectly understand, owing to unexplained metaphor: as: "Agree with thine adversary quickly, &c. &c.:" "Whoso calls his brother[2] a fool, is in danger of hell fire:" "Every one must be salted with fire, and every sacrifice salted with salt. Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another." Now every man of original and singular genius has his own forms of thought; in so far as they are natural, we must not complain, if to us they are obscure. But the moment _affectation_ comes in, they no longer are reconcilable with the perfect character: they indicate vanity, and incipient sacerdotalism. The distinct notice that Jesus avoided to expound his parables to the multitude, and made this a boon to the privileged few; and that without a parable he spake not to the multitude; and the pious explanation, that this was a fulfilment of Prophecy, "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter dark sayings on the harp," persuade me that the impression of the disciples was a deep reality. And it is in entire keeping with the general narrative, which shows in him so much of mystical assumption. Strip the parables of the imagery, and you find that sometimes one thought has been dished up four or five times, and generally, that an idea is dressed into sacred grandeur. This mystical method made a little wisdom go a great way
with the multitude; and to such a mode of economizing resources the
instinct of the uneducated man betakes itself, when he is claiming to
act a part for which he is imperfectly prepared.

It is common with orthodox Christians to take for granted, that
unbelief of Jesus was a sin, and belief a merit, at a time when no
rational grounds of belief were as yet public. Certainly, whoever asks
questions with a view to _prove_ Jesus, is spoken of vituperatingly
in the gospels; and it does appear to me that the prevalent Christian
belief is a true echo of Jesus's own feeling. He disliked being put
to the proof. Instead of rejoicing in it, as a true and upright man
ought,--instead of blaming those who accept his pretensions on too
slight grounds,--instead of encouraging full inquiry and giving frank
explanations, he resents doubt, shuns everything that will test him,
is very obscure as to his own pretensions, (so as to need probing
and positive questions, whether he _does_ or _does not_ profess to
be Messiah,) and yet is delighted at all easy belief. When asked for
miracles, he sighs and groans at the unreasonableness of it; yet
does not honestly and plainly renounce pretension to miracle, as Mr.
Martineau would, but leaves room for credit to himself for as many
miracles as the credulous are willing to impute to him. It is possible
that here the narrative is unjust to his memory. So far from being
the picture of perfection, it sometimes seems to me the picture of a
conscious and wilful impostor. His general character is too high for
_this_; and I therefore make deductions from the account. Still, I do
not see how the present narrative could have grown up, if he had
been really simple and straight-forward, and not perverted by his
essentially false position. Enigma and mist seem to be his element; and when I find his high satisfaction at all personal recognition and bowing before his individuality, I almost doubt whether, if one wished to draw the character of a vain and vacillating pretender, it would be possible to draw anything more to the purpose than this. His general rule (before a certain date) is, to be cautious in public, but bold in private to the favoured few. I cannot think that such a character, appearing now, would seem to my friend a perfect model of a man.

No precept bears on its face clearer marks of coming from the genuine Jesus, than that of _selling all and following him_. This was his original call to his disciples. It was enunciated authoritatively on various occasions. It is incorporated with precepts of perpetual obligation, in such a way, that we cannot without the greatest violence pretend that he did not intend it as a precept[3] to _all_ his disciples. In Luke xii. 22-40, he addresses the disciples collectively against Avarice; and a part of the discourse is: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. _Sell that ye have, and give alms_: provide yourselves bags that wax not old; a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, &c.... Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning," &c. To say that he was not intending to teach a universal morality,[4] is to admit that his precepts are a trap; for they then mix up and confound mere contingent duties with universal sacred obligations, enunciating all in the same breath, and with the same solemnity. I cannot think that Jesus intended any separation. In fact, when a rich young man asked of him what he should do, that he might inherit
eternal life, and pleaded that he had kept the ten commandments, but felt that to be insufficient, Jesus said unto him: "_If thou wilt be perfect_, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven:" so that the duty was not contingent upon the peculiarity of a man possessing apostolic gifts, but was with Jesus the normal path for all who desired perfection. When the young man went away sorrowing, Jesus moralized on it, saying: "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of heaven:" which again shows, that an abrupt renunciation of wealth was to be the general and ordinary method of entering the kingdom. Hereupon, when the disciples asked: "Lo! we _have_ forsaken all, and followed thee: what shall we have _therefore_?" Jesus, instead of rebuking their self-righteousness, promised them as a reward, that they should sit upon twelve[5] thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. A precept thus systematically enforced, is illustrated by the practice, not only of the twelve, but apparently of the seventy, and what is stronger still, by the practice of the five thousand disciples after the celebrated days of the first Pentecost. There was no longer a Jesus on earth to itinerate with, yet the disciples in the fervour of first love obeyed his precept: the rich sold their possessions, and laid the price at the apostles' feet.

The mischiefs inherent in such a precept rapidly showed themselves, and good sense corrected the error. But this very fact proves most emphatically that the precept was pre-apostolic, and came from the genuine Jesus; otherwise it could never have found its way into the gospels. It is undeniable, that the first disciples, by whose
tradition alone we have any record of what Jesus taught, understood
him to deliver this precept to _all_ who desired to enter into the
kingdom of heaven,—all who desired to be perfect: why then are we to
refuse belief, and remould the precepts of Jesus till they please our
own morality? This is not the way to learn historical fact.

That to inculcate religious beggary as the _only_ form and mode of
spiritual perfection, is fanatical and mischievous, even the church
of Rome will admit. Protestants universally reject it as a deplorable
absurdity;—not merely wealthy bishops, squires and merchants, but
the poorest curate also. A man could not preach such doctrine in a
Protestant pulpit without incurring deep reprobation and contempt;
but when preached by Jesus, it is extolled as divine wisdom,—and
disobeyed.

Now I cannot look on this as a pure intellectual error, consistent
with moral perfection. A deep mistake as to the nature of such
perfection seems to me inherent in the precept itself; a mistake which
indicates a moral unsoundness. The conduct of Jesus to the rich young
man appears to me a melancholy exhibition of perverse doctrine, under
an ostentation of superior wisdom. The young man asked for bread and
Jesus gave him a stone. Justly he went away sorrowful, at receiving a
reply which his conscience rejected as false and foolish. But this is
not all Jesus was necessarily on trial, when any one, however sincere,
came to ask questions so deeply probing the quality of his wisdom
as this: "How may I be perfect?" and to be on trial was always
disagreeable to him. He first gave the reply, "Keep the commandments;"
and if the young man had been satisfied, and had gone away, it appears that Jesus would have been glad to be rid of him: for his tone is magisterial, decisive and final. This, I confess, suggests to me, that the aim of Jesus was not so much to _enlighten_ the young man, as to stop his mouth, and keep up his own ostentation of omniscience. Had he desired to enlighten him, surely no mere dry dogmatic command was needed, but an intelligent guidance of a willing and trusting soul.

I do not pretend to certain knowledge in these matters. Even when we hear the tones of voice and watch the features, we often mistake. We have no such means here of checking the narrative. But the best general result which I can draw from the imperfect materials, is what I have said.

After the merit of "selling all and following Jesus," a second merit, not small, was, to receive those whom he sent. In Matt. x., we read that he sends out his twelve disciples, (also seventy in Luke,) men at that time in a very low state of religious development,--men who did not themselves know what the Kingdom of Heaven meant,--to deliver in every village and town a mere formula of words: "Repent ye: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." They were ordered to go without money, scrip or cloak, but to live on religious alms; and it is added,--that if any house or city does not receive them, _it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment_ than for it. He adds, v. 40: "He that receiveth _you_, receiveth _me_, and he that receiveth _me_, receiveth HIM that sent me."--I quite admit, that in all probability it was (on the whole) the more pious part of Israel which was likely to receive these ignorant missionaries; but inasmuch
as they had no claims whatever, intrinsic or extrinsic, to reverence,
it appears to me a very extravagant and fanatical sentiment thus
emphatically to couple the favour or wrath of God with their reception
or rejection.

A third, yet greater merit in the eyes of Jesus, was, to acknowledge
him as the Messiah predicted by the prophets, which he was not,
according to my friend. According to Matthew (xvi. 13), Jesus put
leading questions to the disciples in order to elicit a confession of
his Messiahship, and emphatically blessed Simon for making the avowal
which he desired; but instantly forbade them to tell the great secret
to any one. Unless this is to be discarded as fiction, Jesus,
although to his disciples in secret he confidently assumed Messianic
pretensions, had a just inward misgiving, which accounts both for his
elation at Simon's avowal, and for his prohibition to publish it.

In admitting that Jesus was not the Messiah of the prophets, my friend
says, that if Jesus were _less_ than Messiah, we can reverence him
no longer; but that he was _more_ than Messiah. This is to me
unintelligible. The Messiah whom he claimed to be, was not only the
son of David, celebrated in the prophets, but emphatically the Son of
Man of Daniel vii., who shall come in the clouds of heaven, to take
dominion, glory and kingdom, that all people, nations and languages
shall serve him,—an everlasting kingdom which shall not pass away.
How Jesus himself interprets his supremacy, as Son of Man, in Matt.
x., xi., xxiii., xxv., and elsewhere, I have already observed. To
claim such a character, seems to me like plunging from a pinnacle
of the temple. If miraculous power holds him up and makes good his
daring, he is more than man; but if otherwise, to have failed will
break all his bones. I can no longer give the same human reverence
as before to one who has been seduced into vanity so egregious; and
I feel assured _a priori_ that such presumption _must have_ entangled
him into evasions and insincerities, which _naturally_ end in
crookedness of conscience and real imposture, however noble a man's
commencement, and however unshrinking his sacrifices of goods and ease
and life.

The time arrived at last, when Jesus felt that he must publicly assert
Messiahship; and this was certain to bring things to an issue. I
suppose him to have hoped that he was Messiah, until hope and the
encouragement given him by Peter and others grew into a persuasion
strong enough to act upon, but not always strong enough to still
misgivings. I say, I suppose this; but I build nothing on my
supposition. I however see, that when he had resolved to claim
Messiahship publicly, one of two results was inevitable, _if_ that
claim was ill-founded:--viz., either he must have become an impostor,
in order to screen his weakness; or, he must have retracted his
pretensions amid much humiliation, and have retired into privacy to
learn sober wisdom. From these alternatives _there was escape only by
death_, and upon death Jesus purposely rushed.

All Christendom has always believed that the death of Jesus was
_voluntarily_ incurred; and unless no man ever became a wilful martyr,
I cannot conceive why we are to doubt the fact concerning Jesus. When
he resolved to go up to Jerusalem, he was warned by his disciples of the danger; but so far was he from being blind to it, that he distinctly announced to them that he knew he should suffer in Jerusalem the shameful death of a malefactor. On his arrival in the suburbs, his first act was, ostentatiously to ride into the city on an ass's colt in the midst of the acclamations of the multitude, in order to exhibit himself as having a just right to the throne of David. Thus he gave a handle to imputations of intended treason.---He next entered the temple courts, where doves and lambs were sold for sacrifice, and--(I must say it to my friend's amusement, and in defiance of his kind but keen ridicule,) committed a breach of the peace by flogging with a whip those who trafficked in the area. By such conduct he undoubtedly made himself liable to legal punishment, and probably might have been publicly scourged for it, had the rulers chosen to moderate their vengeance. But he "meant to be prosecuted for treason, not for felony," to use the words of a modern offender. He therefore commenced the most exasperating attacks on all the powerful, calling them hypocrites and whitened sepulchres and vipers' brood; and denouncing upon them the "condemnation of hell." He was successful. He had both enraged the rulers up to the point of thirsting for his life, and given colour to the charge of political rebellion. He resolved to die; and he died. Had his enemies contemptuously let him live, he would have been forced to act the part of Jewish Messiah, or renounce Messiahship.

If any one holds Jesus to be not amenable to the laws of human morality, I am not now reasoning with such a one. But if any one
claims for him a human perfection, then I say that his conduct on this occasion was neither laudable nor justifiable; far otherwise. There are cases in which life may be thrown away for a great cause; as when a leader in battle rushes upon certain death, in order to animate his own men; but the case before us has no similarity to that. If our accounts are not wholly false, Jesus knowingly and purposely exasperated the rulers into a great crime,—the crime of taking his life from personal resentment. His inflammatory addresses to the multitude have been defended as follows:

"The prophetic Spirit is sometimes oblivious of the rules of the drawing-room; and inspired Conscience, like the inspiring God, seeing a hypocrite, will take the liberty to say so, and act accordingly. Are the superficial amenities, the soothing fictions, the smotherings of the burning heart,... really paramount in this world, and never to give way? and when a soul of _power, unable to refrain_, rubs off, though it be with rasping words, all the varnish from rottenness and lies, is he to be tried in our courts of compliment for a misdemeanor? Is there never a higher duty than that of either pitying or converting guilty men,—the duty of publicly exposing them? of awakening the popular conscience, and sweeping away the conventional timidities, for a severe return to truth and reality? No rule of morals can be recognized as just, which prohibits conformity of human speech to fact; and insists on terms of civility being kept with all manner of iniquity."

I certainly have not appealed to any conventional morality of
drawing-room compliment, but to the highest and purest principles
which I know; and I lament to find my judgment so extremely in
opposition. To me it seems that _inability to refrain_ shows weakness,
not _power_, of soul, and that nothing is easier than to give vent to
violent invective against bad rulers. The last sentence quoted, seems
to say, that the speaking of Truth is never to be condemned: but I
cannot agree to this. When Truth will only exasperate, and cannot do
good, silence is imperative. A man who reproaches an armed tyrant in
words too plain, does but excite him to murder; and the shocking thing
is, that this seems to have been the express object of Jesus. No good
result could be reasonably expected. Publicly to call men in authority
by names of intense insult, the writer of the above distinctly sees
will never convert them; but he thinks it was adapted to awaken the
popular conscience. Alas! it needs no divine prophet to inflame a
multitude against the avarice, hypocrisy, and oppression of rulers,
nor any deep inspiration of conscience in the multitude to be wide
awake on that point themselves A Publius Clodius or a Cleon will do
that work as efficiently as a Jesus; nor does it appear that the poor
are made better by hearing invectives against the rich and powerful.
If Jesus had been aiming, in a good cause, to excite rebellion, the
mode of address which he assumed seems highly appropriate; and in such
a calamitous necessity, to risk exciting murderous enmity would be the
act of a hero: but as the account stands, it seems to me the deed of
a fanatic. And it is to me manifest that he overdid his attack, and
failed to commend it to the conscience of his hearers. For up to
this point the multitude was in his favour. He was notoriously so
acceptable to the many, as to alarm the rulers; indeed the belief
of his popularity had shielded him from prosecution. But after this
fierce address he has no more popular support. At his public trial the vast majority judge him to deserve punishment, and prefer to ask free forgiveness for Barabbas, a bandit who was in prison for murder. We moderns, nursed in an arbitrary belief concerning these events, drink in with our first milk the assumption that Jesus alone was guiltless, and all the other actors in this sad affair inexcusably guilty. Let no one imagine that I defend for a moment the cruel punishment which raw resentment inflicted on him. But though the rulers felt the rage of Vengeance, the people, who had suffered no personal wrong, were moved only by ill-measured Indignation. The multitude love to hear the powerful exposed and reproached up to a certain limit; but if reproach go clearly beyond all that they feel to be deserved, a violent sentiment reacts on the head of the reviler: and though popular indignation (even when free from the element of selfishness) ill fixes the due _measure_ of Punishment, I have a strong belief that it is righteous, when it pronounces the verdict Guilty.

Does my friend deny that the death of Jesus was wilfully incurred? The "orthodox" not merely admit, but maintain it. Their creed justifies it by the doctrine, that his death was a "sacrifice" so pleasing to God, as to expiate the sins of the world. This honestly meets the objections to self-destruction; for how better could life be used, than by laying it down for such a prize? But besides all other difficulties in the very idea of atonement, the orthodox creed startles us by the incredible conception, that a voluntary sacrifice of life should be unacceptable to God, unless offered by ferocious and impious hands. If Jesus had "authority from the Father to lay down his
life," was he unable to stab himself in the desert, or on the sacred altar of the Temple, without involving guilt to any human being?

Did He, who is at once "High Priest" and Victim, when "offering up himself" and "presenting his own blood unto God," need any justification for using the sacrificial knife? The orthodox view more clearly and unshrinkingly avows, that Jesus deliberately goaded the wicked rulers into the deeper wickedness of murdering him; but on my friend's view, that Jesus was _no_ sacrifice, but only a Model man, his death is an unrelieved calamity. Nothing but a long and complete life could possibly test the fact of his perfection; and the longer he lived, the better for the world.

In entire consistency with his previous determination to die, Jesus, when arraigned, refused to rebut accusation, and behaved as one pleading Guilty. He was accused of saying that if they destroyed the temple, he would rebuild it in three days; but how this was to the purpose, the evangelists who name it do not make clear. The fourth however (without intending so to do) explains it; and I therefore am disposed to believe his statement, though I put no faith in his long discourses. It appears (John ii. 18-20) that Jesus after scourging the people out of the temple-court, was asked for a sign to justify his assuming so very unusual authority: on which he replied: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Such a reply was regarded as a manifest evasion; since he was sure that they would not pull the temple down in order to try whether he could raise it up miraculously. Now if Jesus really meant what the fourth gospel says he meant;--if he "spoke of _the temple of his body_;"--how was any one
to guess that? It cannot be denied, that such a reply, _prima facie_,
suggested, that he was a wilful impostor: was it not then his obvious
duty, when this accusation was brought against him, to explain that
his words had been mystical and had been misunderstood? The form of
the imputation in Mark xiv. 58, would make it possible to imagine,—if
the _three days_ were left out, and if his words were _not_ said in
reply to the demand of a sign,—that Jesus had merely avowed that
though the outward Jewish temple were to be destroyed, he would erect
a church of worshippers as a spiritual temple. If so, "John" has
grossly misrepresented him, and then obtruded a very far-fetched
explanation. But whatever was the meaning of Jesus, if it was honest,
I think he was bound to explain it; and not leave a suspicion of
imposture to rankle in men's minds.[6] Finally, if the whole were
fiction, and he never uttered such words, then it was his duty to deny
them, and not remain dumb like a sheep before its shearers.

After he had confirmed by his silence the belief that he had used
a dishonest evasion indicative of consciousness that he was no real
Messiah, he suddenly burst out with a full reply to the High Priest's
question; and avowed that he _was_ the Messiah, the Son of God; and
that they should hereafter see him sitting on the right-hand of power,
and coming in the clouds of heaven,—of course to enter into judgment
on them all. I am the less surprized that this precipitated his
condemnation, since he himself seems to have designed precisely that
result. The exasperation which he had succeeded in kindling led to his
cruel death; and when men's minds had cooled, natural horror possessed
them for such a retribution on such a man. His _words_ had been met
with _deeds_: the provocation he had given was unfelt to those beyond the limits of Jerusalem; and to the Jews who assembled from distant parts at the feast of Pentecost he was nothing but the image of a sainted martyr.

I have given more than enough indications of points in which the conduct of Jesus does not seem to me to have been that of a perfect man: how any one can think him a Universal Model, is to me still less intelligible. I might say much more on this subject. But I will merely add, that when my friend gives the weight of his noble testimony to the Perfection of Jesus, I think it is due to himself and to us that he should make clear what he means by this word "Jesus." He ought to publish--(I say it in deep seriousness, not sarcastically)--an expurgated gospel; for in truth I do not know how much of what I have now adduced from the gospel as _fact_, he will admit to be fact. I neglect, he tells me, "a higher moral criticism," which, if I rightly understand, would explode, as evidently unworthy of Jesus, many of the representations pervading the gospels: as, that Jesus claimed to be an oracular teacher, and attached spiritual life or death to belief or disbelief in this claim. My friend says, it is beyond all serious question _what_ Jesus _was_: but his disbelief of the narrative seems to be so much wider than mine, as to leave me more uncertain than ever about it. If he will strike out of the gospels all that he disbelieves, and so enable me to understand _what_ is the Jesus whom he reveres, I have so deep a sense of his moral and critical powers, that I am fully prepared to expect that he may remove many of my prejudices and relieve my objections: but I cannot honestly say that
I see the least probability of his altering my conviction, that in _consistency_ of goodness Jesus fell far below vast numbers of his unhonoured disciples.

[Footnote 1: I have by accident just taken up the "British Quarterly," and alighted upon the following sentence concerning Madame Roland:--"To say that she was without fault, would be to say that she was not human." This so entirely expresses and concludes all that I have to say, that I feel surprise at my needing at all to write such a chapter as the present.]

[Footnote 2: I am acquainted with the interpretation, that the word More is not here Greek, _i.e., fool_, but is Hebrew, and means _rebel_, which is stronger than Raca, _silly fellow_. This gives partial, but only partial relief.]

[Footnote 3: Indeed we have in Luke vi. 20-24, a version of the Beatitudes so much in harmony with this lower doctrine, as to make it an open question, whether the version in Matth. v. is not an improvement upon Jesus, introduced by the purer sense of the collective church. In Luke, he does not bless the poor _in spirit_, and those who hunger _after righteousness_, but absolutely the "poor" and the "hungry," and all who honour _Him_; and in contrast, curses _the rich_ and those who are full.]

[Footnote 4: At the close, is the parable about the absent master of page 250 / 328]
a house; and Peter asks, "Lord? (Sir?) speakest thou this parable unto _us_, or also unto _all_?" Who would not have hoped an ingenuous reply, "To you only," or, "To everybody"? Instead of which, so inveterate is his tendency to muffle up the simplest things in mystery, he replies, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward," &c., &c., and entirely evades reply to the very natural question.]

[Footnote 5: This implied that Judas, as one of the twelve, had earned the heavenly throne by the price of earthly goods.]

[Footnote 6: If the account in John is not wholly false, I think the reply in every case discreditable. If literal, it all but indicates wilful imposture. If mystical, it is disingenuously evasive; and it tended, not to instruct, but to irritate, and to move suspicion and contempt. Is this the course for a religious teacher?--to speak darkly, so as to mislead and prejudice; and this, when he represents it as a matter of spiritual life and death to accept his teaching and his supremacy?]

CHAPTER VIII.

ON BIGOTRY AND PROGRESS.

If any Christian reader has been patient enough to follow me thus far, I now claim that he will judge my argument and me, as before the
bar of God, and not by the conventional standards of the Christian churches.

Morality and Truth are principles in human nature both older and more widespread than Christianity or the Bible: and neither Jesus nor James nor John nor Paul could have addressed or did address men in any other tone, than that of claiming to be themselves judged by some pre-existing standard of moral truth, and by the inward powers of the hearer. Does the reader deny this? or, admitting it, does he think it impious to accept their challenge? Does he say that we are to love and embrace Christianity, without trying to ascertain whether it be true or false? If he say, Yes,—such a man has no love or care for Truth, and is but by accident a Christian. He would have remained a faithful heathen, had he been born in heathenism, though Moses, Elijah and Christ preached a higher truth to him. Such a man is condemned by his own confession, and I here address him no longer.

But if Faith is a spiritual and personal thing, if Belief given at random to mere high pretensions is an immorality, if Truth is not to be quite trampled down, nor Conscience to be wholly palsied in us,—then what, I ask, was I to do, when I saw that the genealogy in the first chapter of Matthew is an erroneous copy of that in the Old Testament? and that the writer has not only copied wrong, but also counted wrong, so, as to mistake eighteen for fourteen? Can any man, who glories in the name of Christian, lay his hand on his heart, and say, it was my duty to blind my eyes to the fact, and think of it no further? Many, alas, I know, would have whispered this to me; but if
any one were to proclaim it, the universal conscience of mankind would call him impudent.

If however this first step was right, was a second step wrong? When I further discerned that the two genealogies in Matthew and Luke were at variance, utterly irreconcilable,—and both moreover nugatory, because they are genealogies of Joseph, who is denied to be the father of Jesus,—on what ground of righteousness, which I could approve to God and my conscience, could I shut my eyes to this second fact?

When forced, against all my prepossessions, to admit that the two first chapters of Matthew and the two first chapters of Luke are mutually destructive,[1] would it have been faithfulness to the God of Truth, or a self-willed love of my own prejudices, if I had said, "I will not inquire further, for fear it should unsettle my faith?" The reader’s conscience will witness to me, that, on the contrary, I was bound to say, what I did say: "I _must_ inquire further in order that I may plant the foundations of my faith more deeply on the rock of Truth."

Having discovered, that not all that is within the canon of the Scripture is infallibly correct, and that the human understanding is competent to arraign and convict at least some kinds of error therein contained;—where was I to stop? and if I am guilty, where did my guilt begin? The further I inquired, the more errors crowded upon me, in History, in Chronology, in Geography, in Physiology, in Geology.[2]
Did it then at last become a duty to close my eyes to the painful light? and if I had done so, ought I to have flattered myself that I was one of those, who being of the truth, come to the lights that their deeds may be reproved?

Moreover, when I had clearly perceived, that since all evidence for Christianity must involve moral considerations, to undervalue the moral faculties of mankind is to make Christian evidence an impossibility and to propagate universal scepticism;--was I then so to distrust the common conscience, as to believe that the Spirit of God pronounced Jael blessed, for perfidiously murdering her husband's trusting friend? Does any Protestant reader feel disgust and horror, at the sophistical defences set up for the massacre of St. Bartholomew and other atrocities of the wicked Church of Rome? Let him stop his mouth, and hide his face, if he dares to justify the foul crime of Jael.

Or when I was thus forced to admit, that the Old Testament praised immorality, as well as enunciated error; and found nevertheless in the writers of the New Testament no indication that they were aware of either; but that, on the contrary, "the Scripture" (as the book was vaguely called) is habitually identified with the infallible "word of God;"--was it wrong in me to suspect that the writers of the New Testament were themselves open to mistake?

When I farther found, that Luke not only claims no infallibility and
no inspiration, but distinctly assigns human sources as his means of
knowledge:--when the same Luke had already been discovered to be
in irreconcilable variance with Matthew concerning the infancy of
Jesus:--was I sinful in feeling that I had no longer any guarantee
against _other_ possible error in these writers? or ought I to have
persisted in obtruding on the two evangelists on infallibility of
which Luke shows himself unconscious, which Matthew nowhere claims,
and which I had demonstrative proof that they did not both possess? A
thorough-going Bibliolater will have to impeach me as a sinner on this
count.

After Luke and Matthew stood before me as human writers, liable to and
convicted of human error, was there any reason why I should look on
Mark as more sacred? And having perceived all three to participate in
the common superstition, derived from Babylon and the East, traceable
in history to its human source, existing still in Turkey and
Abyssinia,--the superstition which mistakes mania, epilepsy, and other
forms of disease, for possession by devils;--should I have shown love
of truth, or obstinacy in error, had I refused to judge freely of
these three writers, as of any others who tell similar marvels? or
was it my duty to resolve, at any rate and against evidence, to acquit
them of the charge of superstition and misrepresentation?

I will not trouble the reader with any further queries. If he has
justified me in his conscience thus far, he will justify my proceeding
to abandon myself to the results of inquiry. He will feel, that the
Will cannot, may not, dare not dictate, whereto the inquiries of the
Understanding shall lead; and that to allege that it _ought_, is to plant the root of Insincerity, Falsehood, Bigotry, Cruelty, and universal Rottenness of Soul.

The vice of Bigotry has been so indiscriminately imputed to the religious, that they seem apt to forget that it is a real sin;--a sin which in Christendom has been and is of all sins most fruitful, most poisonous: nay, grief of griefs! it infects many of the purest and most lovely hearts, which want strength of understanding, or are entangled by a sham theology, with its false facts and fraudulent canons. But upon all who mourn for the miseries which Bigotry has perpetrated from the day when Christians first learned to curse; upon all who groan over the persecutions and wars stirred up by Romanism; upon all who blush at the overbearing conduct of Protestants in their successive moments of brief authority.---a sacred duty rests in this nineteenth century of protesting against Bigotry, not from a love of ease, but from a spirit of earnest justice.

Like the first Christians, they must become _confessors_ of the Truth; not obtrusively, boastfully, dogmatically, or harshly; but, "speaking the truth in love," not be ashamed to avow, if they do not believe all that others profess, and that they abhor the unrighteous principle of judging men by an authoritative creed. The evil of Bigotry which has been most observed, is its untameable injustice, which converted the law of love into licensed murder or gratuitous hatred. But I believe a worse evil still has been, the intense reaction of the human mind against Religion for Bigotry's sake. To the millions of Europe,
bigotry has been a confutation of all pious feeling. So unlovely has
religion been made by it,

Horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans,

that now, as 2000 years ago, men are lapsing into Atheism or
Pantheism; and a totally new "dispensation" is wanted to retrieve the
lost reputation of Piety.

Two opposite errors are committed by those who discern that the
pretensions of the national religious systems are overstrained and
unjustifiable. One class of persons inveighs warmly, bitterly, rudely
against the bigotry of Christians; and know not how deep and holy
affections and principles, in spite of narrowness, are cherished in
the bosom of the Christian society. Hence their invective is harsh and
unsympathizing; and appears so essentially unjust and so ignorant,
as to exasperate and increase the very bigotry which it attacks. An
opposite class know well, and value highly, the moral influences of
Christianity, and from an intense dread of harming or losing these,
do not dare plainly and publicly to avow their own convictions. Great
numbers of English laymen are entirely assured, that the Old Testament
abounds with error, and that the New is not always unimpeachable:
yet they only whisper this; and in the hearing of a clergyman, who is
bound by Articles and whom it is indecent to refute, keep a respectful
silence. As for ministers of religion, these, being called perpetually
into a practical application of the received doctrine of their church,
are of all men least able to inquire into any fundamental errors in that doctrine. Eminent persons among them will nevertheless aim after and attain a purer truth than that which they find established: but such a case must always be rare and exceptive. Only by disusing ministerial service can any one give fair play to doubts concerning the wisdom and truth of that which he is solemnly ministering: hence that friend of Arnold's was wise in this world, who advised him to take a curacy in order to settle his doubts concerning the Trinity. --Nowhere from any body of priests, clergy, or ministers, as an Order, is religious progress to be anticipated, until intellectual creeds are destroyed. A greater responsibility therefore is laid upon laymen, to be faithful and bold in avowing their convictions.

Yet it is not from the practical ministers of religion, that the great opposition to religious reform proceeds. The "secular clergy" (as the Romanists oddly call them) were seldom so bigoted as the "regulars." So with us, those who minister to men in their moral trials have for the most part a deeper moral spirit, and are less apt to place religion in systems of propositions. The _robur legionum_ of bigotry, I believe, is found,—first, in non-parochial clergy, and next in the anonymous writers for religious journals and "conservative" newspapers; who too generally[3] adopt a style of which they would be ashamed, if the names of the writers were attached; who often seem desirous to make it clear that it is their trade to carp, insult, or slander; who assume a tone of omniscience, at the very moment when they show narrowness of heart and judgment. To such writing those who desire to promote earnest Thought and tranquil Progress ought anxiously to
testify their deep repugnance. A large part of this slander and insult
is prompted by a base pandering to the (real or imagined) taste of the
public, and will abate when it visibly ceases to be gainful.

* * * * *

The law of God's moral universe, as known to us, is that of Progress.
We trace it from old barbarism to the methodized Egyptian idolatry;
to the more flexible Polytheism of Syria and Greece; the poetical
Pantheism of philosophers, and the moral monotheism of a few sages.
So in Palestine and in the Bible itself we see, first of all, the
image-worship of Jacob's family, then the incipient elevation of
Jehovah above all other Gods by Moses, the practical establishment
of the worship of Jehovah alone by Samuel, the rise of spiritual
sentiment under David and the Psalmists, the more magnificent views
of Hezekiah's prophets, finally in the Babylonish captivity the new
tenderness assumed by that second Isaiah and the later Psalmists. But
ceremonialism more and more encrusted the restored nation; and Jesus
was needed to spur and stab the conscience of his contemporaries,
and recal them to more spiritual perceptions; to proclaim a coming
"kingdom of heaven," in which should be gathered all the children of
God that were scattered abroad; where the law of love should reign,
and no one should dictate to another. Alas! that this great movement
had its admixture of human imperfection. After this, Steven the
protomartyr, and Paul once him persecutor, had to expose the emptiness
of all external santifications, and free the world from the law of
Moses. _Up_ to this point all Christians approve of progress; but _at_
this point they want to arrest it.

The arguments of those who resist Progress are always the same, whether it be Pagans against Hebrews, Jews against Christians, Romanists against Protestants, or modern Christians against the advocates of a higher spiritualism. Each established system assures its votaries, that now at length they have attained a final perfection: that their foundations are irremovable: progress _up_ to that position was a duty, _beyond_ it is a sin. Each displaces its predecessor by superior goodness, but then each fights against his successor by odium, contempt, exclusions and (when possible) by violences. Each advances mankind one step, and forbids them to take a second. Yet if it be admitted that in the earlier movement the party of progress was always right, confidence that the case is now reversed is not easy to justify.

Every persecuting church has numbered among its members thousands of pious people, so grateful for its services, or so attached to its truth, as to think those impious who desire something purer and more perfect. Herein we may discern, that every nation and class is liable to the peculiar illusion of overesteeeming the sanctity of its ancestral creed. It is as much our duty to beware of this illusion, as of any other. All know how easily our patriotism may degenerate into an unjust repugnance to foreigners, and that the more intense it is, the greater the need of antagonistic principles. So also, the real excellencies of our religion may only so much the more rivet us in a wrong aversion to those who do not acknowledge its authority or
It is probable that Jesus desired a state of things in which all who worship God spiritually should have an acknowledged and conscious union. It is clear that Paul longed above all things to overthrow the "wall of partition" which separated two families of sincere worshippers. Yet we now see stronger and higher walls of partition than ever, between the children of the same God,—with a new law of the letter, more entangling to the conscience, and more depressing to the mental energies, than any outward service of the Levitical law. The cause of all this is to be found in the claim of Messiahship for Jesus. This gave a premium to crooked logic, in order to prove that the prophecies meant what they did not mean and could not mean. This perverted men's notions of right and wrong, by imparting factitious value to a literary and historical proposition, "Jesus is the Messiah," as though that were or could be religion. This gave merit to credulity, and led pious men to extol it as a brave and noble deed, when any one overpowered the scruples of good sense, and scolded them down as the wisdom of this world, which is hostile to God. This put the Christian church into an essentially false position, by excluding from it in the first century all the men of most powerful and cultivated understanding among the Greeks and Romans. This taught Christians to boast of the hostility of the wise and prudent, and in every controversy ensured that the party which had the merit of mortifying reason most signally should be victorious. Hence, the downward career of the Church into base superstition was determined and inevitable from her very birth; nor was any improvement possible,
until a reconciliation should be effected between Christianity and the
cultivated reason which it had slighted and insulted.

Such reconciliation commenced, I believe, from the tenth century, when
the Latin moralists began to be studied as a part of a theological
course. It was continued with still greater results when Greek
literature became accessible to churchmen. Afterwards, the physics
of Galileo and of Newton began not only to undermine numerous
superstitions, but to give to men a confidence in the reality of
abstract truth, and in our power to attain it in other domains than
that of geometrical demonstration. This, together with the philosophy
of Locke, was taken up into Christian thought, and Political
Toleration was the first fruit. Beyond that point, English religion
has hardly gone. For in spite of all that has since been done in
Germany for the true and accurate _exposition_ of the Bible, and for
the scientific establishment of the history of its component books,
we still remain deplorably ignorant here of these subjects. In
consequence, English Christians do not know that they are unjust and
utterly unreasonable, in expecting thoughtful men to abide by the
creed of their ancestors. Nor, indeed, is there any more stereotyped
and approved calumny, than the declaration so often emphatically
enunciated from the pulpit, that _unbelief in the Christian miracles_
is the fruit of a wicked heart and of a soul enslaved to sin_. Thus
do estimable and well-meaning men, deceived and deceiving one another,
utter base slander in open church, where it is indecorous to reply
to them,—and think that they are bravely delivering a religious
testimony.
No difficulty is encountered, so long as the inward and the outward rule of religion agree,--by whatever names men call them,--the Spirit and the Word--or Reason and the Church,--or Conscience and Authority. None need settle which of the two rules is the greater, so long as the results coincide: in fact, there is no controversy, no struggle, and also probably no progress. A child cannot guess whether father or mother has the higher authority, until discordant commands are given; but then commences the painful necessity of disobeying one in order to obey the other. So, also, the great and fundamental controversies of religion arise, only when a discrepancy is detected between the inward and the outward rule: and then, there are only two possible solutions. If the Spirit within us and the Bible (or Church) without us are at variance, _we must either follow the inward and disregard the outward law; else we must renounce the inward law and obey the outward_. The Romanist bids us to obey the Church and crush our inward judgment: the Spiritualist, on the contrary, follows his inward law, and, when necessary, defies Church, Bible, or any other authority. The orthodox Protestant is better and truer than the Romanist, because the Protestant is not like the latter, consistent in error, but often goes right: still he _is_ inconsistent as to this point. Against the Spiritualist he uses Romanist principles, telling him that he ought to submit his "proud reason" and accept the "Word of God" as infallible, even though it appear to him to contain errors. But against the Romanist the same disputant avows Spiritualist principles, declaring that since "the Church" appears to him to be erroneous, he dares not to accept it as
infallible. What with the Romanist he before called "proud reason," he now designates as Conscience, Understanding, and perhaps the Holy Spirit. He refused to allow the right of the Spiritualist to urge, that the Bible contains contradictions and immoralities, and therefore cannot be received; but he claims a full right to urge that the Church has justified contradictions and immoralities, and therefore is not to be submitted to. The perception that this position is inconsistent, and, to him who discerns the inconsistency, dishonest, is every year driving Protestants to Rome. And in principle there are only two possible religions: the Personal and the Corporate; the Spiritual and the External. I do not mean to say that in Romanism there is nothing but what is Corporate and External; for that is impossible to human nature: but that this is what the theory of their argument demands; and their doctrine of Implicit[4] (or Virtual) Faith entirely supersedes intellectual perception as well as intellectual conviction. The theory of each church is the force which determines to what centre the whole shall gravitate. However men may talk of spirituality, yet let them once enact that the freedom of individuals shall be absorbed in a corporate conscience, and you find that the narrowest heart and meanest intellect sets the rule of conduct for the whole body.

It has been often observed how the controversies of the Trinity and Incarnation depended on the niceties of the Greek tongue. I do not know whether it has ever been inquired, what confusion of thought was shed over Gentile Christianity, from its very origin, by the imperfection of the New Testament Greek. The single Greek[5] word
[Greek: pistis] needs probably three translations into our far more accurate tongue,—viz., Belief, Trust, Faith; but especially Belief and Faith have important contrasts. Belief is purely intellectual; Faith is properly spiritual. Hence the endless controversy about Justification by [Greek: pistis], which has so vexed Christians; hence the slander cast on _unbelievers_ or _misbelievers_ (when they can no longer be burned or exiled), as though they were _faithless_ and _infidels_.

But nothing of this ought to be allowed to blind us to the truly spiritual and holy developments of historical Christianity,—much less, make us revert to the old Paganism or Pantheism which it supplanted.—The great doctrine on which all practical religion depends,—the doctrine which nursed the infancy and youth of human nature,—is, "the sympathy of God with the perfection of individual man." Among Pagans this was so marred by the imperfect characters ascribed to the Gods, and the dishonourable fables told concerning them, that the philosophers who undertook to prune religion too generally cut away the root, by alleging[6] that God was mere Intellect and wholly destitute of Affections. But happily among the Hebrews the purity of God's character was vindicated; and with the growth of conscience in the highest minds of the nation the ideal image of God shone brighter and brighter. The doctrine of his Sympathy was never lost, and from the Jews it passed into the Christian church. This doctrine, applied to that part of man which is divine, is the wellspring of Repentance and Humility, of Thankfulness, Love, and Joy. It reproves and it comforts; it stimulates and animates. This it is
which led the Psalmist to cry, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." This has satisfied prophets, apostles, and martyrs with God as their Portion. This has been passed from heart to heart for full three thousand years, and has produced bands of countless saints. Let us not cut off our sympathies from those, who have learnt to sympathize with God; nor be blind to that spiritual good which they have; even if it be, more or less sensibly, tinged with intellectual error. In fact, none but God knows, how many Christian hearts are really pure from bigotry. I cannot refuse to add my testimony, such as it is, to the effect, that _the majority is always truehearted_. As one tyrant, with a small band of unscrupulous tools, manages to use the energies of a whole nation of kind and well-meaning people for cruel purposes, so the bigoted few, who work out an evil theory with consistency, often succeed in using the masses of simpleminded Christians as their tools for oppression. Let us not think more harshly than is necessary of the anathematizing churches. Those who curse us with their lips, often love us in their hearts. A very deep fountain of tenderness can mingle with their bigotry itself: and with tens of thousands, the evil belief is a dead form, the spiritual love is a living reality. Whether Christians like it or not, we must needs look to Historians, to Linguists, to Physiologists, to Philosophers, and generally, to men of cultivated understanding, to gain help in all those subjects which are preposterously called _Theology_: but for devotional aids, for pious meditations, for inspiring hymns, for purifying and glowing thoughts, we have still to wait upon that succession of kindling souls, among whom may be named with special honour David and Isaiah, Jesus and Paul, Augustine, A Kempis, Fenelon, Leighton, Baxter, Doddridge,
Religion was created by the inward instincts of the soul: it had afterwards to be pruned and chastened by the sceptical understanding. For its perfection, the co-operation of these two parts of man is essential. While religious persons dread critical and searching thought, and critics despise instinctive religion, each side remains imperfect and curtailed.

It is a complaint often made by religious historians, that no church can sustain its spirituality unimpaired through two generations, and that in the third a total irreligion is apt to supervene. Sometimes indeed the transitions are abrupt, from an age of piety to an age of dissoluteness. The liability to such lamentable revulsions is plainly due to some insufficiency in the religion to meet all the wants of human nature. To scold at that nature is puerile, and implies an ignorance of the task which religion undertakes. To lay the fault on the sovereign will of God, who has "withheld his grace" from the grandchildren of the pious, might be called blasphemy, if we were disposed to speak harshly. The fault lies undoubtedly in the fact, that Practical Devoutness and Free Thought stand apart in unnatural schism. But surely the age is ripe for something better;--for a religion which shall combine the tenderness, humility, and disinterestedness, that are the glory of the purest Christianity, with that activity of intellect, untiring pursuit of truth, and strict adherence to impartial principle, which the schools of modern science embody. When a spiritual church has its senses exercised to discern
good and evil, judges of right and wrong by an inward power, proves all things and holds fast that which is good, fears no truth, but rejoices in being corrected, intellectually as well as morally,—it will not be liable to be "carried to and fro" by shifting winds of doctrine. It will indeed have movement, namely, a steady _onward_ one, as the schools of science have had, since they left off to dogmatize, and approached God's world as learners; but it will lay aside disputes of words, eternal vacillations, mutual illwill and dread of new light, and will be able without hypocrisy to proclaim "peace on earth and goodwill towards men," even towards those who reject its beliefs and sentiments concerning "God and his glory."

NOTE ON PAGE 168.

The author of the "Eclipse of Faith," in his Defence (p. 168), referring to my reply in p. 101 above, says:--"In this very paragraph Mr. Newman shows that I have _not_ misrepresented him, nor is it true that I overlooked his novel hypothesis. He says that 'Gibbon is exhibiting and developing the deep-seated causes of the _spread_ of Christianity before Constantine,'—which Mr. Newman says had _not_ spread. On the contrary; he assumes that the Christians were 'a small fraction,' and thus _does_ dismiss in two sentences, I might have said three words, what Gibbon had strained every nerve in his celebrated chapter to account for."

Observe his phrase, "On the contrary." It is impossible to say more
plainly, that Gibbon represents the spread of Christianity before
Constantine to have been very great, and then laboured in vain to
account for that spread; and that I, arbitrarily setting aside
Gibbon's fact as to the magnitude of the "spread," cut the knot which
he could not untie.

But the fact, as between Gibbon and me, is flatly the reverse.
I advance nothing novel as to the numbers of the Christians, no
hypothesis of my own, no assumption. I have merely adopted Gibbon's
own historical estimate, that (judging, as he does judge, by the
examples of Rome and Antioch), the Christians before the rise of
Constantine were but a small fraction of the population. Indeed, he
says, not above one-twentieth part; on which I laid no stress.

It may be that Gibbon is here in error. I shall willingly withdraw any
historical argument, if shown that I have unawares rested on a false
basis. In balancing counter statements and reasons from diverse
sources, different minds come to different statistical conclusions.
Dean Milman ("Hist. of Christianity," vol. ii. p. 341) when
deliberately weighing opposite opinions, says cautiously, that "Gibbon
is perhaps inclined to underrate" the number of the Christians. He
adds: "M. Beugnot agrees much with Gibbon, and I should conceive, with
regard to the West, is clearly right."

I beg the reader to observe, that I have not represented the
numerical strength of the Christians in Constantine's army to be
great. Why my opponent should ridicule my use of the phrase _Christian regiments_, I am too dull to understand. ("Who would not think," says he, "that it was one of Constantine’s _aide-de-camps_ that was speaking?") It may be that I am wrong in using the plural noun, and that there was only _one_ such regiment,—that which carried the Labarum, or standard of the cross (Gibbon, ch. 20), to which so much efficacy was attributed in the war against Licinius. I have no time at present, nor any need for further inquiries on such matters. It is to the devotion and organization of the Christians, not to their proportionate numbers, that I attributed weight. If (as Milman says) Gibbon and Beugnot are "clearly right" as regards _the West_—_i.e._, as regards all that vast district which became the area of modern European Christendom, I see nothing in my argument which requires modification.

But why did Christianity, while opposed by the ruling powers, spread "_in the East?_" In the very chapter from which I have quoted, Dean Milman justifies me in saying, that to this question I may simply reply, "I do not know," without impairing my present argument. (I myself find no difficulty in it whatever; but I protest against the assumption, that I am bound to believe a religion preternatural, unless I can account for its origin and diffusion to the satisfaction of its adherents.) Dean Milman, vol. ii. pp. 322-340, gives a full account of the Manichaean religion, and its rapid and great spread in spate of violent persecution. MANI, the founder, represented himself as "a man invested with a divine mission." His doctrines are described by Milman as wild and mystical metaphysics, combining elements of
thought from Magianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism. "His worship was simple, without altar, temple, images, or any imposing ceremonial. Pure and simple prayer was their only form of adoration."

They talked much of "Christ" as a heavenly principle, but "did not believe in his birth or death. Prayers and Hymns addressed to the source of light, exhortations to subdue the dark and sensuous element within, and the study of the marvellous book of Mani, constituted their devotion. Their manners were austere and ascetic; they tolerated, but only tolerated, marriage, and that only among the inferior orders. The theatre, the banquet, and even the bath, they severely proscribed. Their diet was of fruits and herbs; they shrank with abhorrence from animal food." Mani met with fierce hostility from West and East alike; and at last was entrapped by the Persian king Baharam, and "was flayed alive. His skin, stuffed with straw, was placed over the gate of the city of Shahpoor."

Such a death was as cruel and as ignominious as that of crucifixion; yet his doctrines "expired not with their author. In the East and in the West they spread with the utmost rapidity.... The extent of its success may be calculated by the implacable hostility of other religions to the doctrines of Mani; _the causes of that success are more difficult to conjecture_."

Every reason, which, as far as I know, has ever been given, why it should be hard for early Christianity to spread, avail equally as reasons against the spread of Manichaeism. The state of the East, which admitted the latter without miracle, admitted the former also.
It nevertheless is pertinent to add, that the recent history of
Mormonism, compared with that of Christianity and of Manichaeism,
may suggest that the martyr-death of the founder of a religion is a
positive aid to its after-success.

[Footnote 1: See Strauss on the Infancy of Jesus.]

[Footnote 2: My "Eclectic" reviewer (who is among the least orthodox
and the least uncandid) hence deduces, that I have confounded the two
questions, "Does the Bible contain errors in human science?" and, "Is
its purely spiritual teaching true?" It is quite wonderful to me, how
educated men can so totally overlook what I have so plainly and so
often written. This very passage might show the contrary, if he had
but quoted the whole paragraph, instead of the middle sentence only.
See also pp. 67, 74, 75, 86, 87, 125.]

[Footnote 3: Any orthodox periodical which dares to write charitably,
is at once subjected to fierce attack us un_orthodox.]

[Footnote 4: _Explicit_ Faith in a doctrine, means, that we understand
what the propositions are, and accept them. But if through blunder we
accept a wrong set of propositions, so as to believe a false doctrine,
we nevertheless have _Implicit_ (or Virtual) Faith in the true one, if
only we say from the heart: "Whatever the Church believes, I believe."
Thus a person, who, through blundering, believes in Sabellianism or
Arianism, which the Church has condemned, is regarded to have _virtual
faith in Trinitarianism, and all the "merit" of that faith, because
of his good will to submit to the Church; which is the really saving
virtue.]

[Footnote 5: [Greek: Dikaiosune] (righteousness), [Greek: Diatheke]
(covenant, testament), [Greek: Charis] (grace), are all terms pregnant
with fallacy.]

[Footnote 6: Horace and Cicero speak the mind of their educated
contemporaries in saying that "we ought to pray to God _only_ for
external blessings, but trust to our own efforts for a pure and
tranquil soul,"--a singular reversing of spiritual religion]

CHAPTER IX.

REPLY TO THE DEFENCE OF THE "ECLIPSE OF FAITH."

This small treatise was reviewed, unfavourably of course, in most of
the religious periodicals, and among them in the "Prospective Review,"
by my friend James Martineau. I had been about the same time attacked
in a book called the "Eclipse of Faith," written (chiefly against my
treatise on the Soul) in the form of a Platonic Dialogue; in which a
sceptic, a certain Harrington, is made to indulge in a great deal
of loose and bantering argumentation, with the view of ridiculing my
religion, and doing so by ways of which some specimen will be given.
I made an indignant protest in a new edition of this book, and added also various matter in reply to Mr. Martineau, which will still be found here. He in consequence in a second article[1] of the "Prospective" reviewed me afresh; but, in the opening, he first pronounced his sentence in words of deep disapproval against the "Eclipse of Faith."

"The method of the work," says he, "its plan of appealing from what seems shocking in the Bible to something more shocking in the world, simply doubles every difficulty without relieving any; and tends to enthrone a devil everywhere, and leave a God nowhere.... The whole force of the writer's thought,—his power of exposition, of argument, of sarcasm, is thrown, in spite of himself, into the irreligious scale.... If the work be really written[2] in good faith, and be not rather a covert attack on all religion, it curiously shows how the temple of the author's worship stands on the same foundation with the _officina_ of Atheism, and in such close vicinity that the passer-by cannot tell from which of the two the voices stray into the street."

The author of the "Eclipse," buoyed up by a large sale of his work to a credulous public, put forth a "Defence," in which he naturally declined to submit to the judgment of this reviewer. But my readers will remark, that Mr. Martineau, writing against me, and seeking to rebut my replies to him—{nay, I fear I must say my _attack_ on him; for I have confessed, almost with compunction, that it was I who first
stirred the controversy)--was very favourably situated for maintaining
a calmly judicial impartiality. He thought us both wrong, and he
administered to us each the medicine which seemed to him needed.
He passed his strictures on what he judged to be my errors, and he
rebuked my assailant for profane recklessness.

I had complained, not of this merely, but of monstrous indefensible
garbling and misrepresentation, pervading the whole work. The dialogue
is so managed, as often to suggest what is false concerning me, yet
without asserting it; so as to enable him to disown the slander, while
producing its full effect against me. Of the directly false statements
and garblings I gave several striking exhibitions. His reply to all
this in the first edition of his "Defence" was reviewed in a _third_
article of the "Prospective Review;" Its ability and reach of thought
are attested by the fact that it has been mistaken for the writing of
Mr. Martineau; but (as clearly as reviews ever speak on such subjects)
it is intimated in the opening that this new article is from a new
hand, "at the risk of revealing _division of persons and opinions_
within the limits of the mystic critical _We_." Who is the author, I
do not know; nor can I make a likely guess at any one who was in more
than distant intercourse with me.

This third reviewer did not bestow one page, as Mr. Martineau had
done, on the "Eclipse;" did not summarily pronounce a broad sentence
without details, but dedicated thirty-four pages to the examination
and proof. He opens with noticing the parallel which the author of
the "Eclipse" has instituted between his use of ridicule and that
of Pascal; and replies that he signally violates Pascal's two rules, first, to speak with truth against one's opponents and not with calumny; secondly, not to wound them needlessly. "Neglect of the first rule (says he) has given to these books [the "Eclipse" and its "Defence"] their apparent controversial success; disregard of the second their literary point." He adds, "We shall show that their author misstates and misrepresents doctrines; garbles quotations, interpolating words which give the passage he cites reference to subjects quite foreign from those to which in the original they apply, while retaining the inverted commas, which are the proper sign of faithful transcription; that similarly, he allows himself the licence of omission of the very words on which the controversy hangs, while in appearance citing _verbatim_:... and that he habitually employs a sophistry too artful (we fear) to be undesigned. May he not himself have been deceived, some indulgent reader perhaps asks, by the fallacies which have been so successful with others? It would be as reasonable to suppose that the grapes which deluded the birds must have deluded Zeuxis who painted them."

So grave an accusation against my assailant's truthfulness, coming not from me, but from a third party, and that, evidently a man who knew well what he was saying and why,—could not be passed over unnoticed, although that religious world, which reads one side only, continued to buy the "Eclipse" and its "Defence" greedily, and not one in a thousand of them was likely to see the "Prospective Review," In the second edition of the "Defence" the writer undertakes to defend himself against my advocate, in an Appendix of 19 closely printed
pages, the "Defence" itself being 218. The "Eclipse," in its 9th edition of small print, is 393 pages. And how does he set about his reply? By trying to identify the third writer with the second (who was notoriously Mr. Martineau), and to impute to him ill temper, chagrin, irritation, and wounded self-love, as the explanation of this third article: He says (p. 221):--

"The third writer--if, as I have said, he be not the second--sets out on a new voyage of discovery ... and still humbly following in the wake of Mr. Newman's great critical discoveries,[3] repeats that gentleman's charges of falsifying passages, garbling and misrepresentation. In doing so, he employs language, and _manifests a temper_ which I should have thought that respect for himself, if not for his opponent, would have induced him to suppress. It is enough to say, that he quite rivals Mr. Newman in sagacity, and if possible, has more successfully denuded himself of charity.... If he be the same as the second writer, I am afraid that the little Section XV." [i.e._

the reply to Mr. Martineau in 1st edition of the "Defence"] "must have offended the _amour propre_ more deeply than it ought to have done, considering the wanton and outrageous assault to which it was a very lenient reply, and that the critic affords another illustration of the old maxim, that there are none so implacable as those who have done a wrong.

"As the spectacle of the reeling Helot taught the Spartans sobriety, so his _bitterness_ shall teach me moderation. I know enough of human nature to understand that it is very possible for an _angry_ man--and
chagrin and irritation are too legibly written on every page of this article--to be betrayed into gross injustice."

The reader will see from this the difficulty of _my_ position in this controversy. Mr. Martineau, while defending himself, deprecated the profanity of my other opponent, and the atheistic nature of his arguments. He spoke as a bystander, and with the advantage of a judicial position, and it is called "wanton and outrageous." A second writer goes into detail, and exposes some of the garbling arts which have been used against me; it is imputed[4] to ill temper, and is insinuated to be from a spirit of personal revenge. How much less can _I_ defend myself, and that, against untruthfulness, without incurring such imputation! My opponent speaks to a public who will not read my replies. He picks out what he pleases of my words, and takes care to divest them of their justification. I have (as was to be expected) met with much treatment from the religious press which I know cannot be justified; but all is slight, compared to that of which I complain from this writer. I will presently give a few detailed instances to illustrate this. While my charge against my assailant is essentially moral, and I cannot make any parade of charity, he can speak patronizingly of me now and then, and makes his main attacks on my _logic_ and _metaphysics_. He says, that in writing his first book, he knew no characteristics of me, except that I was "a gentleman, a scholar, and _a very indifferent metaphysician._" At the risk of encountering yet more of banter and insult, I shall here quote what the third "Prospective Reviewer" says on this topic. (Vol. x. p. 208):--
"Our readers will be able to judge how well qualified the author is to sneer at Mr. Newman's metaphysics, which are far more accurate than his own, or to ridicule his logic. The tone of contempt which he habitually assumes preposterously reverses the relative intellectual status, so far as sound systematic thought is concerned, of the two men."

I do not quote this as testimony to myself but as testimony that others, as well as I, feel the contemptuous tone assumed by my adversary in precisely that subject on which modesty is called for. On metaphysics there is hitherto an unreconciled diversity among men who have spent their lives in the study; and a large part of the endless religious disputes turns on this very fact. However, the being told, in a multitude of ingenious forms, that I am a wretched logician, is not likely to raffle my tranquillity. What does necessarily wound me, is his misrepresenting my thoughts to the thoughtful, whose respect I honour; and poisoning the atmosphere between me and a thousand religious hearts. That these do not despise me, however much contempt he may vent, I know only too well through their cruel fears of me.

I have just now learned incidentally, that in the last number (a supplementary number) of the "Prospective Review," there was a short reply to the second edition of Mr. Rogers's "Defence," in which the Editors officially deny that the third writer against Mr. Rogers is the same as the second; which, I gather from their statement, the
"British Quarterly" had taken on itself to affirm.

I proceed to show what liberties my critic takes with my arguments, and what he justifies.

I. In the closing chapter of my third edition of the "Phases," I had complained of his bad faith in regard to my arguments concerning the Authoritative imposition of moral truth from without. I showed that, after telling his reader that I offered no proof of my assertions, he dislocated my sentences, altered their order, omitted an adverb of inference, and isolated three sentences out of a paragraph of forty-six lines: that his omission of the inferential adverb showed his deliberate intention to destroy the reader's clue to the fact, that I had given proof where he suppresses it and says that I have given none; that the sentences quoted as 1, 2, 3, by him, with me have the order 3, 2, 1; while what he places first, is with me an immediate and necessary deduction from what has preceded. Now how does he reply? He does not deny my facts; but he justifies his process. I must set his words before the reader. _(Defence, 2nd ed., p. 85.)

"The strangest thing is to see the way in which, after parading this supposed 'artful dodge,'[5] which, I assure you, gentle reader, was all a perfect novelty to my consciousness,--Mr. Newman goes on to say, that the author of the 'Eclipse' has altered the order of his sentences to suit a purpose. He says: 'The sentences quoted as 1, 2, 3, by him, with me have the order 3, 2, 1.' I answer, that Harrington
was simply anxious to set forth at the head of his argument, in the
clearest and briefest form, the _conclusions_ he believed Mr.
Newman to hold, and which he was going to confute. He had no idea of
any relation of subordination or dependence in the above sophisms, as
I have just proved them to be, whether arranged as 3, 2, 1, or 1,
2, 3, or 2, 3, 1, or in any other order in which the possible
permutations of three things, taken 3 and 3 together, can exhibit
them; _ex nihilo, nil fit_; and three nonentities can yield just as
little. Jangle as many changes as you will on these three cracked
bells, no logical harmony can ever issue out of them."

Thus, because he does not see the validity of my argument, he is to
pretend that I have offered none: he is not to allow his readers to
judge for themselves as to the validity, but they have to take his
word that I am a very "queer" sort of logician, ready "for any feats
of logical legerdemain."

I have now to ask, what is garbling, if the above is not? He admits
the facts, but justifies them as having been convenient from his point
of view; and then finds my charity to be "very grotesque," when I do
not know how, without hypocrisy, to avoid calling a spade a spade.

I shall here reprint the pith of my argument, somewhat shortened:--

"No heaven-sent Bible can guarantee the veracity of God to a man who
doubts that veracity. Unless we have independent means of knowing that
God is truthful and good, his word (if we be over so certain that it
is really his word) has no authority to us: _hence_ no book revelation
can, without sapping its own pedestal, deny the validity of our _a
priori_ conviction that God has the virtues of goodness and veracity,
and requires like virtues in us. _And in fact_, all Christian apostles
and missionaries, like the Hebrew prophets, have always confuted
Paganism by direct attacks on its immoral and unspiritual doctrines,
and have appealed to the consciences of heathens, as competent to
decide in the controversy. Christianity itself has _thus_ practically
confessed what is theoretically clear, that an authoritative external
revelation of moral and spiritual truth is essentially impossible to
man. What God reveals to us, he reveals within, through the medium of
our moral and spiritual senses. External teaching may be a training of
those senses, but affords no foundation for certitude."

This passage deserved the enmity of my critic. He quoted bits of
it, very sparingly, never setting before his readers my continuous
thought, but giving his own free versions and deductions. His fullest
quotation stood thus, given only in an after-chapter:--"What God
reveals to us, he reveals _within_, through the medium of our moral
and spiritual senses." "Christianity itself has practically confessed
what is theoretically clear, _{(you must take Mr. Newman's word for
both,)_[7]_ that an authoritative external revelation of moral and
spiritual truth is essentially impossible to man." "No book-revelation
can, without sapping its own pedestal, &c. &c."

These three sentences are what Mr. Rogers calls the three cracked
bells, and thinks by raising a laugh, to hide his fraud I have
carefully looked through the whole of his dialogue concerning Book
Revelation in his 9th edition of the "Eclipse" (pp. 63-83 of close
print). He still excludes from it every part of my argument,
only stating in the opening (p. 63) as my conclusions, that a
book-revelation is impossible, and that God reveals himself from
within, not from without In his _Defence_ (which circulates far less
than the "Eclipse," to judge by the number of editions) he displays
his bravery by at length printing my argument; but in the "Eclipse" he
continues to suppress it, at least as far as I can discover by turning
to the places where it ought to be found.

In p. 77 (9th ed.) of the "Eclipse." he _implies_., without absolutely
asserting, that I hold the Bible to be an impertinence. He repeats
this in p. 85 of the "Defence." Such is his mode. I wrote: "_Without_
a priori _belief_, the Bible is an impertinence," but I say, man
_has_ this _a priori_ belief, on which account the Bible is _not_
an impertinence. My last sentence in the very passage before us,
expressly asserts the value of (good) external teaching. This my
critic laboriously disguises.

He carefully avoids allowing his readers to see that I am contending
fundamentally for that which the ablest Christian divines have
conceded and maintained; that which the common sense of every
missionary knows, and every one who is not profoundly ignorant of the
Bible and of history ought to know. Mr. Rogers is quite aware, that
no apostle ever carried a Bible in his hand and said to the heathen,
"Believe that there is a good and just God, _because_ it is written in this book;" but they appealed to the hearts and consciences of the hearers as competent witnesses. He does not even give his reader enough of my paragraph to make intelligible what I _meant_ by saying "Christianity has practically confessed;" and yet insists that I am both unreasonable and uncharitable in my complaints of him.

I here reprint the summary of my belief concerning our knowledge of morality as fundamental, and not to be tampered with under pretence of religion. "If an angel from heaven bade me to lie, and to steal, and to commit adultery, and to murder, and to scoff at good men, and usurp dominion over my equals, and do unto others everything that I wish _not_ to have done to me; I ought to reply, BE THOU ANATHEMA! This, I believe, was Paul's doctrine; this is mine."

It may be worth while to add how in the "Defence" Mr. Rogers pounces on my phrase "_a priori_ view of the Divine character," as an excuse for burying his readers in metaphysics, in which he thinks he has a natural right to dogmatize against and over me. He must certainly be aware of the current logical (not metaphysical) use of the phrase _a priori_: as when we say, that Le Verrier and Adams demonstrated _a priori_ that a planet _must_ exist exterior to Uranus, before any astronomer communicated information that it _does_ exist. Or again: the French Commissioners proved by actual measurement that the earth is an oblate spheroid, of which Newton had convinced himself _a priori_.}
I always avoid a needless argument of metaphysics. Writing to the
general public I cannot presume that they are good judges of anything
but a practical and moral argument. The _a priori_ views of God, of
which I here speak, involve no subtle questions; they are simply those
views which are attained _independently of the alleged authoritative
information_, and, of course, are founded upon considerations
_earlier_ than it.

But it would take too much of space and time, and be far too tedious
to my readers, if I were to go in detail through Mr. Rogers's
objections and misrepresentations. I have the sad task of attacking
_his good faith_, to which I further proceed.

II. In the preface to my second edition of the "Hebrew Monarchy,"
I found reason to explain briefly in what sense I use the word
inspiration. I said, I found it to be current in three senses;
"first, as an extraordinary influence peculiar to a few persons, as
to prophets and apostles; secondly, _as an ordinary influence of the
Divine Spirit on the hearts of men, which quickens and strengthens
their moral and spiritual powers_, and is accessible to them all (in
a certain stage of development) _in some proportion to their own
faithfulness._ The third view teaches that genius and inspiration are
two names for one thing.... _Christians for the most part hold the two
first conceptions_, though they generally call the second _spiritual
influence_, not inspiration; the third, seems to be common in the
Old Testament. It so happens that the _second is the only inspiration
which I hold._" [I here super-add the italics] On this passage Mr. Rogers commented as follows ("Defence" p. 156):--

"The latest utterance of Mr. Newman on the subject [of inspiration] that I have read, occurs in his preface to the second edition of his "Hebrew Monarchy," where he tells us, that he believes it is an influence accessible to all men, _in a certain stage of development_. [Italics.] Surely it will be time to consider his theory of inspiration, when he has told us a little more about it. To my mind, if the very genius of mystery had framed the definition, it could not have uttered anything more indefinite."

Upon this passage the "Prospective" reviewer said his say as follows (vol x. p. 217):--

"The writer will very considerately defer criticism on Mr. Newman's indefinite definition, worthy of the genius of mystery, till its author has told us a little more about it. Will anyone believe that he himself deliberately omits the substance of the definition, and gives in its stead a parenthetical qualification, which might be left out of the original, without injury either to the grammatical structure, or to the general meaning of the sentence in which it occurs?" He proceeds to state what I did say, and adds: "Mr. Newman, in the very page in which this statement occurs, expressly identifies his doctrine with the ordinary Christian belief of Divine influence. His words are exactly coincident in sense with those employed by the author of the
"Eclipse," where he acknowledges the reality of 'the ordinary, though mysterious action, by which God aids those who sincerely seek him in every good word and work.' The moral faithfulness of which Mr. Newman speaks, is the equivalent of the sincere search of God in good word and work, which his opponent talks of."

I must quote the _entire_ reply given to this in the "Defence," second edition, p. 224:--

"And now for a few examples of my opponent's criticisms. 1. I said in the "Defence" that I did not understand Mr. Newman's notions of inspiration, and that, as to his very latest utterance--namely, that it was an influence _accessible to all men in a certain stage of development_ [italics], it was utterly unintelligible to me. 'Will any one believe (says my critic) that he deliberately omits the substance of the definition, and gives in its stead a parenthetical qualification, which might be left out of the original without injury either to the grammatical structure or to the general meaning of the sentence in which it occurs? Was anything ever more amusing? A parenthetical clause which might be left out of the original without injury to the grammatical structure or to the general meaning! _Might_ be left out? Ay, to be sure it might, and not only 'without injury,' but with benefit; just as the dead fly which makes the ointment of the apothecary to stink might be left out of _that_ without injury. But it was _not_ left out; and it is precisely because it was there, and diffused so remarkable an odour over the whole, that I characterized the definition as I did--and most justly. Accessible to all men in
a certain stage of development! When and how _accessible_? What _species_ of development, I beseech you, is meant? And what is the _stage_ of it? The very thing, which, as I say, and as everybody of common sense must see, renders the definition utterly vague, is the very clause in question."

Such is his _entire_ notice of the topic. From any other writer I should indeed have been amazed at such treatment. I had made the very inoffensive profession of agreeing with the current doctrine of Christians concerning spiritual influence. As I was not starting any new theory, but accepting what is notorious, nothing more than an indication was needed. I gave, what I should not call definition, but description of it. My critic conceals that I have avowed agreement with Christians; refers to it as a theory of my own; complains that it is obscure; pretends to quote my definition, and leaves out all the cardinal words of it, which I have above printed in italics. My defender, in the "Prospective Review," exposes these mal-practices; points out that my opponent is omitting the main words, while complaining of deficiency; that I profess to agree with Christians in general; and _that I evidently agree with my critic in particular_. The critic undertakes to reply to this, and the reader has before him the whole defence. The man who, as it were, puts his hand on his heart to avow that he anxiously sets before his readers, if not what I _mean_, yet certainly what I have _expressed_--still persists in hiding from them the facts of the case; avoids to quote from the reviewer so much as to let out that I profess to agree[8] with what is prevalent among Christians and have no peculiar theory;--still
withholds the cardinal points of what he calls my definition; while
he tries to lull his reader into inattention by affecting to be
highly amused, and by bantering and bullying in his usual style, while
perverting the plainest words in the world.

I have no religious press to take my part. I am isolated, as my
assailant justly remarks. For a wonder, a stray review here and
there has run to my aid, while there is a legion on the other
side--newspapers, magazines, and reviews. Now if any orthodox man, any
friend of my assailant, by some chance reads these pages, I beg him to
compare my quotations, thus fully given, with the originals; and if he
find anything false in them, then let him placard me as a LIAR in the
whole of the religious press. But if he finds that I am right,
then let him learn in what sort of man he is trusting--what sort of
champion of _truth_ this religious press has cheered on.

III. I had complained that Mr. Rogers falsely represented me to make
a fanatical "divorce" between the intellectual and the spiritual, from
which he concluded that I ought to be indifferent as to the worship of
Jehovah or of the image which fell down from Jupiter. He has pretended
that my religion, according to me, has received nothing by traditional
and historical agencies; that it owes nothing to men who went before
me; that I believe I have (in my single unassisted bosom) "a spiritual
faculty so bright as to anticipate all essential[9] spiritual
verities;" that had it not been for traditional religion, "we should
everywhere have heard the invariable utterance of spiritual religion
in the one dialect of the heart,"--that "this divinely implanted
faculty of spiritual discernment anticipates all external truth,"
&c. &c. I then adduced passages to show that his statement was
emphatically and utterly contrary to fact. In his "Defence," he thus
replies, p. 75:--

"I say with an unfltering conscience, that no controvertist ever more
honestly and sincerely sought to give his opponent's views, than I
did Mr. Newman's, after the most diligent study of his rather obscure
books; and that whether I have succeeded or not in giving what he
_thought_, I have certainly given what he _expressed_. It is quite
true that I supposed Mr. Newman intended to "divorce" faith and
intellect; and what else on earth could I suppose, in common even
with those who were most leniently disposed towards him, from such
sentiments as these? ALL THE GROUNDS OF BELIEF PROPOSED TO THE MERE
UNDERSTANDING HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH FAITH AT ALL. THE PROCESSES OF
THOUGHT HAVE NOTHING TO QUICKEN THE CONSCIENCE OR AFFECT THE SOUL.
_How then can the state of the soul be tested by the conclusion to
which the intellect is led?_ I was _compelled_, I say, to take these
passages as everybody else took them, to _mean_ what they obviously
_express_."

Here he so isolates three assertions of mine from their context, as
to suggest for each of them a false meaning, and make it difficult for
the reader who has not my book at hand to discover the delusion.
The first is taken from a discussion of the arguments concerning the
soul's immortality ("Soul," p. 223, 2nd edition), on which I wrote
thus, p. 219:--that to judge of the accuracy of a metaphysical
argument concerning mind and matter, requires not a pure conscience and a loving soul, but a clear and calm head; that if the doctrine of immortality be of high religious importance, we cannot believe it to rest on such a basis, that those in whom the religious faculties are most developed may be more liable to err concerning it than those who have no religious faculty in action at all. On the contrary, concerning truths which are really spiritual it is an obvious axiom,[10] that "he who is spiritual judgeth all things, and he himself is judged of no man." After this I proceeded to allude to the history of the doctrine among the Hebrews, and quoted some texts of the Psalms, the _argument_ of which, I urged, is utterly inappreciable to the pure logician, "because it is spiritually discerned." I continued as follows:--

"This is as it should be. Can a mathematician understand physiology, or a physiologist questions of law? A true love of God in the soul itself, an insight into Him depending on that love, and a hope rising out of that insight, are prerequisite for contemplating this spiritual doctrine, which is a spontaneous impression of the gazing soul, powerful (perhaps) in proportion to its faith; whereas all the grounds of belief proposed to the mere understanding have nothing to do with faith at all."

I am expounding the doctrine of the great Paul of Tarsus, who indeed applies it to this very topic,—the future bliss which God has prepared for them that love him. Does Mr. Rogers attack Paul as making a fanatical divorce between faith and intellect, and say that he is
_compelled_ so to understand him, when he avows that "the natural man understandeth not the things of God; for they are foolishness unto him." "When the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." Here is a pretended champion of Evangelical truth seeking to explode as absurdities the sentiments and judgments which have ever been at the heart of Christianity, its pride and its glory!

But I justify my argument as free from fanaticism--and free from obscurity when the whole sentence is read--to a Jew or Mohammedan, quite as much as to a Christian.

My opponent innocently asks, _how much_ I desire him to quote of me? But is innocence the right word, when he has quoted but two lines and a half, out of a sentence of seven and a half, and has not even given the clause complete? By omitting, in his usual way, the connecting particle _whereas_, he hides from the reader that he has given but half my thought; and this is done, after my complaint of this very proceeding. A reader who sees the whole sentence, discerns at once that I oppose "the _mere_ understanding," to the whole soul; in short, that by the man who has _mere_ understanding, I mean him whom Paul calls "the natural man." Such a man may have metaphysical talents and acquirements, he may be a physiologist or a great lawyer; nay, I will add, (to shock my opponent's tender nerves), _even if he be an Atheist_, he may be highly amiable and deserving of respect and love; but if he has no spiritual development, he cannot have insight into spiritual truth. Hence such arguments for immortality as _can_ be
appreciated by him, and _cannot_ be appreciated by religious men as such, "have nothing to do with faith at all"

The two other passages are found thus, in p. 245 of the "Soul," 2nd edition. After naming local history, criticism of texts, history of philosophy, logic, physiology, demonology, and other important but very difficult studies, I ask:--

"Is it not extravagant to call inquiries of this sort _spiritual_ or to expect any spiritual[11] results from them? When the spiritual man (as such) cannot judge, the question is removed into a totally different court from that of the soul, the court of the critical understanding.... How then can the state of the soul be tested by the conclusion to which the intellect is led? What means the anathematizing of those who remain unconvinced? And how can it be imagined that the Lord of the soul cares more about a historical than about a geological, metaphysical, or mathematical argument? The processes of thought have nothing to quicken the conscience or affect the soul."

From my defender in the "Prospective Review" I learn that in the first edition of the "Defence" the word _thought_ in the last sentence above was placed in italics. He not only protested against this and other italics as misleading, but clearly explained my sense, which, as I think, needs no other interpreter than the context. In the new edition the italics are removed, but the unjust isolation of the sentences
remains. "_The_ processes of thought," of which I spoke, are not "_all_ processes," but the processes _involved in the abstruse inquiries to which I had referred_. To say that _no_ processes of thought quicken the conscience, or affect the soul, would be a gross absurdity. This, or nothing else, is what he imputes to me; and even after the protest made by the "Prospective" reviewer, my assailant not only continues to hide that I speak of _certain_ processes of thought, not _all_ processes, but even has the hardihood to say that he takes the passages as _everybody else_ does, and that he is _compelled_ so to do.

In my own original reply I appealed to places where I had fully expressed my estimate of intellectual progress, and its ultimate beneficial action. All that I gain by this, is new garblings and taunts for inconsistency. "Mr. Newman," says be, "is the last man in the world to whom I would deny the benefit of having contradicted himself." But I must confine myself to the garbling. "Defence," p. 95:--

"Mr. Newman affirms that my representations of his views on this subject are the most direct and intense reverse of all that he has most elaborately and carefully written!" He still says, "_what_ God reveals, he reveals within and not without," and "he _did_ say (though, it seems, he says no longer), that 'of God we know everything from within, nothing from without;' yet he says I have grossly misrepresented him."
This pretended quotation is itself garbled. I wrote, ("Phases," 1st edition, p. 152)--"Of _our moral and spiritual_ God we know nothing without, everything within." By omitting the adjectives, the critic produces a statement opposed to my judgment and to my writings; and then goes on to say."Well, if Mr. Newman will engage to prove contradictions,... I think it is no wonder that his readers do not understand him."

I believe it is a received judgment, which I will not positively assert to be true, but I do not think I have anywhere denied, that God is discerned by us in the universe as a designer, creator, and mechanical ruler, through a mere study of the world and its animals and all their adaptations, _even without_ an absolute necessity of meditating consciously on the intelligence of man and turning the eyes within. Thus a creative God may be said to be discerned "from without." But in my conviction, that God is not _so_ discerned to be _moral_ or _spiritual_ or to be _our_ God; but by moral intellect and moral experience acting "inwardly." If Mr. Rogers chooses to deny the justness of my view, let him deny it; but by omitting the emphatic adjectives he has falsified my sentence, and then has founded upon it a charge of inconsistency. In a previous passage (p. 79) he gave this quotation in full, in order to reproach me for silently withdrawing it in my second edition of the "Phases." He says:--

"The two sentences in small capitals are not found in the new edition of the 'Phases.' _They are struck out_. It is no doubt the right of an
author to erase in a new edition any expressions he pleases; but
when he is about to charge another with having grossly garbled and
stealthily misrepresented him, it is as well to let the world know
_what_ he has erased and _why_. He says that my representation of his
sentiments is the most direct and intense reverse of all that he
has most elaborately and carefully written. It certainly is not the
intense reverse of all that he has most elaborately and carefully
_scratched out_.

I exhibit here the writer's own italics.

By this attack on my good faith, and by pretending that my withdrawal
of the passage is of serious importance, he distracts the reader's
attention from the argument there in hand (p. 79), which is, _not_
what are my sentiments and judgements, but whether he had a right
to dissolve and distort my chain of reasoning (see I. above) while
affecting to quote me, and pretending that I gave nothing but
assertion. As regards my "elaborately and carefully _scratching out_,"
this was done; 1. Because the passage seemed to me superfluous; 2.
Because I had pressed the topic elsewhere; 3. Because I was going to
enlarge on it in my reply to him, p. 199 of my second edition.[12]

When the real place comes where my critic is to deal with the
substance of the passage (p. 94 of "Defence"), the reader has seen how
he mutilates it.

The other passage of mine which he has adduced, employs the word
_reveals_, in a sense analogous to that of _revelation_, in avowed
relation to _things moral and spiritual_, which would have been seen,
had not my critic reversed the order of my sentences; which he does again in p. 78 of the "Defence," after my protest against his doing so in the "Eclipse." I wrote: (Soul, p. 59) "Christianity itself has thus practically confessed, what is theoretically clear, that an authoritative _external_ revelation of moral and spiritual truth is essentially impossible to man. What God reveals to us, he reveals _within_, through the medium of our moral and spiritual senses."
The words, "What God reveals," seen in the light of the preceding sentence, means: "That portion of _moral and spiritual truth_ which God reveals." This cannot be discovered in the isolated quotation; and as, both in p. 78 and in p. 95, he chooses to quote my word _What_ in italics, his reader is led on to interpret me as saying "_every thing whatsoever_ which we know of God, we learn from within;" a statement which is not mine.

Besides this, the misrepresentation of which I complained is not confined to the rather metaphysical words of _within_ and _without_, as to which the most candid friends may differ, and may misunderstand one another;--as to which also I may be truly open to correction;--but he assumes the right to tell his readers that my doctrine undervalues Truth, and Intellect, and Traditional teaching, and External suggestion, and Historical influences, and counts the Bible an impertinence. When he fancies he can elicit this and that, by his own logic, out of sentences and clauses torn from their context, he has no right to disguise what I have said to the contrary, and claim to justify his fraud by accusing me of self-contradiction. Against all my protests, and all that I said to the very opposite previous to
any controversy, he coolly alludes to it (p. 40 of the "Defence")
as though it were my avowed doctrine, that: "_Each_ man, looking
exclusively within, can _at once_ rise to the conception of God's
infinite perfections."

IV. When I agree with Paul or David (or think I do), I have a right
to quote their words reverentially; but when I do so, Mr. Rogers
deliberately justifies himself in ridiculing them, pretending that he
only ridicules _me_. He thus answers my indignant denunciation in the
early part of his "Defence," p. 5:--

"Mr. Newman warns me with much solemnity against thinking that
'questions pertaining to God are advanced by boisterous glee.' I do
not think that the 'Eclipse' is characterised by boisterous glee; and
certainly I was not at all aware, that the things which _alone_[13]
I have ridiculed--some of them advanced by him, and some by
others--deserved to be treated with solemnity. For example, that an
authoritative external revelation,[14] which most persons have thought
possible enough, is _im_possible,--that man is most likely born for
a dog's life, and 'there an end'--that there are great defects in the
morality of the New Testament, and much imperfection in the character
of its founder,--that the miracles of Christ might be real, because
Christ was a _clairvoyant_ and mesmerist,--that God was not a Person,
but a Personality;--I say, I was not aware that these things, and such
as these, which alone I ridiculed, were questions 'pertaining to God,'
in any other sense than the wildest hypotheses in some sense pertain
to science, and the grossest heresies to religion."
Now first, is his statement true?

_Are_ these the _only_ things which he ridiculed?

I quoted in my reply to him enough to show what was the class of "things pertaining to God" to which I referred. He forces me to requote some of the passages. "Eclipse," p. 82 [1st ed.] "You shall be permitted to say (what I will not contradict), that though _Mr. Newman may be inspired_ for aught I know ... inspired as much as (say) _the inventor of Lucifer matches_--yet that his book is not divine,--that it is purely human."

Again: p. 126 [1st ed.] "Mr. Newman says to those who say they are unconscious of these facts of spiritual pathology, that _the consciousness of the spiritual man is not the less true, that_ [though?] _the unspiritual man is not privy to it_; and this most devout gentleman quotes with unction the words: _For the spiritual man judgeth all things, but himself is judged of no man_."

P. 41, [1st ed.], "I have rejected creeds, and I have found what the Scripture calls, _that peace which passeth all understanding_." "I am sure it passes mine, (says Harrington) if you have really found it, and I should be much obliged to you, if you would let me participate in the discovery." "Yes, says Fellowes:... '_I have escaped from the
bondage of the letter and have been introduced into the liberty of the
Spirit.... The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. The fruit
of the Spirit is joy, peace, not_--"" "Upon my word (said Harrington,
laughing), I shall presently begin to fancy that Douce Davie Deans has
turned infidel."

I have quoted enough to show the nature of my complaints. I charge the
satirist with profanity, for ridiculing sentiments which _he himself_
avows to be holy, ridiculing them for no other reason but that with
_me also_ they are holy and revered. He justifies himself in p. 5
of his "Defence," as above, by denying my facts. He afterwards, in
Section XII. p. 147, admits and defends them; to which I shall return.

I beg my reader to observe how cleverly Mr. Rogers slanders me in the
quotation already made, from p. 5, by insinuating, first, that it is
my doctrine, "that man is _most likely_ born for _a dog's life_,
and there an end;" next, that I have taken under my patronage the
propositions, that "the miracles of Christ might be real, because
Christ was a _clairvoyant_ and mesmerist, and that God is not a Person
but a Personality." I cannot but be reminded of what the "Prospective"
reviewer says of Zeuxis and the grapes, when I observe the delicate
skill of touch by which the critic puts on just enough colour to
affect the reader's mind, but not so much as to draw him to closer
examination. I am at a loss to believe that he supposes me to think
that a theory of mesmeric wonders (as the complement of an atheistic
creed?) is "a question pertaining to God," or that my rebuke bore the
slightest reference to such a matter. As to Person and Personality, it
is a subtle distinction which I have often met from Trinitarians; who, when they are pressed with the argument that three divine Persons are nothing but three Gods, reply that Person is not the correct translation of the mystical _Hypostasis_ of the Greeks, and Personality is perhaps a truer rendering. If I were to answer with the jocosity in which my critic indulges, I certainly doubt whether he would justify me. So too, when a Pantheist objects (erringly, as I hold) that a Person is necessarily something finite, so that God cannot be a Person; if, against this, a Theist contend that God is at once a Person and a Principle, and invent a use of the word Personality to overlap both ideas; we may reject his nomenclature as too arbitrary, but what rightful place ridicule has here, I do not see. Nevertheless, it had wholly escaped my notice that the satirist had ridiculed it, as I now infer that he did.

He tells me he _was not aware_ that the holding that _there are great defects in the morality of the New Testament, and much imperfection in the character of its Founder, was a question pertaining to God_. Nor indeed was _I_ aware of it.

I regard questions concerning a book and a human being to be purely secular, and desire to discuss them, not indeed with ridicule but with freedom. When _I_ discuss them, he treats my act as intolerably offensive, as though the subject were sacred; yet he now pretends that _I_ think such topics "pertain to God," and he was not aware of it until I told him so! Thus he turns away the eyes of his readers from my true charge of profanity, and fixes them upon a fictitious charge
so as to win a temporary victory. At the same time, since Christians
believe the morality of the _Old_ Testament to have great defects,
and that there was much imperfection in the character of its eminent
saints, prophets, and sages; I cannot understand how my holding
the very same opinion concerning the _New_ Testament should be a
peculiarly appropriate ground of banter and merriment; nor make me
more justly offensive to Christians, than the Pauline doctrine is to
Jews.

In more than one place of this "Defence" he misrepresents what I have
written on Immortality, in words similar to those here used, though
here he does _not_[15] expressly add my name. In p. 59, he says,
that "according to Mr. Newman's theology, it is most _probable_
(in italics) that the successive generations of men, with perfect
indifference to their relative moral conditions, their crimes
or wrongs, are all knocked on the head together; and that future
adjustment and retribution is a dream." (So p. 72.) In a note to the
next page, he informs his readers that if I say that I have left the
question of immortality _doubtful_, it does not affect the argument;
for I have admitted "the probability" of there being no future life.

This topic was specially discussed by me in a short chapter of my
treatise on the "Soul," to which alone it is possible for my critic to
refer. In that chapter assuredly I do _not_ say what he pretends; what
I _do_ say is, (after rejecting, as unsatisfactory to me, the popular
arguments from metaphysics, and from the supposed need of a future
state to _redress the inequalities of this life_:) p. 232: "But do I
then deny a future life, or seek to undermine a belief of it? _Most assuredly not_; but I would put the belief (whether it is to be weaker or firmer) on a _spiritual_ basis, and on none other."

I am ashamed to quote further from that chapter in this place; the ground on which I there tread is too sacred for controversy. But that a Christian advocate should rise from reading it to tell people that he has a right to _ridicule_ me for holding that "man is _most likely born for a dog's life_, and there an end;" absorbs my other feelings in melancholy. I am sure that any candid person, reading that chapter, must see that I was hovering between doubt, hope, and faith, on this subject, and that if any one could show me that a Moral Theism and a Future Life were essentially combined, I should joyfully embrace the second, as a fit complement to the first. This writer takes the opposite for granted; that if he can convince me that the doctrine of a Future Life is essential to Moral Theism, he will--not _add_ to--but _refute_ my Theism! Strange as this at first appears, it is explained by his method. He draws a hideous picture of what God's world has been in the past, and indeed is in the present; with words so reeking of disgust and cruelty, that I cannot bear to quote them; and ample quotation would be needful. Then he infers, that since I must admit all this, I virtually believe in an immoral Deity. I suppose his instinct rightly tells him, that I shall not be likely to reason, "Because God can be so very cruel or careless to-day, he is sure to be very merciful and vigilant hereafter." Accepting his facts as a _complete_ enumeration of the phenomena of the present world, I suppose it is better inductive logic to say: "He who can be himself so
cruel, and endure such monsters of brutality for six or more thousand years, must (by the laws of external induction) be the same, and leave men the same, for all eternity; and is clearly reckless of moral considerations." If I adopt this alternative, I become a Pagan or an Atheist, one or other of which Mr. Rogers seems anxious to make me. If he would urge, that to look at the dark and terrible side of human life is onesided and delusive, and that the God who is known to us in Nature has so tempered the world to man and man to the world as to manifest his moral intentions;--(arguments, which I think, my critic must have heard from Socrates or Plato, without pooling out on them scalding words, such as I feel and avow to be blasphemous;)--then he might perhaps help my faith where it is weakest, and give me (more or less) aid to maintain a future life dogmatically, instead of hopefully and doubtfully. But now, to use my friend Martineau's words: "His method doubles every difficulty without relieving any, and tends to enthrone a Devil everywhere, and leave a God nowhere."

Since he wrote his second edition of the "Defence," I have brought out my work called "Theism," in which (without withdrawing my objections to the popular idea of future _Retribution_) I have tried to reason out a doctrine of Future Life from spiritual considerations. I have no doubt that my critic would find them highly aboard, and perhaps would pronounce them ineffably ludicrous, and preposterous feats of logic. If I could hide their existence from him, I certainly would, lest he misquote and misinterpret them. But as I cannot keep the book from him, I here refer to it to say, that if I am to maintain this most profound and mysterious doctrine with any practical intensity,
my convictions in the power of the human mind to follow such high
inquiries, need to be greatly _strengthened_, not to be undermined
by such arguments and such detestable pictures of this world, as Mr.
Rogers holds up to me.

He throws at me the imputation of holding, that "man is _most likely_
born for a _dog's life_, and there an end." And is then the life of
a saint for seventy years, or for seven years, no better than a dog's
life? What else but a _long_ dog's life does this make heaven to be?
Such an undervaluing of a short but noble life, is consistent with
the scheme which blasphemes earth in order to ennoble heaven, and then
claims to be preeminently logical. According to the clear evidence of
the Bible, the old saints in general were at least as uncertain as I
have ever been concerning future life; nay, according to the writer
to the Hebrews, "through fear of death they were all their lifetime
subject to bondage." If I had called _that_ a dog's life, how
eloquently would Mr. Rogers have rebuked me!

V. But I must recur to his defence of the profanity with which he
treats sacred sentiments and subjects. After pretending, in p. 5, that
he had ridiculed nothing but the things quoted above, he at length,
in pp. 147-156, makes formal admission of my charge and _justifies
himself_. The pith of his general reply is in the following, p. 152:--

"Now (says Mr. Newman) I will not here farther insist on the
monstrosity of bringing forward St. Paul's words in order to pour
contempt upon them; a monstrosity which no sophistry of Mr. Harrington

can justify! I think the _real_ monstrosity is, that men should

so coolly employ St. Paul's words,—for it is a quotation from the

treatise on the "Soul,"—to mean something totally different from

anything he intended to convey by them, and employ the dialect of the

Apostles to contradict their doctrines; that is the monstrosity ... It

is very hard to conceive that Mr. Newman did not see this.... But had

he gone on only a few lines, the reader would have seen Harrington

saying: 'These words you have just quoted were well in St. Paul's

mouth, and had a meaning. In yours, I suspect, they would have none,

or a very different one."


According to this doctrine of Mr. Rogers, it would not have been

profane in an unbelieving Jew to _make game_ of Moses, David, and the

Prophets, whenever they were quoted by Paul. The Jew most profoundly

believed that Paul quoted the old Scriptures in a false, as well as in

a new meaning. One Christian divine does not feel free to ridicule

the words of Paul when quoted erroneously (as he thinks) by another

Christian divine? Why then, when quoted by me? I hold it to be a great

insolence to deny my right to quote Paul or David, as much as Plato

or Homer, and adopt their language whenever I find it to express my

sentiment. Mr. Rogers's claim to deride highly spiritual truth, barely

because I revere it, is a union of inhumanity and impiety. He has

nowhere shown that Paul meant something "totally different" from

the sense which I put on his words. I know that he cannot. I do

not pretend always to bind myself to the definite sense of my

predecessors; nor did the writers of the New Testament. They often
adopt and apply _in an avowedly new sense_ the words of the Old Testament; so does Dr. Watts with the Hebrew Psalms. Such adaptation, in the way of development and enlargement, when done with sincerely pious intention, has never been reproved or forbidden by Christians, Whether I am wise or unwise in my interpretations, the _subject_ is a sacred one, and I treat it solemnly; and no errors in my "logic" can justify Mr. Rogers in putting on the mask of a profane sceptic, who scoffs (not once or twice, but through a long book) at the most sacred and tender matters, such as one always dreads to bring before a promiscuous public, lest one cast pearls before swine. And yet unless devotional books be written, especially by those who have as yet no church, how are we to aid one another in the uphill straggle to maintain some elements of a heavenly life? Can anything be more heartless, or more like the sneering devil they talk of, than Mr. Harrington? And here one who professes himself a religious man, and who deliberately, after protest, calls _me_ an INFIDEL, is not satisfied with having scoffed in an hour of folly--(in such an hour, I can well believe, that melancholy record the "Eclipse of Faith," was first penned)--but he persists in justifying his claim to jeer and snarl and mutilate, and palm upon me senses which he knows are deliberately disavowed by me, all the while pretending that it is my bad logic which justifies him! We know that very many religious men _are_ bad logicians: if I am as puzzle-headed a fool as Mr. Rogers would make people think me, how does that justify his mocking at my religion? He justifies himself on the ground that I criticize the New Testament as freely as I should Cicero (p. 147). Well, then let him criticize me, as freely (and with as little of suppression) as I criticize it. But I do not _laugh_ at it; God forbid! The reader will
see how little reason Mr. Rogers had to imagine that I had not read
so far as to see Harrington's defence; which defence is, either an
insolent assumption, or at any rate not to the purpose.

I will here add, that I have received letters from numerous Christians
to thank me for my book on the "Soul," in such terms as put the
conduct of Mr. Rogers into the most painful contrast: painful, as
showing that there are other Christians who know, and _he_ does not
know _, what is the true heart and strength of Christianity. He trusts
in logic and ridicules the Spirit of God.

That leads me to his defence of his suggestion that I might be
possibly as much inspired as the inventor of lucifer matches. He says,
p. 154:--

"Mr. Newman tells me, that I have clearly a profound unbelief in the
Christian doctrine of divine influence, or I could not thus grossly
insult it I answer... that which Harrington ridiculed, as the context
would have shown Mr. Newman, if he had had the patience to read
on, and the calmness to judge, is the chaotic view of inspiration,
_formally_ held by Mr. Parker, who is _expressly_ referred to,

The passage concerning Mr. Parker is in the _preceding_ page: I had
read it, and I do not see how it at all relieves the disgust which
every right-minded man must feel at this passage. My disgust is not
personal: though I might surely ask,—If Parker has made a mistake, how does that justify insulting _me_? As I protested, I have made no peculiar claim to inspiration. I have simply claimed "that which all[16] pious Jews and Christians since David have always claimed."

Yet he pertinaciously defends this rude and wanton passage, adding, p. 155: "As to the inventor of lucifer matches, I am thoroughly convinced that he has shed more light upon the world and been abundantly more useful to it, than many a cloudy expositor of modern spiritualism."

Where to look for the "many" expositors of spiritualism, I do not know. Would they were more numerous.

Mr. Parker differs from me as to the use of the phrase "Spirit of God." I see practical reasons, which I have not here space to insist on, for adhering to the _Christian_, as distinguished from the _Jewish_ use of this phrase. Theodore Parkes follows the phraseology of the Old Testament, according to which Bezaleel and others received the spirit of God to aid them in mere mechanical arts, building and tailoring. To ridicule Theodore Parker for this, would seem to me neither witty nor decent in an unbeliever; but when one does so, who professes to believe the whole Old Testament to be sacred, and stoops to lucifer matches and the Eureka shirt, as if this were a refutation, I need a far severer epithet. Mr. Rogers implies that the light of a lucifer match is comparable to the light of Theodore Parker; what will be the judgment of mankind a century hence, if the wide dissemination of the "Eclipse of Faith" lead to inscribing the name of Henry Rogers permanently in biographical dictionaries! Something of this sort may appear:--
"THEODORE PARKER, the most eminent moral theologian whom the first half of the nineteenth century produced in the United States. When the churches were so besotted, as to uphold the curse of slavery because they found it justified in the Bible; when the Statesmen, the Press, the Lawyers, and the Trading Community threw their weight to the same fatal side; Parker stood up to preach the higher law of God against false religion, false statesmanship, crooked law and cruel avarice. He enforced three great fundamental truths, God, Holiness, and Immortality. He often risked life and fortune to rescue the fugitive slave. After a short and very active life full of good works, he died in blessed peace, prematurely worn out by his perpetual struggle for the true, the right, and the good. His preaching is the crisis which marked the turn of the tide in America from the material to the moral, which began to enforce the eternal laws of God on trade, on law, on administration, and on the professors of religion itself."

And what will be then said of him, who now despises the noble Parker? I hope something more than the following:--"HENRY ROGERS, an accomplished gentleman and scholar, author of many books, of which by far the most popular was a smart satirical dialogue, disfigured by unjustifiable garbling and profane language, the aim of which was to sneer down Theodore Parker and others who were trying to save spiritual doctrine out of the wreck of historical Christianity."

Jocose scoffing, and dialogue writing is the easiest of tasks; and
if Mr. Rogers's co-religionists do not take the alarm, and come in
strength upon Messrs. Longman, imploring them to suppress these books
of Mr. Rogers, persons who despise _all_ religion (with whom Mr.
Rogers pertinaciously confounds me under the term infidel), may one of
these days imitate his sprightly example against his creed and church.
He himself seems to me at present incurable. I do not appeal to _him_.
I appeal to his co-religionists, how they would like the publication
of a dialogue, in which his free and easy sceptic "Mr. Harrington"
might reason on the _opposite_ side to that pliable and candid man
of straw "Mr. Fellowes?" I here subjoin for their consideration, an
imaginary extract of the sort which, by their eager patronage of the
"Eclipse of Faith," they are inviting against themselves.

_Extract._

I say, Fellowes! (said Harrington), what was that, that Parker and
Rogers said about the Spirit of God?

Excuse me (said Fellowes), Theodore Parker and Henry Rogers hold very
different views, Mr. Rogers would be much hurt to bear you class him
with Parker.

I know (replied he), but they both hold that God inspires people; and
that is a great point in common, as I view it. Does not Mr. Rogers
believe the Old Testament inspired and all of it true?
Certain (said Fellowes): at least he was much shocked with Mr. Newman for trying to discriminate its chaff from its wheat.

Well then, he believes, does not he, that Jehovah filled men _with the spirit of wisdom_ to help them make a suit of clothes for Aaron!

Fellowes, after a pause, replied:--That is certainly written in the 28th chapter of Exodus.

Now, my fine fellow! (said Harrington), here is a question to _rile_ Mr. Rogers. If Aaron's toggery needed one portion of the spirit of wisdom from Jehovah, how many portions does the Empress Eugenie's best crinoline need?

Really (said Fellowes, somewhat offended), such ridicule seems to me profane.

Forgive me, dear friend (replied Harrington, with a sweet smile). _Your_ views I never will ridicule; for I know you have imbibed somewhat of Francis Newman's fancy, that one ought to feel tenderly towards other men's piety. But Henry Rogers is made of stouter stuff; he manfully avows that a religion, if it is true, ought to stand the test of ridicule, and he deliberately approves this weapon of attack.
I cannot deny that (said Fellowes, lifting his eyebrows).

But I was going to ask (continued Harrington) whether Mr. Rogers does not believe that Jehovah filled Bezaleel with the Spirit of God, for the work of jeweller, coppersmith, and mason?

Of course he does (answered Fellowes), the text is perfectly clear, in the 31st of Exodus; Bezaleel and Aholiab were both inspired to become cunning workmen.

By the Goose (said Harrington)--forgive a Socratic oath--I really do not see that Mr. Rogers differs much from Theodore Parker. If a man cannot hack a bit of stone or timber without the Spirit of God, Mr. Rogers will have hard work to convince me, that any one can make a rifled cannon without the Spirit of God.

There is something in that (said Fellowes). In fact, I have sometimes wondered how Mr. Rogers could say that which _looks_ so profane, as what he said about the Eureka shirt.

Pray what is that? (said Harrington;) and where?

It is in his celebrated "Defence," 2nd edition, p. 155. "_If_ Minos and Praxiteles are inspired in the same sense as Moses and Christ,
then the inventor of lucifer matches, as well as the inventor of the Eureka shirts, must be also admitted”—to be inspired.

Do you mean that he is trying to save the credit of Moses, by maintaining that the Spirit of God which guides a sculptor is _not_ the same in kind as that which guides a saint?

No (replied Fellowes, with surprise), he is not defending Moses; he is attacking Parker.

Bless me (said Harrington, starting up), what is become of the man's logic! Why, Parker and Moses are in the same boat. Mr. Rogers fires at it, in hope to sink Parker; and does not know that he is sending old Moses to Davy's locker.

Now this is too bad (said Fellowes), I really cannot bear it.

Nah! Nah! good friend (said Harrington, imploringly), be calm; and remember, we have agreed that ridicule--against _Mr. Rogers_, not against _you_--is fair play.

That is true (replied Fellowes with more composure).

Now (said Harrington, with a confidential air), you are my friend, and
I will tell you a secret--be sure you tell no one--I think that Henry Rogers, Theodore Parker, and Francis Newman are three ninnies; all wrong; for they all profess to believe in divine inspiration: yet they are not ninnies of the same class. I admit to Mr. Rogers that there is a real difference.

How do you mean (said Fellowes, with curiosity aroused)?

Why (said Harrington, pausing and becoming impressive), Newman is a flimsy mystic; he has no foundation, but he builds logically enough--at least as far as I see--on his fancies and other people's fancies. This is to be a simple ninny. But Mr. Rogers fancies he believes a mystical religion, and doesn't; and fancies he is very logical, and isn't. This is to be a doubly distilled ninny.

Really I do not call this ridicule, Mr. Harrington (said Fellowes, rising), I must call it slander. What right have you to say that Mr. Rogers does not believe in the holy truths of the New Testament?

Surely (replied Harrington) I have just as much right as Mr. Rogers has to say that Mr. Newman does not believe the holy sentiments of St. Paul, when Mr. Newman says he does. Do you remember how Mr. Rogers told him it was absurd for an infidel like him to third: he was in a condition to rebuke any one for being profane, or fancy he had a right to say that he believed this and that mystical text of Paul, which, Mr. Rogers avows, Newman totally mistakes and does not believe as
Paul meant it. Now I may be very wrong; but I augur that Newman _does not_ understand Paul, and Rogers does _not_. For Rogers is of the Paley school, and a wit; and a brilliant chap he is, like Macaulay. Such men cannot be mystics nor Puritans in Pauline fashion; they cannot bear to hear of a religion _from within_; but, as I heard a fellow say the other day, Newman has never worked off the Puritan leaven.

Well (said Fellowes), but why do you call Mr. Rogers illogical?

I think you have seen one instance already, but that is a trifle compared to his fundamental blunder (said Harrington).

What can you mean? how fundamental (asked his friend)?

Why, he says, that _I_ (for instance) who have so faith whatever in what he calls revelation, cannot have any just belief or sure knowledge of the moral qualities of God; in fact, am logically bound (equally with Mr. Newman) to regard God as _im_moral, if I judge by my own faculties alone. Does he not say that?

Unquestionably; he has a whole chapter (ch. III.) of his "Defence" to enforce this on Mr. Newman (replied Fellowes).

Well, next, he tells me, that when the Christian message, as from God, is presented to me, I am to believe it on the word of a God whom I
suppose to be, or _ought_ to suppose to be, immoral. If I suppose A B
a rogue, shall I believe the message which the rogue sends me?

Surely, Harrington, you forget that you are speaking of God, not of
man: you ought not to reason so (said Fellowes, somewhat agitated).

Surely, Fellowes, it is _you_ who forget (retorted Harrington) that
syllogism depends on form, not on matter. Whether it be God or Man,
makes no difference; the logic must be tried by turning the terms into
X Y Z. But I have not said all Mr. Rogers says, I am bound to throw
away the moral principles which I already have, at the bidding of a
God whom I am bound to believe to be immoral.

No, you are unfair (said Fellowes), I know he says that revelation
would confirm and _improve_ your moral principles.

But I am _not_ unfair. It is he who argues in a circle. What will be
_improvement_, is the very question pending. He says, that if Jehovah
called to me from heaven, “O Harrington! O Harrington! take thine
innocent son, thine only son, lay him on the altar and kill him,” I
should be bound to regard obedience to the command an _improvement_
of my morality; and this, though, up to the moment when I heard
the voice, I had been _bound logically_ to believe Jehovah to be an
IMMORAL God. What think you of that for logic?
I confess (said Fellowes, with great candour) I must yield up my
friend's reputation as a _logician_; and I begin to think he was
unwise in talking so contemptuously of Mr. Newman's reasoning
faculties. But in truth, I love my friend for the great _spiritual_
benefits I have derived from him and cannot admit to you that he is
not a very sincere believer in mystical Christianity.

What benefits, may I ask? (said Harrington).

I have found by his aid the peace which passeth understanding (replied
he).

It passes my understanding, if you have (answered Harrington,
laughing), and I shall be infinitely obliged by your allowing me to
participate in the discovery. In plain truth, I do not trust your
mysticism.

But are you in a condition to form an opinion? (said Fellowes, with
a serious air). Mr. Rogers has enforced on me St. Paul's maxim: "The
natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God."

My most devout gentleman I (replied Harrington), how unctuous you are!
Forgive my laughing; but it does _so_ remind me of Douce Davie Deans.
I will make you professor of spiritual insight, &c., &c., &c.
Now is not this disgusting? Might I not justly call the man a "profane dog" who approved of it? Yet everything that is worst here is closely copied from the Eclipse of Faith, or justified by the Defence. How long will it be before English Christians cry out Shame against those two books?

VI. I must devote a few words to define the direction and justification of my argument in one chapter of this treatise. All good arguments are not rightly addressed to all persons. An argument good in itself may be inappreciable to one in a certain mental state, or may be highly exasperating. If a thoughtful Mohammedan, a searcher after truth, were to confide to a Christian a new basis on which he desired to found the Mohammedan religion—viz., the absolute moral perfection of its prophet, and were to urge on the Christian this argument in order to convert him, I cannot think that any one would blame the Christian for demanding what is the evidence of the fact. Such an appeal would justify his dissecting the received accounts of Mohammed, pointing out what appeared to be flaws in his moral conduct; nay, if requisite, urging some positive vice, such as his excepting himself from his general law of four wives only. But a Christian missionary would surely be blamed (at least I should blame him), if, in preaching to a mixed multitude of Mohammedans against the authority of their prophet, he took as his basis of refutation the prophet's personal sensuality. We are able to foresee that the exasperation
produced by such an argument must derange the balance of mind in the hearers, even if the argument is to the purpose; at the same time, it may be really away from the purpose to _them_, if their belief has no closer connexion with the personal virtue of the prophet, than has that of Jews and Christians with the virtue of Balaam or Jonah. I will proceed to imagine, that while a missionary was teaching, talking, and distributing tracts to recommend, his own views of religion, a Moolah were to go round and inform everybody that this Christian believed Mohammed to be an unchaste man, and had used the very argument to such and such a person. I feel assured that we should all pronounce this proceeding to be a very cunning act of spiteful, bigotry.

My own case, as towards certain Unitarian friends of mine, is quite similar to this. They preach to me the absolute moral perfection of a certain man (or rather, of a certain portrait) as a sufficient basis for my faith. Hereby they challenge me, and as it were force me, to inquire into its perfection. I have tried to confine the argument within a narrow circle. It is addressed by me specifically to them and not to others. I would _not_ address it to Trinitarians; partly, because they are not in a mental state to get anything from it but pain, partly because much of it becomes intrinsically bad _as argument_ when addressed to them. Many acts and words which would be _right_ from an incarnate God, or from an angel, are (in my opinion) highly _unbecoming_ from a man; consequently I must largely remould the argument before I could myself approve of it, if so addressed. The principle of the argument is such as Mr. Rogers justifies, when he says that Mr. Martineau _quite takes away all solid reasons for
believing in Christ's absolute perfection. (“Defence,” p. 220.) I opened my chapter (chapter VII.) above with a distinct avowal of my wish to confine the perusal of it to a very limited circle. Mr. Rogers (acting, it seems, on the old principle, that whatever one's enemy deprecates, is a good) instantly pounces on the chapter, avows that "if infidelity _could_ be ruined, such imprudencies[17] would go far to ruin it," p. 22; and because he believes that it will be "unspeakably[18] painful" to the orthodox for whom I do _not_ intend it, he prints the greater part of it in an Appendix, and expresses his regret that he cannot publish "every syllable of it," p. 22. Such is his tender regard for the feeling of his co-religionists.

My defender in the “Prospective Review” wound up as follows (x. p. 227):--

"And now we have concluded our painful task, which nothing but a feeling of what justice--literary, and personal--required, would have induced us to undertake. The tone of intellectual disparagement and moral rebuke which certain critics,--deceived by the shallowest sophisms with which an unscrupulous writer could work on their prepossessions and insult their understandings--have adopted towards Mr. Newman made exposure necessary. The length to which our remarks have extended requires apology. Evidence to character is necessarily cumulative, and not easily compressible within narrow limits. Enough has been said to show that there is not an art discreditable in controversy, to which recourse is not freely had in the 'Eclipse of Faith' and the Defence of it."
The reader must judge for himself whether this severe and terrible sentence of the reviewer proceeds from ill-temper and personal mortification, as the author of the Eclipse and its Defence gratuitously lays down, or whether it was prompted by a sense of justice, as he himself affirms.

[Footnote 1: The "Eclipse" had previously been noticed in the same review, on the whole favourably, by a writer of evidently a different religious school, and before I had exposed the evil arts of my assailant.]

[Footnote 2: The authorship is since acknowledged by Mr. Henry Rogers, in the title to his article on Bishop Butler in the "Encyclopaedia Britannica."]

[Footnote 3: That is, my "discovery" that the writer of the "Eclipse of Faith" grossly misquotes and misinterprets me.]

[Footnote 4: Page 225, he says, that each criticism "is quite worthy of Mr. Newman's _friend_, defender and admirer;" assuming a fact, in order to lower my defender's credit with his readers.]

[Footnote 5: As he puts "artful dodge" into quotation marks, his readers will almost inevitably believe that this vulgar language is
mine. In the same spirit to speaks of me as "making merry" with a Book Revelation; as if I had the slightest sympathy or share in the style and tone which pervades the "Eclipse." But there is no end of such things to be denounced.]

[Footnote 6: Italics in the original.]

[Footnote 7: In the ninth edition, p. 104, I find that to cover the formal falsehood of these words, he adds: "what he calls his arguments are assertions only," still withholding that which would confute him.]

[Footnote 8: I will here add, that this "stinking fly"--the parenthesis ("in a certain stage of development")--was added merely to avoid dogmatizing on the question, how early in human history or in human life this mysterious notion of the divine spirit is recognizable as commencing.]

[Footnote 9: If the word _essential_ is explained away, _this_ sentence may be attenuated to a truism.]

[Footnote 10: Paul to the Corinthians, 1st Ep. ii.]

[Footnote 11: This clause is too strong. "Expect _direct_ spiritual results," might have been better.]
Footnote 12: The substance of what I wrote was this. Socrates and Cicero ask, _where did we pick up our intelligence?_ It did not come from nothing; it most reside in the mind of him from whom we and this world came; God must be more intelligent than man, his creature.—But this argument may be applied with equal truth, not to intelligence only, but to all the essential high qualities of man, everything noble and venerable. Whence came the principle of love, which is the noblest of all! It must reside in God more truly and gloriously than in man. He who made loving hearts must himself be loving. Thus the intelligence and love of God are known through our consciousness of intelligence and love _within_.

Footnote 13: He puts _alone_ in italics. A little below he repeats, "which alone I ridiculed."

Footnote 14: He should add: "external _authoritative_ revelation _of moral and spiritual truth_." No communication from heaven could have moral weight, to a heart previously destitute of moral sentiment, or unbelieving in the morality of God.—What is there in this that deserves ridicule?

Footnote 15: He puts it between two other statements which avowedly refer to me.

Footnote 16: Mr. Rogers asks on this: "Does Mr. Newman mean that
he claims as much as the _apostles_ claimed, _whether they did so
rightfully or not_?" See how acutely a logician can pervert the word
_all_.

[Footnote 17: There is much meaning in the word imprudencies on which
I need not comment.]

[Footnote 18: "Unspeakably painful" is his phrase for something
much smaller, ("Eclipse" ninth edition p. 194,) which he insists on
similarly obtruding, against my will and protest.]

APPENDIX I.

It is an error not at all peculiar to the author of the "Eclipse of
Faith," but is shared with him by many others, and by one who has
treated me in a very different spirit, that Christians are able to
use atheistic arguments against me without wounding Christianity. As I
have written a rather ample book, called "Theism," expressly designed
to establish against Atheists and Pantheists that moral Theism which
Christians, Jews, and Mohammedans have in common, and which underlies
every attempt of any of the three religions to establish its peculiar
and supernatural claims; I have no need of entering on that argument
here. It is not true, that, as a Theist, I evade the objections urged
by real atheists or sceptics; on the contrary, I try to search them to
the very bottom. It is only in arguing with Christians that I disown
the obligation of reply; and that, because they are as much concerned
as I to answer; and ought to be able to give me, _on the ground of natural theology_, good replies to every fundamental objection from the sceptic, if I have not got them myself. To declare the objections of our common adversaries valid against those first principles of religion which are older than Jesus or Moses, is certainly to surrender the cause of Christianity.

If this need more elucidation, let it be observed, that no Christian can take a single step in argument with a heathen, much less establish his claim of authority for the Bible, without presuming that the heathen will admit, on hearing them, those doctrines of moral Theism, which, it is pretended, _I_ can have no good reason for admitting.

If the heathen sincerely retorts against the missionary such Pagan scepticism as is flung at me by Christians, the missionary's words are vain; nor is any success possible, unless (with me) he can lay a _prior_ foundation of moral Theism, independent of any assumption concerning the claims of the Bible. It avails nothing to preach repentance of sin and salvation from judgment to come, to minds which are truly empty of the belief that God has any care for morality. I of course do not say, and have never said, that the doctrine of the divine holiness, goodness, truth, must have been previously an active belief of the heathen hearer. To have stated a question clearly is often half the solution; and the teacher, who so states a high doctrine, gives a great aid to the learner's mind. But unless, after it has been affirmed that there is a Great Eternal Being pervading the universe, who disapproves of human evil and commands us to pursue the good, the conscience and intellect of the hearer gives assent, no
argument of moral religion can have weight with him; therefore neither can any argument about miracles, nor any appeal to the “Bible” as authoritative. Of course the book has not as yet any influence over him, nor will its miracles, any more than its doctrines, be received on the ground of their being in the book. Thus a direct and independent discernment of the great truths of moral Theism is a postulate, to be proved or conceded _before_ the Christian can begin the argument in favour of Biblical preternaturalism. I had thought it would have been avowed and maintained with a generous pride, that eminently in Christian literature we find the noblest, soundest, and fullest advocacy of moral Theism, as having its evidence in the heart of man within and nature without, _independently of any postulates concerning the Bible_. I certainly grew up for thirty years in that belief. Treatises on Natural Theology, which (with whatever success) endeavoured to trace—not only a constructive God in the outer world, but also a good God when that world is viewed in connexion with man; were among the text-books of our clergy and of our universities, and were in many ways crowned with honour. Bampton Lectures, Bridgewater Treatises, Burnet Prize Essays, have (at least till very recently in one case) been all, I rather think, in the same direction. And surely with excellent reason. To avow that the doctrines of Moral Theism have no foundation to one who sees nothing preternatural in the Bible, is in a Christian such a suicidal absurdity, that whenever an atheist advances it, it is met with indignant denial and contempt.

The argumentative strength of this Appendix, as a reply to those who call themselves “orthodox” Christians, is immensely increased by
analysing their subsidiary doctrines, which pretend to relieve,
while they prodigiously aggravate, the previous difficulties of Moral
Theism; I mean the doctrine of the fall of man by the agency of a
devil, and the eternal hell. But every man who dares to think will
easily work out such thoughts for himself.

APPENDIX II.

I here reproduce (merely that it may not be pretended that I silently
withdraw it) the substance of an illustration which I offered in my

When I deny that History can be Religion or a part of Religion, I
mean it exactly in the same sense, in which we say that history is not
mathematics, though mathematics has a history. Religion undoubtedly
comes to us by historical transmission: it has had a slow growth; but
so is it with mathematics, so is it with all other sciences. (I refer
to mathematics, not as peculiarly like to religion, but as peculiarly
unlike; it is therefore and _a fortiori_ argument. What is true of
them as sciences, is true of all science.) No science can flourish,
while it is received on authority. Science comes to us _by_ external
transmission, but is not believed _because_ of that transmission. The
history of the transmission is generally instructive, but is no proper
part of the science itself. All this is true of Religion.

THE END.