

trine of justification before God through His perfect righteousness alone—upon the office of faith in appropriating this righteousness and making it our own—upon the truth that salvation is grounded purely in Divine Grace, independent of human merit—upon the fact of the sinner's entire estrangement from God, and his just condemnation under a perfect and holy law—upon the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Ghost; who quickens us from spiritual death into spiritual life—upon personal holiness as the necessary voucher of a regenerate state—upon the offices of the Holy Spirit in renewing, enlightening, comforting, sanctifying and glorifying the believer—upon the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment—upon the eternal blessedness of the redeemed in Heaven, and the everlasting punishment of the wicked in Hell—upon each and upon all these supreme truths which are the ribs of the Christian system, there is not the breadth of a hair which divides the Evangelical churches of this country or of England. Why in this rapid enumeration I have run up a magnificent creed which none upon this platform to-night would hesitate to subscribe; and yet I have stated only in part the doctrinal consensus of the Catholic Church of God upon earth. It is true, it would not be difficult to draw up a formidable list of topics upon which we would honestly divide. Yet this would happen only when we came to specification of the minor details of the system, or to questions of external order which do not touch the vitals of Christianity at all. Upon the system, itself as it stands before us in its essential facts, we agree as with the heart and the voice of one man.

There arises then from this diversity in unity a capital advantage, that these different branches of the church become concurrent witnesses for the truth which they hold in common. There is no compulsory uniformity in their testimony. There is no collusion between the witnesses, patching up a system to be imposed upon the credulity of men. But in the free exercise of private judgment, each has bent over the sacred volume to find out its meaning for himself. That the investigation has been independent and free, is proved by their obstinate difference in given particulars; and their unanimity in affirming the truths which lie at the heart of the system, is a light shining upon the Bible such as could only be produced by the convergence of separate rays to a common focus.

Why is it that the life of our Lord is written by the four Evangelists? Could not one historian have given the substantive facts, without the apparent repetition of them by the other three? Why should Matthew, with his eye fixed upon the Jewish people, cast his narrative into a form which accumulates the testimonies to the Messiahship of Jesus? Why should Luke with his eye fixed upon the Gentile nations, bring out in minute and expressive features the true human nature of Christ—putting him thus in sympathetic relations to the human race, and tinging his Gospel with such a Pauline colour of thought? And why should John, the holy mystic of the Apostolic College, go back of all this into the pre-existence of Christ who “in the beginning was the Word that was with God, and was God”—reciting those wonderful discourses which breathe the music of infinite love from the bosom of the Father? Why this four-sided history of the Redeemer on earth? I do not pretend to give an exhaustive answer to these questions, touching the manifold uses of just such a history as this. But undeniably there is an advantage to us in being able to go around that blessed life upon all the sides of the square, as light and shade fall upon it from north, south, east and west. May it not be in analogy with all this, that the church of God has been allowed to front all the points of compass in the variations which have been indicated; in order that the solid temple of truth within may be recognised as one and alone by the very number of faces it is able to present?

I am warned by the clock that I must close. Christian friends, I suppose you have felt, in those tender moments which sometimes come to us in the closet, an envy of those who enjoyed the privilege of looking upon the face of our Lord on earth.