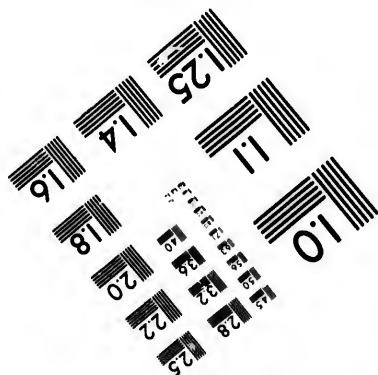
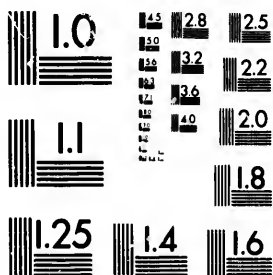


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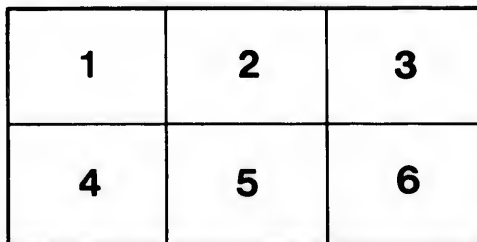
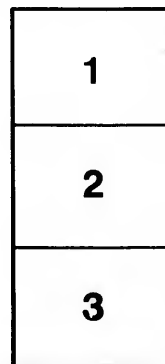
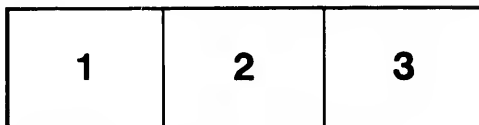
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THE WORK OF CHRIST.

BY THE  
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BEING THE SECOND  
ANNUAL LECTURE AND SERMON

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THE  
Development of Doctrine :

A LECTURE DELIVERED BEFORE THE THEOLOGICAL UNION  
OF VICTORIA UNIVERSITY, MAY 19, 1879.

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BY THE  
REV. E. HARTLEY DEWART, D.D.

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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THIS lecture is designed to be a brief introduction to the History of Christian Doctrine. The subject was selected, partly because it has largely occupied my thoughts for some years past ; and partly because the drift of current theological speculation renders it necessary that every intelligent Christian should have definite views on a question of such great, practical interest. Steering clear of the Romanist theory, on the one hand, and the theory of Skeptical Rationalism, on the other, I have endeavoured to present and defend a conception of the Development of Doctrine, which recognizes both the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, and the right of the Church to test the doctrines received from the past, "by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." How far I have succeeded in fitly working out this idea my readers must decide for themselves.

E. H. D.

TORONTO, *May 30, 1879.*

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# LECTURE.

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## Development of Christian Doctrine.

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### I.

1. MANY weighty considerations invest the history of the doctrines of Christian Theology with profound and abiding interest, not only to the public teacher of religious truth, but to every one who aspires to be able to give a reason for his faith, and to defend it intelligently against the cavils of gainsayers. The simple fact, that by dogmatic theology we mean the statement of the Church's matured conceptions of the great truths of religion, is enough to justify the highest estimate of the importance of the subject. The most ingenious disquisitions, on themes which have no vital relation to human well-being, can never evoke widespread or deep attention, from the busy, practical world. And, as we all know, topics full of instructive

interest may be thrust aside, on the plea that, as they have no direct connection with the vocation in life in which we are engaged, we cannot give them the time that our particular departments of thought and work demand. We may say of some subjects, that they belong to the lawyer, the engineer, the navigator, or the agriculturist, and therefore do not specially concern us. But the doctrines of Christianity are not something which belongs to a class or tribe. They are the science of God, of life and destiny; our best interpretation of God's revelation of Himself in his Word and Works. Christian theology is the full and accurate statement of the great truths respecting the character, government, and purposes of the Creator of all things; and the condition, duty, and destiny of man. These doctrines are not remote abstractions, but living verities, which it deeply concerns all classes of men to understand aright. The importance of our conceptions of these truths is heightened, by remembering that the object for which we study the doctrines of the Bible is to learn how we may fulfil the purpose of our being, glorify God in our earthly life, and be made meet to enjoy the blessedness of eternal life in heaven.

2. The history of dogmatic theology also claims increasing importance, because of the characteristics and tendencies of the times in which we live. This is pre-eminently the age of historic research. The relentless criticism of all that has been received from the past is one of the most striking features in the intellectual activity of the nineteenth century. In all spheres of thought men are persistently demanding the historic facts. The early historical accounts of the institutions of different countries have been keenly investigated and dissected; and many theories

which once were deemed unquestionable have passed out of sight, and now find no defenders. The constituent elements of this globe, on which we dwell, have been rigorously cross-examined, to find out the secret of their birth, and the mystic forces that moulded their forms in remote ages. Within a few years, the life of Christ has been written and re-written, with the closest scrutiny, by both the friends and foes of Christianity, to determine what are the indisputable facts of that wonderful biography, and what testimony they bear to Christ's character and mission, as an infallible teacher of men. In all branches of mental, moral, and physical science, mere theories no longer suffice. Everywhere, and from all classes, there is a cry for the attested facts. No department of thought can be hedged in from this eagle-eyed research. This widely-prevailing spirit of historical criticism prompts us to trace the story of those doctrinal statements of truth, which have so largely become the guiding stars of Christendom. No history can be of more absorbing interest, or profound significance, than the history of those central doctrines, that have fired the hopes and moulded the character of the greatest benefactors of our race. The history of kings and warriors pales before the wonderful history of the grand, immortal truths, which have enlightened and inspired the greatest thinkers and reformers of all climes and ages.

3. A knowledge of the occasions and circumstances under which the truths of dogmatic theology received their scientific expression, and of the peculiar errors these statements were designed to counteract, gives a clearer conception of their import and relation to other truths; and invests them with an attractive interest, which, as un-

historic definitions, they would not possess. An old doctrinal definition is like an old coin ; it bears upon it certain impressions which connect it in our thoughts with the men and the conditions of life which produced it. We trace the history of great thoughts, as we follow the biography of great souls. Religious dogmas have an instructive history. They have had their times of war and peace, victory and defeat ; and, like individuals, according to the degree of truth they embodied, have contributed to enlighten and elevate, or to bewilder the world. All persons who have travelled in countries that have been the theatre of events which have influenced the destiny of nations, know well that such a place is invested with a vastly deeper interest to one who is familiar with the historic events, than the same place possesses for the unintelligent traveller, who, because his ignorance excludes him from the power of its associations, sees nothing but the physical features of scenes where armies battled and kingdoms were lost and won. So, those who are ignorant of the history of doctrines regard them only as technical definitions of truth ; while to the intelligent student of the progress of Christian thought, each doctrine is like an old shield battered in fight ; or a sword that he knows has been wielded victoriously on many a hard-fought battlefield.

4. The interest of this subject, as well as the obligation to pursue it, is also greatly enhanced by the prevailing attitude of many of the representatives of other branches of science towards theology. It cannot be denied that a great change has come over the world of letters in this particular. In former times, theology was the throned monarch, that exacted unquestioning submission from all



the subject sciences. It marked out the boundaries of their provinces, and determined their rank. It was enough to ruin the reputation of any science or philosophy to say it contravened the orthodox theology. In our times all this is changed. And, it may be frankly admitted, that in those past times of which I speak, this imperial ruler in the realms of thought was sometimes too despotic; and that the modern revolution against dogmatic theology is, like most political revolutions, a reaction against the stringency of a time, when priestly dogmas were deemed more sacred and authoritative than the written Word of God and the testimony of human consciousness. But, however that may be, the rebellion against dogma is a serious fact, which demands candid consideration. There is a general outcry against the bondage of doctrines, creeds, and confessions of faith. The intellectual intoxication of our day bends its bow and aims its sharpest arrows against all forms of dogmatic faith. Most precious truths, which have become enshrined as golden treasures in all the creeds of Christendom, are ruthlessly assailed by unbelievers who profess to march under the banner of liberty and progress; not because they have been proved false, but on the plea that all definite statements of doctrine limit freedom of thought. This condition of things makes it the imperative duty of all who are set for the defence of the gospel, to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the testimony which history bears to the doctrines of Christianity, as well as with their agreement with the teaching of the Holy Scriptures.

5. These features of the times in which we live also give additional interest to the history of the errors and heresies of the past. It is instructive to learn the causes of these

aberrations from the faith of the Church, because they are generally exaggerations of neglected truths ; and because it is often found that the same heresy which perplexes modern thought, in some slightly different form, disturbed the faith of the people of some distant land and age, under outward conditions of church life widely different from those of our day. As a knowledge of the past conflicts and victories of the doctrines of the Bible is adapted to strengthen our faith in those tried verities, which have vindicated their adaptation to human want and weakness in all conditions of life, so a knowledge of the history of erroneous and unscriptural theories throws light upon their real character, and greatly aids in proving them unworthy of belief.

## II.

In bringing before you the History and Development of Doctrine, it will not be expected by any one who knows the vast range of the subject, that I could in the limits of a single lecture discuss the modifications which Christian doctrines have undergone, or trace the influences by which they have been moulded into the forms they have ultimately assumed in the systematic theology of modern Christianity. To do this would demand volumes. Ritschl devotes a volume of over 600 8vo. pages to the history of the doctrine of justification, and only traces it from the time of Anselm to the present. The most that I can do is to offer a few thoughts, designed to show that there is a development of doctrine, attested by history, which does not conflict with the authority of the Holy Scriptures, nor disparage the value of definite statements of doctrine.

Taking the term doctrine as meaning the interpretation and definite statement of the religious truths taught in the Bible, let us candidly enquire whether there has been in the past a development of doctrine, or progress in the exposition of theology; and whether there is ground to believe, that it is the function and province of the Church to mould and modify the form in which the truths of Christianity shall be set forth, in order that these definitions may more fully express the clearer apprehensions and more just conceptions of the mind and will of God, to which the representative teachers of Christian truth have attained.

I am aware that there is a strong popular feeling of distrust respecting all theories of progress in theology. It is not very long ago since it would have been deemed a serious offence, to say that the doctrines of dogmatic theology had a historical development at all. They were regarded as fixed formulas, which it would be recreancy to Christianity to change or modify. Some Christian ministers, whose piety and fidelity to the orthodox faith entitle their views to courteous consideration, oppose all theories of development in theology. They do so mainly on the ground, that revelation is complete and can receive no addition; that its teaching is too explicit and unquestionable to leave room for expansion of meaning, or the discovery of new phases of truth; that as the promise of the Spirit to guide into all truth has been given to the Church, it would be a practical denial of that promise to assume that the doctrines which we now possess were not complete expressions of the truth of God; that the theory of the evolution of doctrine implies the insufficiency of Scripture, and tends to destroy confidence in the doctrines

of the Christian faith. It is true that many of the ablest Christian apologetic writers have risen to what may be deemed broader and truer conceptions of the progress of Christian thought; and have adapted their modes of defence to the present condition of scientific and religious thought. Yet the prevailing belief among most evangelical Christians is, that all the doctrines of the denomination to which they belong are precisely identical, in all respects, with those held by the primitive churches of Jerusalem, Rome, and Antioch; that they have not been, and cannot be, modified. Even among those who admit that there has been an historical development of dogmatic theology in former times, many deny the right of the Church of to-day to modify the doctrinal symbols which have been received from the past. This general opposition to the idea of doctrinal development mainly arises from incorrect notions of what is meant by this term; or rather by confounding a reverent and scriptural doctrine of development with skeptical and anti-scriptural theories, which undermine the Christian faith. Theories of development in theology, like theories of development in nature, may be either false or true, and should be accepted or rejected accordingly. We accept the idea of evolution, which recognises it as one of the modes of God's operation, in the accomplishment of his wise purposes; but we reject the theory of evolution, which claims that a mode of development is the efficient cause of the resulting facts of nature.

There are two current theories of development, both of which are misleading and dangerous. There is the Romish theory, as elaborated by the acute Cardinal Newman. It was formerly the practice of Romish theologians to claim that the Church of Rome was always the same, and to

appeal to the theologians of the early centuries in proof of the unity of her teaching. But as time went on, the unscriptural additions of successive popes and councils became so numerous and palpable, that even Romish effrontery could no longer pretend that all these priestly inventions could be vindicated by the example and teaching of the primitive Church. In order to justify these departures from the simple, primitive faith of the Church, the theory of development, which Newman finally presented so plausibly, has been generally accepted by Romish theologians. Its main feature is, that from the original germs of doctrine, and from the theological opinions which may be evolved in any age, the Church can, with unerring judgment, develop doctrines which should be received on her infallible authority with implicit faith. It is easy to see how deftly the Immaculate Conception, the Infallibility of the Pope, and other human dogmas, can be covered and justified by such a theory as this. An unanswerable objection to Newman's theory of development is that its main position—the infallibility claimed for the Church of Rome—is a baseless assumption, that has not a shadow of proof to sustain it. We demand some satisfactory evidence that this infallibility is a fact; but none is available. The whole testimony of history is against this spurious claim. The promise of Christ to St. Peter, that the gates of hell should not prevail against the Church, like all God's promises to men, is conditional. The attainments of true conclusions by men, respecting any great question, depends upon the intelligence and impartiality with which they use their faculties, and the sincerity with which they seek Divine guidance; and not, in any case, on an unconditional freedom from error. If the bishop of Rome was from the

beginning the infallible authority in all matters of faith, it is inconceivable that a fact of such tremendous importance should not have been authoritatively made known to the Church for eighteen centuries ! Nor should it be forgotten, that neither St. Paul nor St. Peter, nor any other apostle, ever claimed to exercise the infallible dictatorship, which is now presumptuously claimed for the Roman Pontiff.

Another theory of development is that of skeptical Rationalism, which repudiates the authority of the Bible as an inspired revelation of truth ; places religious knowledge on the same level with secular knowledge ; maintains the sufficiency of reason to discover all religious truth ; rejects all standards of authority in matters of faith, and constitutes the intuitions of the mind the supreme arbiter in determining what is or is not worthy of belief. This theory is destructive rather than constructive ; a system of doubting and drifting, rather than one which presents any religious truths that claim the faith of the soul. The main characteristic of this school of thought is the denial of a supernatural revelation, and the assumption that all systems of religious belief which have been held among men, have been the natural outgrowth and development of the human mind in its progress towards perfection. The adherents of this general theory display unlimited diversity of belief and teaching, and can only be regarded as belonging to one class, by virtue of their common hostility to all definite or authoritative statements of religious truth.

This theory leaves its votaries adrift on the dark and mysterious sea of being, without either compass, chart, or guiding star, except the impulses and speculations of minds which, by cutting themselves loose from the guidance of revealed truth, have rejected the counsel of God against them

selves. We should reject as dangerous, all theories of development which teach for doctrines of equal authority with Divine Revelation, the speculations and intuitions of men. But I accept that idea of the development of doctrine which simply claims that as the Church grows in knowledge and experience, she may grasp more complete conceptions of the great truths which God has revealed in His Word, and Works, and embody these juster views in her teaching and subordinate standards. I fully believe that this idea of development is in harmony with Scripture, reason, and history; and may be maintained without any recreancy to "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." We should hold no scheme of development that does not test every doctrine by the Word of God: "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

The popular idea of the development of doctrine is a serious misconception. It is commonly assumed that the completed Revelation of the Scriptures is the starting point; and that by inference, intuition, or some other method, some new doctrines are found out, which are additions to what was previously possessed by the Church. But, as Dr. Rainy has shown in the Cunningham Lecture for 1873, the starting point is not the truths revealed in the Bible, but the early Church's imperfect conceptions of these truths, which is a different thing. There is no want of reverence for the Bible, in assuming that the views of the primitive Church, which fell far below an adequate grasp of the vast fulness of meaning which the Revelation contained, might be expanded into proportions more worthy of that Revelation, and of Christ's witnesses in the world. It has been well said, by the eminent divine just named,

that "the difference between the completed Revelation and the Church's apprehension of it, was as great as that between the brightness of the sun and the reflection of it in some imperfectly polished surface, that gives it back again really, constantly, but with a diminished, imperfect wavering lustre."

### III.

Leaving the objections which I have mentioned, in abeyance, for the present, let us proceed to enquire, whether a careful and unprejudiced examination of the facts and arguments, bearing on the question, will not show that there are weighty reasons in favour of such a view of the development of doctrine, as I have briefly indicated.

1. A strong presumption of its truth may be based on God's mode of working in other departments of His empire. Evolution meets us everywhere. The growth of both body and mind, towards physical and mental manhood, is by slow steps, rather than by any sudden bound. And the same mode prevails in all spheres of creation. We should not, indeed, claim that because the oak is evolved by slow growth from the acorn, the theory of development, as applied to Christian dogma, must be true. But, certainly, when we find that this mode of Divine operation prevails in all departments of the worlds of mind and matter, it makes it seem more reasonable and probable that the Church should reach the maturity of her conception of the Divine message of life and love, by growth, rather than that the conceptions of her infancy should be perfect and complete, incapable of expansion or improvement.

2. This probability is greatly strengthened by the historic development in the theology of the Church during the period

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covered by the records of the Old and New Testaments. There can be no question, that there was during this period a development of religious knowledge, relating both to God and man. Each generation stood in clearer light than the preceding one, until, in the fulness of time, came "the true Light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." I know that we cannot build too much on the supposed analogy between the Church of that time and the Church of our era. There was, during that period, a progressive Revelation—which was the main cause of that development of religious thought and life—which was closed with the close of the Apostolic age. It may therefore be fairly argued that we have no ground to expect similar growth, since the supernatural Revelation has been completed. But, after giving all due weight to this consideration, we should bear in mind that during this period there was far more than the simple increase of religious knowledge, by the new truths revealed by Prophets and Apostles, and by the Great Teacher Himself. There was, side by side with this, a real development in the Church's conception of truth. The new revelations flashed back their light on the former revelations, and broadened the mental horizon of those who received them. I cannot, therefore, help feeling that in all this there is something to warrant an expectation that, under the Christian dispensation, which is pre-eminently the period of "the ministration of the Spirit," though the Revelation has been completed, there would be some development in the Church's understanding of the truth, corresponding, in some degree, with that which took place under the former dispensation, by the agency of the same Spirit.

3. There is nothing unreasonable in this idea of develop-

ment. It is analogous to undoubted facts of human experience. A student obtains an authorized text-book on some scientific subject. After a cursory examination of its contents, he becomes acquainted with some of its fundamental principles. But, however perfect, or comprehensive the work may be, no one would maintain that his grasp and comprehension of its teachings may not be enlarged, and rendered more perfect, by further study. Should he devote years to the study of the lessons of that book, and test its principles by practical experiment, he may experience a great growth and development in his knowledge of the truths taught in the work; although the book itself was as complete a treasury of knowledge at the beginning as at the end of his studies.

A still more appropriate illustration would be the case of a Christian convert from heathenism. He learns to read, and receives a copy of the Bible, which he begins to study. He may accept the great truths of the Gospel, and trust in Christ with a true justifying faith, and yet have very limited and imperfect ideas of many of the doctrines of the Christian religion. But, it is his privilege and duty to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." As he studies the Bible, comparing Scripture with Scripture, and becomes intimate with cognate branches of knowledge, his range of mental vision broadens, and some of his former conceptions are modified by seeing the full import of truths he had at one time overlooked. As his knowledge increases, he sees many things in a clearer light, which causes them to present a somewhat different aspect from what they once did. If he attempts to place all these truths, with which his reading of the Bible has made him acquainted, in harmonious relation to

each other, the modification of his previous views becomes still more necessary. He finds that he must modify his old conception of some doctrines, to make room for some other doctrine, not less true and important, which he had comparatively lost sight of. As time goes on, if there is a real mental and religious growth, there is also a great development in his theological ideas. The Bible is the same. Its truths are unchanged. His faith in Christ is unshaken. But the instrument of apprehension and understanding is changed, and consequently his thoughts are not the same. There is a great change from his first crude conceptions of the doctrines of the Bible to his matured thoughts.

We need not, however, go to Japan, or China, to find an illustration of doctrinal development in individual minds. Every Christian has been, in a greater or less degree, the subject of such a development of character and views of truth. This depends as much upon the spiritual and religious state, as upon the intellectual growth of the individual. The change in our apprehension of moral truth is as much affected by growth in holiness, as by growth in knowledge. There is hardly any one, who has for twenty years given any real study to the great questions of theology and science that press upon all thoughtful minds, who would express his views of Christian doctrine, in precisely the same terms he would have used twenty years before. There is scarcely any old minister, who feels quite at home in preaching the sermons he prepared when he first began to preach. Not because he has renounced the doctrines he taught in his youth, or adopted a different creed to what he then held. He still derives his peace and strength from the very same truths which he then believed. But he has learned to see each subject in broader and juster

relations to other truths. He has toned down some disproportionate elevation, and lifted up something that was unduly depressed. There has been an enlargement and development in his thoughts, which his old words do not fitly represent.

Now, just as the quickening which takes place in one soul is a type of the revival which throbs like a current of new life in a community, so the progress which takes place in one mind may illustrate the development of doctrine in the Church. Such terms as God, love, duty, and all words of moral import, convey a very different meaning to individuals whose intelligence and moral culture differ widely. This is equally true of doctrinal truths. But the Church is made up of individuals, whose united character and history constitute her character and history; and there is a striking resemblance between the life of an individual Christian and the life of the Church. There may, therefore, be in the Church a similar growth in holiness and knowledge, to what we have supposed to take place in the case of an individual Christian. This would not fail to be accompanied by a corresponding development in her conceptions of truth; and we actually find that the account of such progress and modification constitutes an important part of the history of the Church in the world, as given in the works of her best historians.

4. The state of systematic theology in the primitive Church, during the century following the close of the Apostolic age, affords strong ground for a belief in the probability and necessity of a more complete development and statement of the doctrines of the Christian faith. While it is scarcely possible to exaggerate the unselfish and heroic piety of that period, several circumstances have

tended to promote an incorrect and extravagant estimate of the condition of theological knowledge in the primitive Church. At the time of the Reformation, in the controversies between Protestants and Roman Catholics, both parties admitted the doctrinal purity of the early Church, and appealed to the writings of the Fathers to prove their own orthodoxy, by showing the identity of their teaching with that of the Church of the first three centuries. The Roman Catholics were compelled to strain fragmentary and indefinite references to find any support for the unscriptural inventions of Rome; while the simpler and purer teaching of Protestantism undoubtedly found its proto-type, in all essential features, in the simple and Scriptural faith of the Christians of the first centuries. But it is not difficult to show that with Protestants, as well as Roman Catholics, "in appealing to the Fathers there has been a constant endeavour to discover that which, from the point of view adopted, should have been there." This method has not yet been abandoned, though it is by no means so much in use as it once was. There has also been an extreme jealousy for the orthodoxy, if not the infallibility, of the early Christian writers; as if it would be a dishonour to Christianity, if any of them were found not in complete harmony with our modern orthodoxy. Even so excellent a writer as Dr. Shedd does not entirely escape this fault; for he sees the Presbyterian doctrines in places where, without Calvinistic glasses, no one could have discovered them. The Rev. Edward Garbett also exults in the pleasant thought, that "the Church of England has ever placed the highest importance on the doctrinal identity existing between her own standards and the faith of the primitive ages." We should not go to the Fathers to search for support for our

particular dogmas, but to learn what they believed and taught.

The exemplary life of the early Christians must forever vindicate the simplicity and purity of their faith. They evidently held the central verities of the Gospel with the assurance of a strong conviction. Christ himself was the centre of their faith and love. As in the early days of Methodism, formal creeds were subordinated to a personal experience of salvation. They lived for Christ, and many of them died for Christ. But there was much latitude allowed, even in the discussion of subjects which we are accustomed to regard as essential. Their theological teaching, like their ecclesiastical organization, was simple rather than elaborate.

Apart from those who may have enjoyed the advantage of Apostolic instruction, there is no reason to believe that the Christians of the second and third centuries possessed a superior and complete system of theology; or that their position was as favourable to a right understanding of the Bible as that of the Christian Church of to-day. Copies of the Scriptures were rare, and could be possessed by comparatively few. Their poverty denied them institutions of learning, and other facilities for the thorough study of theology. The churches of the first and second centuries were largely missionary churches, made up of converts from Judaism and Paganism. They had no such aids and facilities for gaining a thorough knowledge of the meaning of the Scriptures as we possess. The theological remains that have come down to us, show, on the whole, an imperfect grasp of the doctrines of Christianity as a comprehensive system of truth. Though a very great interest must always attach to the life, character, and opinions of the

faithful confessors and martyrs, who were the leading spirits of the Church in the period succeeding the Apostolic age, yet they are to be regarded as noble examples of fidelity to Christ, rather than as great or unerring teachers.

They express the truths of the Gospel which relate to salvation generally in Scriptural terms; but their definitions are frequently vague, and their expositions sometimes fanciful. There is no attempt to set the doctrines of Scripture in harmonious relation to each other. Those who have most carefully studied the patristic writings would be least disposed to accept them as infallible theological guides. No doubt, a doctrine being taught by the early Christian fathers is a strong point in favour of its truth; but a doctrine not being definitely taught in their works would not disprove its scripturalness. There were vast mines of truth in the Bible, whose wealth they had not discovered. Their discussions did not embrace the whole range of doctrinal truth. Those who have turned to the writings of the fathers for a solution of some grave question in theology, know very well that, on many important subjects, you can find only imperfect and unsatisfactory hints.

The inconsistency, contradiction, and confusion which abound in their writings, contrast so strikingly with the harmony of the New Testament, that this marked difference becomes a powerful indirect testimony to the inspiration of the sacred writers. Neander, Prof. Fisher, and others base an argument against the late date which some German critics assign to St. John's Gospel, on the low state of theological literature in the second century; which makes it a literary anachronism to suppose that such a work could have been produced in that period. Every impartial student of the theology of the Church of that period must acknowledge,

that it possessed neither the fulness nor precision of statement necessary to enable the Church successfully to meet and refute the paganism, heresy, and false philosophy by which Christianity was subsequently assailed. Some development was therefore a necessity.

#### IV.

What the condition of theology in the early Church would lead us to expect, actually took place in its subsequent history. There has been an historic development of doctrine. We can point out the time when certain doctrines received their scientific expression, name the men who have stamped the impress of their thoughts upon them, and trace the causes which led to their being thus formulated. Our limits will not permit us to dwell on each of these points. But we may briefly glance at some of the chief causes of doctrinal development. Among these we place, conflict with false systems of religion, heresy, current theories in philosophy, and attempts to produce a comprehensive and systematic science of theology.

1. The moment we attempt to defend our principles and beliefs against objections, we are compelled to definitely chose the positions we will fortify and defend against the enemy; and to reduce our crude ideas to a definite and defensible form, as well as to repudiate all incorrect representations of our beliefs. In this way, the attacks of Pagans and unbelieving Jews compelled the early defenders of Christianity to clear away misrepresentations of the Christian religion, to state their own views, and to give a more explicit interpretation of the teaching of the Scriptures on the points assailed. The apologetic writings



of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and others, not only show us the nature of the objections of anti-Christian assailants, and the method of defence adopted, they also present a fuller statement of their conceptions of the fundamental truths of the Christian system.

2. In a still greater degree, the promulgation of heretical corruptions of the truth became the occasion of developing the doctrines of Christianity ; by rendering it necessary to discriminate between the true and false teaching, which were often plausibly blended in these heresies. The creeds and doctrinal definitions of every age are largely the protest of the Church, against the prevailing heresies of that age. It was found that a heresy could not be refuted merely by denying its truth. In such controversies, it became necessary to state the true teaching of the Scriptures on the subject in dispute. This definition of doctrine, with reference to some current heresy, has caused special prominence to be given to particular doctrines at one time, above what would seem due to them when the errors they condemned had been driven out of sight. This, in turn, might render necessary some adjustment of the creed which contained these doctrines. The history of the Church furnishes many striking examples of the way in which conflicts with heresies directly conduced to shape Christian doctrines, and to give them a permanent prominence in the future teaching of the Church.

Even in the New Testament age, we see examples of this process. It was in repudiating the narrow exclusiveness of Judaism that the great truth was proclaimed, that "God is no respecter of persons ; but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him." It is in contradiction of the error of a legal and ritualistic justi-

fication, that St. Paul asserts the great doctrine of justification by faith in Christ. It is in condemnation of an Antinomian theory of salvation by faith alone, that St. James asserts the principle that "faith without works is dead."

In post-Apostolic times, this tendency is constantly apparent. The mazy theories of Gnostic dualism early compelled the theologians of the Church to define more explicitly the unity of God. It was in the controversies with Monarchianism, Sabellianism, and Arianism, that the true doctrine of the Trinity was developed and formulated: which, under the leadership of Athanasius, was fully and formally defined at the Council of Nice in 325. It was in opposition to the heresy of the followers of Macedonius, that Gregory Nazianzen vindicated the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit, which was explicitly stated and confirmed by the Council of Constance in 381. It was in refuting the erroneous teaching of Patripassians, Nestorians, and Eutychians, respecting Christ, that the orthodox doctrine of the human and divine nature being united in one person, which was finally defined and confirmed by the Council of Chalcedon in 451, was developed.

In all these cases, there was no pretence of having discovered any new doctrine, or of adding anything to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. The appeal was made to the testimony of Scripture, and the previous writings of the chief theologians of the Church; by whom it was alleged all these truths were taught, though not always with equal fulness and definiteness. The position that these truths have maintained in the creeds of Christendom attests the ability and fidelity with which the work was done. Even the great upheaval of the Protestant Reformation, which had no regard for the church authority claimed for

later unscriptural accretions, left these earlier definitions and symbols undisturbed, as a sacred legacy for all time. It would be easy to add numerous illustrations of the influence of heresy, in indirectly promoting the development of Christian doctrine. The early theology of the Protestant Reformation is largely a protest against the heresies of the Church of Rome. The Articles of Religion, in our own Book of Discipline, may be taken as a good illustration of this influence. Some of them would never have been written, but for the Roman errors they condemn. The same influence is operative in our own day. We find it necessary to guard and adjust our statements of truth, because of prevailing errors. We have learned to define a miracle more carefully, because of current theories respecting the immutability of the order of nature. The position and method of our best Christian apologists have necessarily changed since the time of Butler and Paley.

3. Every attempt to frame a systematic body of theology, in which each doctrine will occupy its proper harmonious relation to every other doctrine, must lead to modification and adjustment. Those who have crudely held a few leading doctrines are in danger of presenting them in distorted and exaggerated forms, which leave no room for just conceptions of other important doctrines. This is the great fault in the teaching of some of our modern evangelists. They take a part of the truth as if it were the whole, and thus present an imperfect and distorted theology. The process of ascertaining the teaching of Scripture on any point is not so simple as some think. In some instances, indeed, we find a doctrine clearly taught in a single text, but this is not ordinarily the case. The steps of exegesis, according to a learned authority, are three: first, authenticating a doctrine out of a single

doctrinal passage, as the sense of that passage ; second, ascertaining the contents of whole books and divisions, and various statements of doctrine by comparison of several passages ; third, deriving a sum total of doctrinal statements from the sum total of doctrinal passages and writings.

If doctrines which have been left out of sight be brought forward, and assigned their due prominence in a system of theology, those that had previously received an exaggerated importance must be modified. In systematic theology one doctrine depends upon another. Our belief respecting the Trinity and the Person of Christ will determine our doctrine of the Atonement. Our views respecting the nature of the Atonement will necessarily determine our conception of saving faith, justification, and the extent of the Atonement. The doctrine of sin set forth in any creed, will of necessity determine the doctrines of Soteriology contained in that creed. The degree of authority over the conscience, claimed for the Church, will fix the degree of liberty of thought conceded to the individual Christian. It is evident, therefore, that a change in the conception and statement of any central doctrine would tend to modify the formal expression of other doctrines. This tendency, which was more or less active through the whole history of the Church, was seen in its most imposing form during the scholastic period. The schoolmen attempted nothing less than to gather up into one harmonious whole all the great principles of the Christian system, to set forth their import and their relation to each other. Though they brought great intellectual acuteness to this task, it was beyond their powers. They were "in wandering mazes lost," bewildered by the subtlety of their own speculations and distinctions.

This influence was specially potent in developing the

theology of the period immediately following the Protestant Reformation. The rejection of errors which Rome had incorporated with the theology of the Church, and the closer and more general study of the Bible, greatly quickened theological enquiry, and enriched the religious literature of the Reformers with broader and sounder interpretations of the teaching of the Word of God. The vastness of the treasures of truth, bequeathed to the world in the inspired writings, was never before so fully apprehended. There arose, therefore, a pressing demand for a clear and scientific statement of the doctrinal results attained; and for their presentation in a systematic form. Numerous attempts were made to supply this want. Though the early theology of the Reformation is largely anti-papal, the subsequent creeds cover broader ground. The Augsburg Confession, the Helvetic Confessions, the Heidelberg Catechism, and other doctrinal symbols of that time—not to speak of the works of Calvin and Arminius,—are all evidently efforts to present a systematic and consistent statement of the doctrines they believed to be taught in the Bible. Comparing these with earlier creeds, they present tokens of such adjustment and modification of definition, as the larger range of subjects embraced, the clearer light possessed, and the fuller comparison of Scripture with Scripture rendered necessary.

4. If philosophy is, as it has been called, "The Science of Sciences," which determines the principles and conditions, the limits and relations of all branches of knowledge, it is evident it must influence methods and results in the sphere of theology. The views which a theologian holds on fundamental questions in metaphysics will, consciously or unconsciously, affect his expositions of religious truth. Two

teachers who hold opposite views respecting Freedom and Necessity, or Cause and Effect, must differ in their theological and ethical teaching. Different intellectual methods will prevent uniform results. Even those who may profess to disregard philosophy, unconsciously assume some philosophical principles which will affect their conclusions. The history of Christian thought amply confirms this. While Christianity has sanctified and assimilated what was good and true in the intellectual methods and results of every age, it is well known to every student of Church history, that the prevailing systems of philosophy, in some degree, impressed their features on the theology of every period. All along the Christian centuries, we can trace clearly, in the theology of the Church, the potent influence of the profound idealism of Plato, and the subtle dialectics of Aristotle. The influence of the speculations of Plato is as clearly seen in the writings of Justin Martyr, Origen, and Clement of Alexandria, as is that of Aristotle, in the works of Thomas Aquinas, and the Schoolmen of the 13th and 14th centuries.

Dr. Pressense pertinently says :—" If in the ripe age of Christianity Cartesianism could set its stamp upon the theology of an entire century, it is not surprising that Platonism, in its various forms, more or less modified, should have pressed heavily upon early Christian thought, without, however, absorbing it, except in the form of heresy."

The influence of English and Continental philosophy on modern religious thought is too well known to require proof or example here. A remarkable illustration of the influence of a philosophic theory, on theological teaching, is furnished by Mansel's " Limits of Religious Thought," in which he applies Sir William Hamilton's " Philosophy of

the Unconditioned," in defence of Christian truth, by the use of arguments, which Herbert Spencer borrows to justify the Agnosticism that denies the possibility of any knowledge of the Creator. At times, indeed, secular philosophy has threatened to corrupt the simplicity of the Gospel, by a tendency to interpret the teaching of Scripture, on every point, so as to make it agree with the speculations of a mazy and fanciful philosophy; just as in later times the Pantheistic philosophy of Spinoza, Schelling, and Hegel has tended to undermine faith in a personal God. When the spiritual life of the Church was vigorous, and human speculations were tested by the Word of God, Christian theology shook off all that was baneful in the secular thought of the times; but when religious life was feeble, vain speculations sometimes were substituted for the simple verities of the Christian faith. It does not, however, fall within the scope of our present enquiry to estimate the character and results of this influence; but simply to point out that in every period the dominant philosophy largely impressed itself on the methods and statements of the current theology.

5. Another powerful influence in modifying theological systems and forms, closely allied to the last-named, is science—using this term to mean our knowledge of the verified facts of the physical universe. This force is specially potent in our own day. It is indeed claimed that theology is a science, and therefore liable to all the mutations and modifications of other sciences. I am not disposed to lay much stress on this, as an argument for development in theology. The analogy is not complete. Although theology is a science, it has special characteristics which lift it out of the ranks of ordinary sciences. The great central truths, on which Christian theology is based, are clearly

revealed in the Word of God. They are not a discovery of human research; but a Divine legacy to the Church and the world. But, as in all the other sciences the facts are being slowly sought out and put in order; they cannot be fully classified, because not yet fully known. We cannot, therefore, argue that because the science of geology has been constantly modified by the discovery of new facts, theology must be subject to similar changes. Yet, as long as we do not claim absolute infallibility for our expositions of Scriptural truth, theology cannot be wholly untouched by the causes which affect other sciences. Because theology is the full and systematic statement of what is known and believed as truth, in that great department of knowledge which embraces the character of God and the moral nature, duty, and destiny of man, it must, in the main, be subject to the same laws of thought which govern our conceptions in other departments of knowledge.

Neither does the science of theology stand apart from all other sciences, in solitary and unaffected isolation. On the contrary, it is intimately related to every science, which attempts to unfold the truth respecting any province of the created universe. The idea that the theologian and the scientist work in wholly different spheres, and that each is to pursue his enquiries without regard to the discoveries or conclusions of the other, is an easy way of getting over difficulties, by refusing to look at them; but is not according to truth. It is true, religion has spiritual truths which cannot be discovered or appreciated by the instruments and methods of physical science; and some of the facts of physical nature are only remotely related to moral and religious questions. But yet, religion and science largely overlap, and cover common ground. We may, indeed,



ceive of a religion so limited in its range of teaching, as to leave out of sight the facts of the created universe ; but which is not Christianity. A religion, that did not claim God as the Author and Governor of all things, might run in some parallel line that would never meet the lines of science ; but Biblical theology, which ascribes the origin and upholding of all things to Divine power and wisdom, must find room and an explanation for all attested facts and laws of matter and mind, that will place them in harmonious relation to the truths of our Christian system of doctrine. The conflict which exists between certain alleged facts of science and some interpretations of Scripture, apart from the right or wrong of the parties, affords practical proof that theology and science do, to some extent, occupy the same field ; and therefore may come into collision. We know, beyond dispute, that the conclusions to which some have come, respecting facts of science, influence their interpretations of religious truth. And the religious convictions of others cause them to reject, as untrue, some deductions of science. Luther called Copernicus a " silly fellow " who wanted " to upset the old established astronomy ; " and the Roman Inquisition persecuted Galileo, for teaching that the sun did not move round the earth. Soon, however, both Protestants and Catholics were compelled to adjust their interpretations of Scripture, to make them agree with the demonstrated facts of Astronomy. It is no disparagement of the Bible to say that our expositions of its doctrines may, in some degree, depend on our knowledge of language, history, astronomy and physical science. God reveals himself in His works, as well as in His Word. " The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork." It has been forcibly said by a

recent writer: "All the sciences of nature so-called, are engaged in investigating the various modes in one self-revelation of one God. To the student of theology the forces and laws which these sciences discover, but leave unexplained, are modes of the divine action. They reveal not an abstract nature, but the nature of the Father who is in heaven. For the theologian then to treat disrespectfully any fact or law of the sciences of nature, is to treat disrespectfully that Word of God through whom all things were made." (Rev. G. T. Ladd, in *New Englander*.) Those who deem it derogatory to theology to admit that it may be modified by anything science has to tell, and who claim that Scripture should be interpreted, and its doctrines formulated, regardless of what has been found out in other departments of thought, virtually claim that an unscientific, unhistoric, unsystematic interpretation of the Scriptures is more worthy of confidence, than one that gives a just recognition to all known and verified truth from every field of knowledge.

It is a great mistake to suppose that we help the cause of the orthodox faith, by shutting out the light of any truth from our teaching; or by retaining, as dogma, and imposing upon popular belief, anything that cannot be sustained by adequate proof. If the teaching of science contradicts unquestionable theological truths, it is "science falsely so-called;" and if our theology has no place for any duly established truth of science or history, there must be something wrong with the theology. Our theology must be broad enough to recognize "Whatsoever things are true," whether they were known to a former generation or not.

We must not disparage the testimony of the works of

Creation, as if we could thus exalt Revelation. To do this is to surrender important positions to the current Agnostic Materialism. St. Paul declares that the created works of God so clearly reveal His eternal power and Godhead, that even those who had not the written Revelation were without excuse, if they did not acknowledge Him. Neither should we disparage reason, as if it was something antagonistic to Revelation. Our reason is the medium through which we receive the light of the Word and Spirit, and without which it could never illumine our dark nature. It is sometimes objected, that some of the truths of Revelation are found in the heathen systems of religion, as if this fact depreciated the value of the Revelation of His will which God has given us in the Bible. But God is the Author and Revealer of all truth. The fragments of truth which we find in the writings of the sages of India, or China, do not come from some source that is independent of the Father of lights. These grains of gold, found among the dross of heathenism, do not constitute any ground for disparaging the spiritual verities of the Bible. If Christianity embraces in its teaching, and presents in full-orbed splendour, all the broken rays and fragmentary truths which flash like gleams of light amid the prevailing darkness of other systems, is not this a proof of its claim to be from heaven, rather than an evidence that it is a mere natural growth? Would it not be more unfavourable for Christianity if it *did not* embrace the best things of all other systems? The study of comparative theology affords corroborative proof of the truth of the doctrines of Christianity; for the characteristic ideas and worship of even the darkest systems of heathenism are a confession of the great soul wants and woes, for which Christianity alone offers a true and sufficient remedy.

6. The historic evidences of the power exerted by these different causes in moulding the dogmatic theology of successive periods, are numerous and indisputable. The history of the doctrine of the Atonement furnishes, perhaps, the most striking illustration of these external influences. Though in the primitive period, and in every succeeding age, the great truth that Christ died for our sins, and that those who believe in Him have life through His death, was firmly held and taught by the Church; yet there is much diversity in the mode of defining how the death of Christ became the procuring cause of human salvation. This doctrine assumed a dogmatic form more slowly than any other central truth. It never was formally defined by any council whose authority could give it permanent form; and to this day there is no one theory of the Atonement universally accepted by all denominations which hold the Divine authority of the Holy Scriptures.

The idea of a ransom from the power of the devil must have been more prominent and enduring than some writers are disposed to admit. If this were not so, we would not have Anselm and others, in the twelfth century, lengthily combating this theory. The theory of Satisfaction was first put forth prominently by Anselm, and the moral influence theory by Abelard. It is somewhat singular, however, that Anselm's theory, on which Calvinistic substitution is founded, was sustained by arguments drawn from reason and philosophy, rather than Scripture, and regarded the Atonement as something done for the whole race; while Abelard's scheme, which is the germ of the modern moral influence theory, was based on an exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, and limited the virtue of the atoning work of Christ to the elect.

Time will not allow me even to glance at the different modifications of the doctrine of the Atonement, by theologians of different schools of thought, Romish, Rationalist, and Protestant, from the time of Anselm down to the present. I may, however, say, that the history of this doctrine affords conclusive evidence that saving faith in Christ does not consist in the acceptance of any philosophical theory of the Atonement. I would not disparage any honest attempt to expound this great truth, in its profound relations to man and to God ; but I believe there are thousands now, like the Christians in the primitive Church, who could not explain the Atonement of Christ, in its relation to law and sin, and who yet have grasped by a living faith the conviction that in some way it is the pledge and proof of the infinite love of our Father in heaven, and of Christ's power and willingness "to save to the uttermost them who come unto God by him."

If we deny that there has been any salutary development of doctrine since the apostolic age, we cannot justify the Protestant Reformation, which was, in a very marked degree, a development of doctrinal truth. It is true, the Reformers successfully appealed to the Bible and the patristic writings in proof that their teaching, unlike Romanism, was no "cunningly devised fable," invented by men. But it is none the less true, that the theology of Protestantism presented a fuller and more explicit statement of the doctrines of Christianity than can be found in the literature of any previous age.

In this sense, there was also an important development of doctrine by Wesley. Though it is true, as he claimed, that he preached nothing but what was in accordance with the Bible and the standards of the Church of England ; yet

his exposition of the Witness of the Spirit, and Christian Perfection—not to speak of other doctrines—was a fuller development of these Scriptural truths, which gave them a prominence and power in the preaching of the Gospel that they did not possess before. To deny this, is to deny that Methodism has any distinguishing theological teaching which would warrant its continued existence as an evangelistic organization. Wesley's theology, so far as it was a new presentation of truth, was not the result of speculation, or Biblical criticism. He read the Word of God in the light of the living experience of men and women who had felt its converting and sanctifying power. The whole history of the preaching of Methodism illustrates the reality of this development of Scriptural truth.

7. Though there is scarcely any disposition to deny the historical development of doctrine that has taken place in the past, many, who freely admit the fact, seem to think that this privilege belonged to some bygone golden age, but cannot be claimed as a function of the Christian intelligence of the present, or the future. There is no good ground for such a conclusion. The Rev. Wm. Arthur, in his "Tongue of Fire," clearly shows, that the Church of to-day has a Divine right to all the spiritual privileges enjoyed by the primitive Christians. Does it not follow, by parity of reason, that the Church of to-day may possess as much right and qualification to expound and state the meaning of the Scriptures, as was possessed by the Church of any age since the apostles? There is not a particle of evidence that the Church of this age has been deprived by her Risen Head of any privilege, function, or authority, which was possessed by the Church of any former century. A comparison of the condition of the Church of to-day with that of any former time confirms

this conclusion. It has been forcibly said : " The Christian intelligence of to-day possesses every right that the Christian intelligence of the fourth century, or the twelfth century, or the sixteenth century possessed. And not only has it the same rights, but there can be no doubt, that, upon the whole, it possesses a higher capacity of exercising these rights. In many respects it has both more insight into spiritual truth, and more freedom from spiritual prejudice." (*Rev. Dr. Tulloch.*)

In claiming the right to test all that we have received from the past, by the standard of Scripture and reason, we in no degree disparage the work of the great thinkers of olden times, to whom we are so profoundly indebted. We may sincerely honour them, without conceding that they were divinely appointed and infallible interpreters of the revealed will of God, for all time. The right to review the doctrines formulated in past ages, does not imply that we should reject or lightly esteem them. We cannot believe and cherish them as we ought, if we accept them on human authority, without an intelligent conviction of their truth. And we cannot attain such a conviction without candid examination. The unthinking acceptance of a doctrine, or creed, is not worthy of the name of faith.

It should be remembered that the Church may possess the same authority to develop doctrine, without having the same necessity to do so, that formerly existed. It must not be assumed that men shall do everything they have the power and liberty to do, without regard to the necessity or expediency of their action. The exercise of this power must be governed by godly discretion. The builder does not pull down the house he has erected, merely because he may do so. Legislators do not revoke laws which have

proved to be wise and beneficial, because they have supreme legislative authority. The best known methods in the different arts of life are not rejected, because men are not compelled to practise them. Candid and intelligent thinking—not the prohibition of liberty of thought—is the true protection against reckless change and wrong conclusions. If the spiritual ideas, handed down from past times, have been built upon just views of God's revealed will and of man's nature, they will not suffer loss, "by being taken up from the dogmatic moulds, in which they are apt to lie dead in an unenquiring age, and brought face to face once more with the living Word and with all true knowledge." If they have not been so formed, and cannot endure this test, no reverence for great names should induce us to accept them with unquestioning faith.

## V.

It has been said, that because truth is immutable, and the canon of Revelation complete, there can be no new religious truth, and, therefore, no development of doctrine; as whatever is true now was equally true at the beginning of Christianity. This objection is based upon a misapprehension of what is meant by development, and is, therefore, irrelevant. Truth is unchangeable, but human conceptions of truth are not. It is a law of moral being, that as men grow in holiness and intelligence they experience a corresponding development in their ideas of religious truth. The objection that all truth is unchangeable might be urged with equal force against any development of scientific truth. Matter possessed the same properties and possibilities in the time of Adam and Noah that it does now. The



resources of nature were as ample then as now. Fire and water could produce steam of as great force. Electricity, gravitation, and all the occult forces around us, were the same then as to-day. Yet, there has been a wonderful development in all departments of science. The original book of nature is the same, but our knowledge of what it contains is greatly enlarged. Astronomy, chemistry, geology, magnetism, and mineralogy, may be regarded as kingdoms, erected on ground which human research has reclaimed from the ocean of ignorance that once covered their vast territories from sight. There is, however, nothing true in science now that was not always true; but no one would think of denying the possibility of any development in science, because the facts of nature have not changed since the creation.

In the same way, while there is no change in the Scriptural truths which are the sources of our knowledge of theology, there may be important modifications of our judgment as to what the Bible teaches. "The Word of the Lord endureth forever;" but as Christian theologians become better acquainted with the literature and times of the languages in which the Scriptures were written—as they grow in knowledge of the facts of the created universe, and of their relation to spiritual truth—and understand more perfectly the laws and powers of the human mind, they interpret the Word of God more correctly, and thus discover new truths and richer meanings in the teaching of the old Book. The same object is not the same to different minds, nor even to the same mind at different periods of its growth. The impressions received from any object of thought depend more upon the thinker than upon the object. The unthinking rustic sees in the starry heavens

only a brilliant display of sparkling gold. The impression they make on the mind of the intelligent student of astronomy is widely different. So is it with the starry truths which shine in the firmament of Divine Revelation. They are always the same; but their significance to us depends largely upon our knowledge, and our capacity to discern spiritual things. We cannot, therefore, accept the dictum of Lord Macaulay, that, with regard to divinity, "a Christian of the fifth century with a Bible is on a par with a Christian of the nineteenth century; candour and natural acuteness being of course supposed equal." This might be so, if the teaching of the Bible, on all the mysterious topics on which it speaks, was so unmistakably explicit that there could be no difference of opinion as to its meaning. But the light which progress in other branches of knowledge has shed on Biblical interpretation; the conflicting systems of theology avowedly drawn from the Bible, and the history of actual progress in the science of theology, prove conclusively that this is not the case. The teaching that has educated the Christian world, all along the centuries of our era, has not been the repetition of stereotyped forms and phrases. All history shows that the teaching that has moulded the religious and intellectual life of every age has borne the impress of the living thought of the times.

It has been also urged against this view of the development of doctrine in the Church, that it tends to weaken confidence in the authority of the doctrines of Christianity, by representing them as fashioned by human wisdom, instead of being divinely revealed truths. Some, indeed, who fully admit the historic development of doctrine in the past, have unfairly represented this placing of old truths in a clearer light, as equivalent to inventing new doctrines that

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had not been previously held by the Church. If some have unduly exalted the doctrinal teaching of the Fathers, others have unwarrantably depreciated it, in order to destroy the force of the testimony of the primitive Church, in favour of truths they wish to discredit. It is enough to say, that while, as I have frankly admitted, the theology of the early Church was not so definite and comprehensive as the after conflicts with heresy and unbelief required; it embraced, in simple and Scriptural forms, the great verities that are prominent in the faith of Evangelical Christendom. The manner in which the Church in the third century dealt with Gnostic and Unitarian heresies amply vindicates her character for sound doctrine.

In no instance, in the early times, was any doctrine set forth as a new truth, not already held by the Church; but in every case, the avowed object of those who formulated any doctrinal definition was to give what they believed to be the true meaning of Scripture, as indicated by the expositions of the earlier Christian writers. It is not just to maintain that because the earlier definitions of doctrinal truths were not so full and exact, in what they embraced and excluded, as the theological symbols of a later period, that the truth embodied in the more elaborate statements was not previously held by the Church and taught in the Scriptures. As a recent writer, in the *British Quarterly Review*, speaking of the accepted doctrines of the Christian faith, cogently says: "They owe their vitality and power, their commanding authority over the minds of men, not to any accidental peculiarity of technical verbal structure; but to the essential elements of Divine and eternal truth they were believed to express, and were intended to conserve."

I have no disposition to ascribe any undue importance to the opinions of even great and good men. I firmly adhere to the Protestant principle, that "the Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation ; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." But, unquestionably, the manner in which the central doctrines of our faith have been sifted and discussed, before being scientifically defined, should give them additional claims to reverent regard, rather than discredit them.

The *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, to which Romanists and Ritualists appeal, is futile, as a practical test of orthodoxy. For no dogma can truly claim to have been believed in all times and places, by all Christian people. Yet this motto contains a principle, which we cannot afford to disregard. Any doctrine or belief that has maintained its place in the convictions of large numbers of people, in widely different periods of time, must have some elements of truth and power adapted to humanity. While we maintain the right of every man to think for himself, we should place far above the opinion of any one person, the godly judgment of the representatives of a whole Christian community. Great weight must be attached to those Christian doctrines that are held in common by the different sections of the Church. In an important sense, doctrines may be vindicated by history as well as by Scripture.

When I speak of the sanction of history to any doctrines, I do not mean simply the prestige they acquire from having been held by some great men ; but the authority they derive from having lived as an inspiring power through the changes

of ages, and having vindicated their Divine fitness for the wants of sinful, sorrowing hearts, under every variety of earthly circumstances. If, after being satisfied that a doctrine is taught in the Scriptures, we find that the same truth was defined, after years of careful study, by men of eminent gifts and piety, as the true teaching of the Bible and the Church—that it has been held by the noblest spirits of the Christian centuries—that it sustained martyrs in the agony of a painful death, and missionaries amid loneliness and barbarism—that it survived the fiercest assaults of powerful enemies—and that it nerved men to deeds of unselfish heroism in every clime of earth—do not these historic testimonies lift it up into a holier atmosphere, entitle it a more unfaltering confidence, and invest it with a more imperishable renown?

## VI.

I have referred to the general outcry against theology and all definite statements of belief, as if they were things inconsistent with freedom of thought. It comes mainly from restless spirits, impatient of all restraint, who are against theology, because theology is against their crude fancies. We are constantly told that religion and theology are things that have no necessary connection. That religion consists in right sentiments and acts, and not in any special belief about either God or man; and that the shorter a man's creed is the better. I am thoroughly convinced these indiscriminate denunciations of all dogmatic faith are at variance with the teaching of the New Testament, the unprejudiced dictates of reason and common sense, and the history of Christian life in all ages.

It may be admitted that there is just enough of truth in some of the allegations against creeds to render them plausible; and that in some creeds, at least, minor things have been exalted above things more essential, and the creed itself placed above the Divine Word. We should hold firmly the essential truths of religion; while giving large liberty in matters of opinion which do not affect the spiritual life. There is good reason to think that the great liberty of opinion permitted in the primitive Church, accounts for its comparative freedom from heretical divisions. No one will deny that a mere profession of faith in a creed has no transforming influence upon heart or life; yet, doubtless, the mere profession of orthodoxy has sometimes been counted for more than it was worth, and allowed to outweigh more important evidences of practical godliness. The way in which doctrines are taught in the Scripture—by biography, parable, incidental reference, and brief statements, rather than by any formal summary of articles of belief—while, on the one hand, it renders an explicit statement of the doctrine of Scripture necessary, it should also remind us not to unduly magnify the importance of formal and elaborate creeds. The importance of subscribing to creeds and confessions, as a means of keeping men orthodox, has been greatly overestimated. The history of Methodism has practically proved that a more personal experience of the saving grace of Christ is more to preserve from “divers and strange doctrines,” than subscription to the most elaborate Articles of Religion or Confessions of Faith.

But, while we frankly make these concessions, we cannot, for a moment, justify the hostile onslaughts on doctrines and creeds, to which I have adverted. The very persons

who denounce the creeds of others have their own unwritten creeds, and generally cling to them with confident obstinacy. The belief of properly attested truth no more limits our freedom of thought, than fixed principles of morality limit freedom of action. It is an utterly false idea of liberty of thought, which makes it consist in the right to reject everything, whether true or false. No man is at liberty to deny that the sun gives light and heat, without being branded as a fool.

Because a mere profession of faith in a creed does not change the character, no one has a right to conclude that a living faith in the truths of the Gospel of Christ will bring forth no fruit in the life. It is still true, that "as a man thinketh in his heart so he is." There can be no religion worth the name, that does not rest on a basis of theological truth. Love and faith towards God, and benevolence towards man, cannot exist without a belief in those truths which reveal our relations to God and men. Every one who worships and obeys God, and does good to his neighbour, must have some ground or reason for so doing. Let him state in words the reasons which prompt him to this course of life, rather than another; these reasons will be his doctrinal beliefs—his *theology*. The relation between principles and acts is close and intimate. He that believes nothing will do nothing. Every act of a man's life, that is anything more than a mere unreasoning impulse, is the result of some belief which is related to it as its cause.

The Holy Scriptures give no warrant for this disparagement of doctrine, or belief of the truth. To begin with the Master himself—Jesus says: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." St. Paul exhorts his "son Timothy" to "hold fast the form of sound words;"

and warns him "that the time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine." He tells Titus that a bishop must be one "holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers." He also says: "A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject." St. James says: "Of his own will begat He us with the word of truth." St. Peter also ascribes regeneration to "the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." St. John declares: "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed." St. Jude says: "It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." The Bible clearly gives no countenance to the sentimental latitudinarianism of the present day.

The Divine organization of the Church, as a teaching and working body, and of a preaching ministry, implies and demands common principles of faith; without which there can be no such unity of action as the institution of the Church evidently contemplates. The Church cannot teach all nations unless she has some definite message of truth to teach. Without this, her teachers and missionaries would have no answer to give to the anxious enquirers of a sinful and enslaved world. People cannot be expected to cooperate to send missionaries to teach what they believe to be false. And it is a sufficient reply to those who falsely deny that theological teaching has any influence upon the character and conduct of men, to say, that when our Methodist missionaries go out to Japan and preach the

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Methodist doctrines of a free, full, and present salvation, to the heathen Japanese, this teaching produces the same type of experience and character which it produces in Canada. They have joy and peace through believing the message of life, and drink of the same living water.

The same correspondence between teaching and results is seen in the case of missionaries of other Churches, with different doctrinal views from ours. In every case, whether the teacher is Arminian or Calvinist, Protestant or Catholic, the theological seed sown "yields fruit after its kind."

If we appeal to the record of history, its evidence is overwhelmingly against those who maintain that life and character are not moulded by the doctrines believed. There may have been men better or worse than their creeds, but their teaching has in the end brought forth its natural results. The personal character of Spinoza and Loyola did not prevent their teaching from having pernicious effects. On the other hand, all the great souls whose teaching has brightened and blessed the world, and whose names are watchwords of action and progress, have been men who grasped with an unyielding faith those grand and inspiring truths that have given hope and life to the world. There can be no true peace or power, no safety from the bewildering sophistries of current unbelief, no real nobility or usefulness of life, without settled principles of religious faith. I leave these thoughts with you, simply reminding you, that what I have said in this lecture is but an expansion and enforcement of the apostolical injunction: "PROVE ALL THINGS: HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD."

A SE

# The Work of Christ:

A SERMON DELIVERED BEFORE THE THEOLOGICAL UNION OF  
VICTORIA COLLEGE, MAY 18, 1879.

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BY THE

REV. E. A. STAFFORD.

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# SERMON.

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## THE WORK OF CHRIST.

“ For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”—1 Peter iii. 18.

WHAT was the work done by Jesus Christ in this world? This is no enquiry after a knowledge of historic facts. It is the question of one pierced by a misery the deepest the human soul can know on earth, bearing a poverty worse than sickness or sorrow can create, feeling the shocking disproportion of things in this world, and conscious of destructive evil within himself; alienated from God, heaven lost, hope gone, he is told that Christ alone can bring harmony into the chaos of his being, draw the accursed poison from the deep currents of his nature, and enthrone hope once more where sin has established its enslaving tyranny. In such a condition, a person asks, “What did Christ do for men?” with something more than a desire to know the simple facts of His wondrous life. Because, if it be admitted that He can recover man from his sin and present misery and future hell, then at once these simple facts in His life are clothed with infinite importance.

They take hold upon the whole universe of life. They establish a connection with the Supreme Ruler and His

government, above any facts of which we can know or conceive. And the question, "What did Jesus do?" is designed, in this discussion, to raise our thoughts into this high plane,—*How was His work connected with the plans of government for the universe so as to enable Him to effect such a change as He does bring about in the condition and life of a sinner on this earth?*

I. Our first step in the enquiry leads us behind the facts of His life to the motive from which they sprang. "He hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." His earthly life was spent in the interest of others. There is no parallel between Him and any of the race of conquerors sprung from all lands great in story, scattered along the ages from Nimrod to Napoleon; nor any of the speculating, experimenting philosophers. His was a deliberated, an intense, and sustained effort to reach and save a vast class—the unjust. "I lay down my life for the sheep" (John x. 15), is one of the many forms in which the scriptures teach, as in the text, that His life was for others.

Now there are two ways in which one may lay himself out to work for another.

1. He may undertake the work as a substitute. That is, he may do something another would have done, or which affects the other in the same manner and degree as something he himself must, or might have done. It is not necessary that the substitute do just the same acts as the principal would have done. Take the case of a military substitute. He goes to the seat of war to pursue, possibly, a widely different career from that one through which the principal would have gone, had he taken the field himself. The one may develop such military genius as will carry him up to the very highest orders in command. But possibly

had the other gone he would have remained in the ranks all through the war. The health of the one may fail, and a large portion of his time be spent in hospital, while the other would have been able to stand in his place through the whole campaign. And yet the one is regarded as the proper substitute of the other. The law so accepts it, and human language so describes it. He takes the place of the other, and fully relieves him from doing what he must have done himself.

2. But a person may do a work for another and yet not be his substitute. The work may be simply the expression of a sentiment, the language of love or kindness; but widely different from anything the other would have done, or thought of doing, for himself. A child weaves a garland of forest flowers, or creates some fancy article after his own conceit, and carries it to his parent, saying, "I have done this for you." It is a gift of love. Now, no parent would ever have thought of producing such a thing for himself, or anything in any way like it, so that the child does not do this in the parent's stead, nor as his substitute, but as an expression of love for the parent's happiness.

Now the work of Christ has been described in some quarters as done after the first manner, and in others as after the latter. It has been said that He "suffered for the unjust," as an expression of the Divine love, and through that break made in the sky by love the character of the Deity shone forth, and when men see it, the opposition caused by sin gives way, and thus a reconciliation is effected. Of course, with this presentation of the subject, the death of Christ is in no wise a necessary part of His work; but it followed, as, in the order of nature, death by some means must follow life. A family to-day rejoices

by the cradle. But that picture of domestic happiness means that before one hundred years have passed there will be a very different domestic picture—that somewhere a family will weep by the side of a coffin. The joy at the cradle is the prelude of sorrow at the grave. And so the death of Jesus would have occurred, because His life on earth must have an end, if this presentation of His work were the correct one.

But in opposition to this view it is claimed that He was properly a substitute, doing what He did in some way in man's stead.

II. To which representation shall we ally our confidence? Let this text furnish our answer. "Christ also hath once suffered for *sins*, the just for the unjust."

This text is in the most perfect harmony with the general teachings of the Bible on this subject: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."—Isaiah liii. 5.

We learn then a new fact concerning His work. It was not only in the interest of others, but was in some way connected with the *sins* of those for whom he gave Himself. And in this fact we experience our difficulties in understanding His work. That He should have died for others, offers nothing difficult of comprehension. The same has occurred many times. Parents have died for children, friends for friends, and servants for masters. Nor would we experience any difficulty with the single statement that He died for sins. Many have died for sins, either avenged by nature's law, or by the laws of men. But that He should have died for others, and also on account of their sins, and in such a sense, that had it not been for their



sins He had not died, is calculated to tax our minds with the necessity of some thought.

We may not proceed one step in the study of the work of this great life without including with it the study of man's sin. The sins of the unjust, and Christ's suffering for the unjust, are inseparable parts of one great piece. The body and its shadow may as easily be removed from each other, as Christ's earthly career and death may be understood and accounted for without understanding human sin. *What then is sin?* It is defined as "the transgression of the law." 1 John iii. 4. But before there can be a transgression there must be a temper at variance with the spirit of the law. And this temper may be described as opposition to God. This is the motive force, or the principle that animates every sinful act.

In studying the true nature of sin, whether will I be most successful in turning my attention upon its particular manifestations, or in directing my thought to this principle which animates them all? If I turn to the separate manifestations of sin, I find them assuming infinite forms, and in number they exceed the stars. Some of them seem so trifling in their results that men regard as monstrous the infliction upon the offender of such penalties as the Bible denounces. But, on the other hand, every one has witnessed in the course of his life some manifestations of depravity so gross and revolting, so unprovoked, and so disastrous in result, that, as a punishment, the Miltonic hell would not be hot enough, and eternity not long enough. It is evident then, that I will make little progress while I confine myself to separate acts of sin. But if I turn to the principle from which all spring, I realize results at once. That is the same everywhere and always. There is one firmament ;

but many stars. The sea is one ; the waves are innumerable.

Here then, as in other studies, I may proceed from the little to the great. When the child at school has learned that the mark representing *one*, standing in the second place from the right hand, means not *one*, but *ten*, and in the third place not one, nor ten, but one hundred, and so on, he may say, I need not to learn the meaning of all combinations which may be made of the ten characters used in the science of numbers ; but, knowing their separate value, and this one principle, I know how finance ministers write the vast amounts of national debts, and how astronomers indicate the inconceivable distances of the stars. He learns the great from the little—the many particulars from the one principle. Now, we must do likewise in the study of sin. From its principle—opposition to God—we must determine the character of its individual expressions.

In order then that we may understand what sin is, it is not necessary that we look into the face of a Nero, and behold a burning Rome ; that we hear the roaring of the lions, and the wailing of the Christians in the amphitheatre ; that we follow in the blazing path of devastating war, or feel the last pang that pierces a felon's heart,—it is only needful to stand in the nursery, and translate into common language the contracted fist, and vengeance-brooding countenance of your child ; for these are waves of the universal sea, fruits of the common seed, and products of the one principle pervading all. And a child, in his first rebellion against the love of his parents, who then stand to him instead of God, in his deep hatred and bitter resentment, may say, I know what made Cain kill Abel, what swept away the population of the old world, what overspreads our

earth with wreck and ruin, what, with wakeful distrust, everywhere separates man from man, and all men from God. I feel it in my heart—it is sin—it is opposition to God!

Sin cannot then be an indiscretion, a weakness, a mistake, or an extravagant expression of good nature. It is possible to think of any sinful act, taken by itself, and in view of its immediate consequences only, as but a mistake, or an overflow of good nature; but when we think of the spirit of it, and the principle which controls it, we must think of sin collectively and individually as a *crime*. It must be a crime: it challenges God's government—it contemns His law—it defies His power—it is a principle which first animated the heart of Lucifer, and would to-day drag God from His throne, and make Him less than devil.

III. Let it be admitted then *that sin is a crime*. We cannot think of crimes but as deserving of punishment. Nor can we conceive of the preservation of any proper balance between the ruler and those who are governed, without the infliction of penalties upon transgressors. Nor can we understand God's government to be conducted on principles wholly different from the governments with which we are familiar. Therefore, in the nature of the case, we would look for the infliction of penalties upon those guilty of the transgression of God's law. If He is a father, He is also a ruler, and, as a ruler, the infliction of punishment belongs to His prerogative. We do not see how Christ's work can be understood by us without our realizing this close connection between crime and punishment.

In a work published in one of our large cities two years ago, and which received, on account of some special circumstances, a great deal of attention, we read, "The government

of God totters not by the spread of insubordination." \* \* \* "The offences of millions can never affect the supremacy of God." These sentences are in connection with an argument which aims to dismiss all necessity of penalties from the government of God. Now if this were correct, our relation to Him, whatever it might be, would be something different from that of the ruled to the ruler, or of child to parent. For we can find no trace of any government without the infliction of penalties. In the case of Adam, in the Jewish law, and in the New Testament, penalties are recognized as the proper treatment of offences. Leaving the Bible, in the history of nations we find no people who thought to enforce laws without penalties. The most ancient code of which the world has any knowledge recognizes the necessity of penal visitations. From that code to the city of New York is a tremendous sweep; and yet in that city, after a long carnival of unavenged murders, during which criminals came to feel safe in their crimes, Stokes at last grew anxious in his prison as soon as Governor Dix restored the majesty of the law in insisting upon Foster's execution. That event sent an awakening thrill through all the lower classes both inside and outside of the cells; and bad men became suddenly conscious that they could not pursue a course of crime with impunity, and people ceased to shoot each other as a means of amusement. The great city awoke to realize that if law is to be obeyed, penalties must be attached and enforced.

In poetry we allow unusual liberty; we grant certainly a very wide range of method to the spirit of justice, as in all other things; but not even in this realm are we taught that intelligent creatures may be kept subject to law without penalties inflicted, either by Gods or men. Let us search

then, where we will, for a conception of government which will preserve order, but neither threaten, nor inflict punishment: we traverse all space which nature and art have placed under our control, we walk up and down the centuries of human history, but we find no such conception,—neither in the Bible, nor nature, nor poetry, nor history,—absolutely nowhere except in the religious system of those who arrogate exclusively to themselves the name of liberal Christians.

It is indeed true that God's government does not totter by any spread of insubordination; that the offences of millions have not affected His supremacy; but it is because, in all His laws and dispensations, and, as we shall see, in the work of Christ, the world has convincing testimony that the violation of His law is visited with terrible penalties upon the offender.

IV. We may receive as pretty free from doubt that the human family is subject to the government of God; that this government has been opposed by crime; that the criminal is justly deserving of punishment. And it is evident, in the nature of things, that the penalty is due to the transgressor alone. A crime cannot be transferred from one to another; neither, with propriety, can the penalty which is due to a crime. Over the guilty sinner's head, then, the blow is suspended.

Now it is just at this point the work of Jesus comes in. His life and death make it possible for God to forgive man's sin, to count him just, and to treat him as if he had never sinned; and yet, at the same time, the honour, or authority of the law is just as effectually preserved as it would have been if the penalty had fallen with all its weight upon man who deserved it.

Let it be said here that it is not speculation to deal in this manner with the work of Christ. In stating how His life and death avail for the sinner, we do not offer conjectures or probabilities, but just two results, both clearly declared in the Bible.

1. That He procures forgiveness of sins. Acts v. 31 : "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." The same truth is affirmed again and again.

2. And that His work also preserved the authority of the Divine Law, is a scripture statement. Although Isaiah xlii. 21,—“He will magnify the law and make it honourable,”—may admit of various interpretations, yet the third chapter to the Romans does certainly connect the sinner's forgiveness with the Atonement of Christ, so as to leave no doubt that His work was necessary to preserve a just administration of the law. “Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God ; to declare at this time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

But how was that lowly life and ignominious death connected with the government of the Deity, so as to produce these effects ? It was by the substitution of what Christ did for what man must have endured had the penalty fallen upon him.

It has already been shown that it is not necessary that a substitute do precisely what the principal would have done. Certainly Christ did not do what man must have done, He did not bear the sin. No accommodation was entered into by which He was led to think the sin His own ; nor

did any other regard it as Christ's own sin. The crime was not transferred to one to whom it did not belong, and then the penalty laid upon that one to whom it was not due. Even a sinful heart could resent such shocking injustice as that. He did not suffer eternal condemnation as man would have done. He was not banished from the Father's presence, which must have been the weight of the blow had man suffered what was due to him. But what He did and suffered, taken in the place of the infliction of the penalty in full, just as effectually proclaims to the universe the incalculable evil of sin against God, and the certain peril which attends the sinner's course.

Now, is this substitution sufficient to bring about these effects? Summon the universe as a jury to decide. Set forth the facts. There is the criminal deserving death. To allow him to escape will destroy the authority of the law under which he lives. But then tell what Christ did—the facts of His life and death, with the motive, and that in view of this the sinner is forgiven. This jury is to decide whether other creatures under the same law are likely to feel that they may transgress with impunity. Let the pardoned sinner himself give testimony. He has felt in his soul all the evil of sin; its bitterness and chain have been in his heart, and his escape came only through an acquaintance with Christ's work for him, and a heartfelt reliance upon it as sufficient for his salvation. He has entered into the fellowship of his Saviour's sufferings, has felt the power of His great motive, and while the memory of that anguish of the cross lives in his mind, he must feel that to commit a sin is the greatest calamity that can befall him. We cannot conceive of such derangement of a man's moral powers as would allow that, having been saved by faith in the

Redeemer, he should get from the Cross the idea of license for sin rather than God's abhorrence of it.

We see many illustrations of the most exaggerated forms that evil may assume in men's characters ; but we can think of none so bad as this would indicate ! Macaulay tells us that Lord Bacon developed a degree of genius for evil that worthily renders his name an emblem of the violated altar of sacred friendship. The lust of gain, and of power, led him to persecute the very friend who first placed his feet in the way of competence and influence. Can humanity show us anything worse ? Absalom furnishes a worse type. He stained his hand in blood in one of the most unjustifiable rebellions ever perpetrated. It is bad to be untrue to a friend, but worse to plot against an indulgent father's wealth, influence, and life. The worst possible indignity can be committed only by a child. He alone can drain his parent's heart's blood, drop by drop, and can trample under foot the best offerings of that parent's heart, while yet living, throbbing, bleeding. And all this Absalom did. But Judas must have been worse. We find him in the singular pre-eminence of being alone marked by name for perdition. But neither Absalom nor Judas saw the Cross as we do. It is possible that had even Judas realized all that was meant by his act, he might have refrained from it.

But what words shall adequately set forth that type of moral perverseness, and irredeemable bondage to iniquity which could realize the nature of Christ's motive, feel the measureless depth of His sufferings, and experience deliverance from hell through His mediation, and then conclude that He died that men might sin with impunity ! Such a thing is inconceivable. The saved sinner must feel that the sacrifice of Christ has stamped upon his heart the great evil



of sin, and the stern necessity of obedience to the law, as vividly as could be done by witnessing the perdition of ungodly men ten thousand times intensified.

And let angels, and the inhabitants of other worlds, throughout the boundless creation, survey the facts, and give their testimony. Will the voluntary offering up of himself by Jesus Christ, being put in the stead of the infliction upon man of the penalty due to his sin, preserve to their minds the authority of the law of that God under whose government they all live? Many of these know better than we the value of the sacrifice Jesus made, and in view of its priceless worth there must be amazement that such an offering was possible! That cross and its victim cast forth their image against the sky in the sight of all worlds and all ages, a testimony of God's unswerving demand upon His creatures, of strict obedience to His law; that agony of Jesus for sin will lay its full weight upon the counsels of all creatures in the universe capable of knowing God, through the centuries, steadily bending those counsels into recognition of the Supreme authority of the one ruler of all.

But when once this end is realized, when the authority of the law is preserved, the other result of Christ's work may easily be understood. To forgive the sinner is but the heart of God reaching out after man whom He would save. There is no malice, no nursed wrath which must be appeased before He can take man back to His heart. Sometimes in speaking of this subject it is said that Christ's death satisfied the Father, and allayed His wrath so that He could forgive the sinner. But it is really only in a highly figurative sense that we may use the expression, "the wrath of God," in connection with this subject at all.

What does the wrath of God truly mean? I find in the street the victim of some fatal brawl. The mangled form, the sightless eyes protruding from their sockets, the mingled expression of anger and of pain on the countenance, impress themselves upon my mind, and having learned that some enemy, insane with rage, trampled the life out of this man, the impression lives with me as expressing what is meant by wrath.

At another time I am brought into the presence of one who has just paid the last and highest penalty of some criminal act. The mark of the rope upon the neck, the purple face, and eyes staring out of the last agony that comes upon a criminal's soul, all bring back too vividly that impression which with me means wrath. I say, "this man is a victim of wrath. I will find the wrath that has taken his life." I go to the hangman, that disguised figure whom no one knows and who scarcely knows himself. I ask the cause of his wrath against this man just now dead by his hand. But he knows no feeling of wrath against him. His hand ended the man's life, as much a machine as the rope which he tied around the victim's neck. His inspiration was not the fascination of wrath, but of gain. I then go to the sheriff, then to the judge who pronounced the sentence, the jury which convicted, the Queen's counsel who prosecuted, the jailor who confined, the constable who made the arrest, the magistrate who issued the warrant. I ask each of these in turn the cause of his wrath against this man, through which he has reached such a dreadful death. But they answer me with strange uniformity that they know no feeling of unkindness or bitterness towards him. Some of them even did not know his name. Any of them are

willing to contribute to relieve his widow and orphan children. They are simply instruments in the hands of a stern law against murder. They are but links in a chain which is moved along by the authority of justice. I have not yet found the wrath under which the victim suffered and died. I then go to the legislators who framed the criminal law, to the governor who, in the name of the Queen, gave the Royal sanction to the law. I ask these the cause of their wrath, but I am answered as before. They have never seen this man. They know nothing of him. They will aid his family. In all legislation they are controlled, not by malice, but by a regard to the safety and happiness of all the people. In the end I must find the wrath which took the man's life not in any person, but by generalizing. It lies simply in the necessity that good government preserve the peace of society, and the well-being of every family and individual.

And such also is the wrath of God. The representing it as an unreasoning rage which demands satisfaction, and delights in blood, can only be explained as either ignorance, or blasphemy. His wrath is the necessity, founded in His nature, of preserving the peace and harmony of the universe, by enforcing His own law. So that if by substitution of Christ's work for man's penalty the law is enforced, then the forgiveness of the sinner's guilt is no longer prevented by anything but man's continued rebellion.

V. From these conclusions we are led upon some other questions intimately associated with this wondrous work.

1. Why are not all saved as a necessary consequence of Christ's atonement? Why should anything farther be required? Why should repentance be insisted upon, and faith be demanded of all who are saved? For the very

same reason which led Christ to die—that the law of God may not be dishonoured. “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.” Matt. v. 17. Christ did not suffer that men might continue in sin with impunity, but that He might save them from their sin. And the word repentance describes the only change in a man’s mind which disposes him to separate himself from all sin. And faith in Jesus is the only condition of mind which enables a person to realize the possibility of forgiveness. Faith is not an arbitrary appointment, but stands connected, in the nature of the case, with God’s glorious method of saving men into heaven, by first saving them from their sin, and so eternally enthroning His beneficent law, not only over men’s wills, but in their hearts—in their deepest affections! So that, notwithstanding all that Christ has done, if men do not repent, if they continue without faith, they are continuing to defy the law and its penalties, instead of joining with Christ to exalt and honour it by their obedience, as He did by His sacrifice. Obedience to the Divine law is the highest tribute a creature can pay to Christ’s atoning work.

2. In this interpretation of Christ’s work we have an explanation of the fact that His death is equally efficacious for the countless millions of the human race as for one sinner—that none of its virtue is wasted though many refuse to come, and none is wanting if all come.

Christ on the cross is a testimony that the law of God must be obeyed. We have seen that every person who properly apprehends Jesus on the cross feels more than ever the necessity of obedience. Now, a testimony may be as effectual to millions as to one. The universe may be convinced by the same unequivocal testimony which brings a

strong conviction to one mind. "He suffered for sins." Had there been but one transgression, a sacrifice no less in value must have been required in the interest of the law. But the offering once made for that principle which lives in every sinful act, the evil of that principle is sufficiently affirmed. The work, therefore, avails for every sinner alike, the little child in his first departure from the right, or the man grown a giant in heinous transgression. Until we can find some sin sprung from a motive different from opposition to God, Christ's sacrifice can save all, irrespective of the number or character of their sins.

It is not necessary to distinguish particular sins, nor great sinners, from those not so bad, in considering this subject, since all sins have the same spirit. An American river has its source in a small spring on a hill-side. As it flows onward it is joined by hundreds of tributaries, until at length it dashes its full volume into the mighty sea. Sometimes in a freshet that swollen river, uncontrolled by its banks, rushes through the streets of cities, bears down human habitations, and leaves ruin in its track. Where shall I lay the blame of this ruin? Ye fountains of the hill-side, have ye destroyed the city? Ye shining snows, crowning the high mountains, pouring down your torrents, is this your work? Or ye rills, rippling through grassy lawns and quiet groves? Who has wrought this ruin? Neither the mountain, nor snows, nor rills, but all—the vast current of the rushing river has done the work. So, when we ask, For what sin did Jesus suffer, we need not particularize the sin of Judas who betrayed Him, nor that of Peter who denied Him, nor of the high priests, nor of Pilate, nor my sin, nor yours, nor blasphemy, nor fraud, nor violence: but all together—every sin that is of the nature

of opposition to God. Hence, He could save His own murderers, if they received Him by faith. Many have experienced difficulties with these men. Some make them too good—freeing them from all guilt whatever; others, perhaps, judge them worse than human. Now, the character of their act is not at all affected by the consideration that they were accomplishing the purposes of God. They had no purpose to further the Divine plans, nor were they constrained to do anything against their own choice, to further them. But they had lived in the spirit of sin so long—it had so completely mastered them—that they were capable of leading out to crucifixion any man who should arouse their prejudices or inflame their anger. This was their crime,—the fact that they were bad enough to treat any person as they treated Jesus. It was no worse to treat him as they did than it would have been to treat any other in the same manner. For the same degree of evil must prevail in their hearts before they could be capable of such deeds in any case.

3. This presentation of Christ's work offends no sense of propriety by putting the penalty of one upon another. In the first place, Christ did not bear a penalty at all. It is the license of figurative language which describes His work as the bearing of a penalty. He bore no penalty; but He did a work which is substituted for the penalty. The substitution is not strictly the putting one person in the stead of another; but the work of one in the place of what another should have done. It does not in any sense degrade Christ, or detract from His glory, to speak of Him as thus enduring for man. A minister of the Crown was once seen holding a door open until a burdened porter passed through. Holding doors was not that minister's proper function; yet

if he voluntarily engaged in it to relieve another, it was greatly to his honour. So it was no necessary part of Christ's functions to suffer in the interest of humanity ; but voluntarily condescending to it, both angels and men glorify Him for this work.

4. This view of the Atonement is consistent with the bloody sacrifices of all lands and all ages, and does not do violence to the plain reasoning of any passage of Scripture.

5. This representation is also the legitimate answer to those commercial views of the Atonement which make sin, not a crime, but a debt ; and regard the sacrifice of Jesus as the cancelling of that debt. The legitimate conclusion from such a view must be, that Christ avails for all alike ; that no repentance is necessary ; and that faith is simply realizing for one's self that he is free, because Jesus paid his debt. And such views are yet presented in some quarters. They must deprive Christ's glorious sacrifice of a large share of its power in effecting a thorough and permanent reformation of the whole life. Christ's death truly reveals to a man the greatness of his crime and the need of a reformation, possible to him only through Divine power.

6. It likewise shows why Deity was necessary in the offering. Nothing less could have so effectually shown the enormity of a transgression of God's law.

Doubtless many are saved by simply trusting wholly to Jesus, who know little of the principles involved in the Atonement. And many, through much error, may apprehend much truth, and so come into life. Surely their earnest thought on such a theme cannot be offensive to the gracious Father of all.

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Goodwin's Redemption Redeemed.

**SUBJECTS FOR THESES.**

Doctrinal and Historical Thesis.—"Universalism."  
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