

A
DISSERTATION
UPON THE
USE AND IMPORTANCE
OF
UNAUTHORITATIVE TRADITION.

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UPON THE
USE AND IMPORTANCE

OF
UNAUTHORITATIVE TRADITION,

BY THE LATE PROVOST OF ORIEL,

DR. EDWARD HAWKINS.

ALSO
SUPPLEMENTARY EXTRACTS

FROM

HIS BAMPTON LECTURES

IN ILLUSTRATION OF THE PRINCIPLE ADVOCATED.

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DEDICATED TO ALL WHO PRAY THAT THE CHURCH
MAY BE INSPIRED WITH THE SPIRIT OF
TRUTH, UNITY, AND CONCORD.

By the publication of the late Dean Burgon's interesting Memoir of Dr. Edward Hawkins, late Provost of Oriel, attention has been directed to the celebrated Sermon on "The Use and Importance of Unauthoritative Tradition, as an introduction to the Christian Doctrines," preached in the University Pulpit, May 31st, 1818.

As copies of the Sermon cannot now be obtained, it has been thought desirable to reprint the Dissertation, by the same Author, in which the argument in the Sermon is embodied and developed; and which, in Dean Burgon's opinion, "deserves the attention of every student of Sacred Science."

It appears also to possess especial importance for all those who are conducting, or are interested in, Missions to the Heathen.

24th June, 1889.

P R E F A C E .

WHILST the subject of Scriptural difficulties has been often admirably handled both generally and in detail, there is still one arising from the very form and structure of the Scriptures, on which sufficient attention has not perhaps been bestowed; although it is a source of sensible uneasiness to some believers, and secretly influences the practice of many more. The purpose of the following pages is to state and consider this difficulty; and further, to pursue into some of its more important particulars the view, which that inquiry suggests, of the value of *unauthoritative tradition*, not so much in the confirmation or interpretation of Christian doctrines, but as intended to be the ordinary *introduction* to them.

After some account therefore of the reasons for the slight degree of attention with which the difficulty in question is sometimes regarded, and of the insufficient answers frequently proposed to it, an attempt is made to exhibit an adequate solution of it: (I.) in the *principle* of that practice, which has in fact been commonly pursued by considerate men in the communication of religious truth; and

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of which one effect has been to prevent the difficulty itself from being much more generally felt and recognised than it is at present. (p. 1—14.)

(II.) In *proof*, and *defence*, and *explanation*, of this principle much more will here be advanced than many readers might consider requisite, or than to many indeed will be at all necessary. (p. 14—46.) Those however, who admit the principle at once, may neglect the arguments urged in its behalf, and proceed to consider (III.) *the use and application of it*: (p. 46 to the end :) and if they then acknowledge its extensive utility, and perceive at the same time that it has been either undervalued by many, or lamentably neglected in practice, they will admit that a formal discussion of what was to them a very obvious position may not be altogether needless. The very existence of the truth contended for was indeed virtually denied in various writings and public speeches during the agitation of the late questions concerning the distribution of the holy Scriptures; and it is still denied in works which appear at least to obtain a very considerable circulation.

The application of the principle thus opposed, or disregarded, will extend beyond the solution of the difficulty before alluded to; and without suggesting, to pious and sensible men, any novelty in practice, may perhaps throw somewhat of additional light upon the importance of their established practice in the dissemination of Christian knowledge, or of

Christianity itself, amongst the young, and those of riper years, at home and abroad.

If these few pages can in the slightest degree contribute to such valuable ends, and if they are capable also incidentally of supplying a ready answer to certain popular objections, either against the evidence of some important articles of faith, or even against revealed religion itself, they will have been without impropriety offered to the publick at large. To the candid consideration of the Established Clergy they are submitted in a more especial manner, but with peculiar deference; they are addressed however to every thoughtful believer in Christianity, and to those also who have not yet admitted the claims of Revelation, but who are honestly intent upon the discovery of religious truth.

USE AND IMPORTANCE OF UNAUTHORITATIVE
TRADITION.

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A DISSERTATION, ETC.

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WHY are many of the Christian doctrines so *indirectly taught* in the Scriptures?—is a question sometimes put not merely by those who doubt or disbelieve the doctrines, but by very sincere believers, by those even who have ascertained their truth with abundant learning and ability. Why, they ask, are many of the most important articles of faith rather implied than taught; why have we to learn them in great measure from incidental notices of them in books written upon particular occasions, controversies, or heresies, many of them long since passed away, whilst some men have erred through ignorance of these particulars, and some have been at times perplexed although they have embraced the truth, and some have missed altogether that faith in which all are most concerned to live? why this difficulty, they ask, when more *direct and systematic* statements of the main points of faith might have been with equal ease delivered by the same authority, and would of course, from believers, have met with implicit veneration?

The difficulty seems to deserve consideration, in order that we may solve the doubts of others at least, if not our own.

But though many may have perceived the indirectness, with which important truths are taught in the Scriptures, and yet have laboured under no perplexity in consequence; others probably will have avoided the doubt merely by inattention to the real existence and extent of the difficulty in the sacred Volume. Thoroughly convinced by the authority of Scripture they may not have attended strictly to the process by which their own conviction of the truth of the Christian doctrines has been established; although resting them entirely upon Scriptural authority, they may not have *first* collected them solely and immediately from the Scriptures. Hence they may not have observed, that the various proofs of a given doctrine have been accumulated perhaps from the parts of the sacred Volume the most unconnected apparently with each other; that one text occasionally of the greatest importance towards their conviction had no force at all in that respect until compared with another, and that perhaps with a third, each separately incapable of bearing upon the point in question, but all together composing an indissoluble argument, of so much the more force indeed, as it precludes the possibility of forgery and interpolation. In this manner important doctrines often receive strong confirmation from collations of texts in the New Testament with corresponding passages in the Jewish Scriptures: for example, the glory of Christ spoken of by St. John, (xii. 41.) and the dignity of the Holy Ghost according to the words of St. Paul, (Acts xxviii. 25.) are signally illustrated by referring to the passage in the prophecies of Isaiah, (Is. vi. 1.—10.) to which both

the apostles allude.* Again, in proof of a single doctrine we are accustomed to combine the declaration of John the Baptist concerning Christ, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost," as recorded by the first three Evangelists, (Matt. iii. 11. Mark i. 8. Luke iii. 16.) with our Lord's assertion in St. John's Gospel, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," (John iii. 5.) and with the expression of St. Paul to Titus, God has "saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," (Tit. iii. 5.) Another instance of complex proof of doctrines might be the comparison of the following texts, "All Scripture," says St. Paul to Timothy, "is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.) and is "able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus"—"of which salvation," says St. Peter, (1 Pet. i. 10.) "the prophets have enquired and searched diligently—searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify—unto whom it was revealed, that unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven:" and in this the apostle confirms the promises in St. John's Gospel, (John xiv. 26. xvi. 13. xv. 26.) whilst in another Epistle he declares the inspiration of the old prophets also to have proceeded from the Holy

* See the observations upon these passages by Whitby, Jones of Nayland, Waterland, Bishops Wilson and Horsley, collected in the Family Bible, edited by D'Oyly and Mant.

Ghost; "For the prophecy came not in old time
 "by the will of man: but holy men of God spake
 "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," (2
 Pet. i. 21.) It is only in combination with each
 other that these passages throw light upon the in-
 spiration of both the Old and New Testaments by
 the same supreme Being, and attest at the same
 time the unity of the three Persons in the Divine
 nature.

It is obvious that those who are more accustomed
 to the language of the uninspired advocates for the
 Christian doctrines than to the study of the Scrip-
 tures themselves, may not have observed the com-
 plex structure of the very proofs by which their
 faith was chiefly established. From the same cause
 they may often suppose particular doctrines to be
 directly asserted in texts, which in fact only imply
 and assume them; because the commentators, with
 perfect propriety as far as the truth and soundness
 of their argument is concerned, but incorrectly with
 respect to the form of the original words, quote as
 direct declarations of a doctrine the passages which
 indirectly indicate the sacred writer's belief of it.*
 In this manner the fifth chapter of St. Paul's
 Epistle to the Romans is frequently appealed to
 with respect to the doctrine of original sin; and yet
 throughout the chapter the consequences of Adam's
 transgression are not taught, but rather assumed
 by the apostle as already known to his readers, in
 order to argue from them to the corresponding
 extent of the gracious consequences of Christ's

* See for example Whitby's quotation of 1 Cor. xv. 22. in
 his note upon Rom. v. 12.

atonement. These are probably amongst the cir-
 cumstances which occasionally conceal from the
 view of Christians the indirectness of Scripture
 with respect to several important doctrines, of the
 truth of which they are entirely and with the
 greatest justice convinced. At the same time it
 should be observed, that the implication of doc-
 trinal points, or the complex character of the
 Scriptural proofs of them, the more convincing and
 satisfactory they are as modes of *proof*, are, however,
 so much the less adapted to the purpose of *teaching*
 the doctrines themselves.

To attempt to meet the difficulty by detailing the
 circumstances under which the several books of the
 New Testament were composed is by no means
 satisfactory; for however natural* and just the
 method of them may thus be made to appear with
 respect to the then Christian churches or converts,
 the question still remains—how is such a style or
 method suited to *our* wants, which must be sup-
 posed to have been equally in the contemplation of
 the divine Author of the Scriptures; how can these
 writings be the best adapted to convey satisfactory
 information upon doctrinal points to Christians now,
 or in succeeding ages?

* See Macknight's Prelim. Essay, iii. p. 64, 65, ed. 4to. 1795.
 Bishop Conybeare on Scripture Difficulties, p. 112. in the
 Enchiridion Theologicum, vol. II., Oxford, 1812. There
 follows in the same place an excellent answer to the question
 in the text, but not sufficient for the present purpose, because
 it does not recognise the existence of the difficulty under con-
 sideration in these pages: the difficulties indeed of which
 Bishop Conybeare treats are not of the same class with that
 considered here, as will sufficiently appear in the sequel.

Nor will it suffice to answer, that we are frequently obliged to gather the sentiments of other writers (the heathen philosophers, for example) from a careful examination and comparison of their works; that we thus become satisfied what their sentiments were, and why not then submit to the same mode in ascertaining the opinions of the sacred writers:—for in fact we do throw blame on the philosopher, who obliges us to pursue such a painful method of collecting those opinions which he *professes to teach*: the philosopher indeed may sometimes be supposed to have intended obscurity, which will not therefore detract from the authority of his writings; but the important truths of Christianity were doubtless intended to be made out with great clearness by all its professors, not to be confined to the exclusive knowledge of a favoured few. And in the present case believers are supposed to admit, that they can ascertain at last the real doctrines; but they are perplexed by the obscure and indirect method adopted for *teaching* them truths so important; they are grieved because others seem thus induced to reject them altogether; and although they doubt not but that what the Holy Spirit has directed He has ordered for the best, they yet confess the difficulty, and are pained by its apparent consequences.

It may indeed be very possible for men of superior learning, industry, and capacity, to make out from the Scriptures without assistance many or most of the doctrines of our faith, which they may then impart to others; and this, it may be said, would be analogous to the method by which the great and beneficial discoveries of human science

have been often made by learned men, and afterwards bestowed upon the rest of mankind. But the cases do not appear altogether parallel; because here the great mass of Christians, the ignorant quite as much as the learned, are so deeply interested in the truths of Christianity, that we might expect the mode of acquiring them would originally be more level to their capacity. And besides, even the discoveries alluded to have frequently not been made until great pains and many years had been consumed in vain upon the search after them; or great truths have been long overlooked, although apparently obvious when perceived; or have met with long opposition when discovered, although they have been afterwards imparted to inferior minds with comparative facility, or at last admitted on all hands without a question. The true doctrines concerning the motions of the earth, or the theory of gravitation, how long was it before they were made out, and how difficult to establish them when first brought to light, and when many were startled by their novelty; although they could afterwards be satisfactorily explained to persons of very humble attainments. But then no similar perplexity arises here, because we feel that the world might have continued ignorant of these truths entirely without essential harm; and that in fact they never were, like the doctrines of Christianity, designed to be known and believed by the generality of mankind.

Let any man who is now convinced from Scripture of the truth of the Christian doctrines, but who has not perceived how easily they might of themselves have escaped his notice, consider only how many great truths there are in the world

quite clear and confessed at present, yet originally overlooked, or disbelieved. What can be more generally admitted now than the laws of motion, how easy to teach them even to a child, and yet how many ages passed away before they were thought of, although all the elements of these truths were present to the minds of all men from the first. Most readers will probably admit that the theory of population elucidated by Mr. Malthus is a remarkable example to the same purpose. But to take a stronger instance—how striking and convincing is the argument by which Paley has proved the genuineness of St. Paul's Epistles—and yet the materials of that argument lay unnoticed for many centuries in the hands of every Christian! And why did they so, but from that very circumstance which gives such demonstrative force to his conclusions—that the hints and notices upon which the argument is raised, lie so scattered and unconnected in the substance of the History and Epistles as to exclude all possibility of forgery. Just so the method of the Christian writings affords indeed the very strongest *proofs* of doctrines interwoven by allusion, implication, and every indirect mode, with the texture of the sacred books; but it is often the least adapted to the purpose of *teaching* those doctrines, which was the end we should have expected them to have in view: and some of the doctrines themselves, like the argument of Paley, might have been undiscovered possibly to the present age, had the only mode of acquiring a knowledge of them been the research of the learned, who should impart their discoveries to other men. Nay, more, it is matter

of fact that the difficulty, which we have supposed, is sometimes felt by learned and able, as well as sincere, believers; by those, in short, who would naturally be the best qualified to elicit from Scripture the scheme of Christian doctrines. They, indeed, who can best appreciate the whole difficulty of such a task are, perhaps, the most likely to feel the perplexing thought—why should the Divine Spirit have chosen by such means to convey to the whole Christian world the doctrines most important for the whole world to know and believe.

But the propriety may be questioned of proposing a difficulty for consideration little likely to be ever answered completely, but the very mention of which may raise a new doubt in the mind of the pious Christian, or suggest a new cavil to the unbeliever. There is surely little cause, however, to refrain from any argument calculated to benefit the believer, when the cavils, to which it may give occasion, cannot possibly amount to an objection to Revelation itself without the grossest presumption or most culpable ignorance on the part of the objector. For the difficulty in question is *no objection*; it has long since been unanswerably shown that no objection can lie against Revelation on account of any alleged obscurity, or partial discovery of its truths, which does not equally lie against the tenets of pure deism; that, admitting the facts of the common course of nature, there is in truth nothing in revealed Religion which may not be equally well believed to have proceeded from the same author. It would be no less unreasonable to object to the truth of Christianity itself on account of the difficulty here

acknowledged, than it would be to deny the reality, or the high importance of that knowledge of agriculture which civilized nations possess, because there are various savage tribes to whom the art itself is unknown. We may dismiss the case of the unbeliever therefore with this serious but charitable warning, that, if he imagines he can raise an objection to Christianity on these grounds, when they have absolutely, as grounds of objection, been refuted (especially by Bishop Butler),* either his negligence will be sinful, should he not have considered the answer if he could; or should his want of opportunity or ability have prevented his knowing the demonstrative force of the argument against him, then will his presumption be sinful, if under such ignorance he attempts to carp at revealed Religion. But with respect to the believer it might be wrong indeed to hazard presenting a new difficulty to his mind, were there not some reason from experience to believe that those, who have not felt the difficulty before, are not likely to feel it long: whilst of course the enquiry would not have been proposed, did it not seem calculated to lead to results satisfactory perhaps at once to some who have laboured under the difficulty assumed, and in their consequences also not uninteresting to all believers in Christianity.

At the same time it may be right to state, that neither is the whole difficulty expected to be solved, nor to the same extent with all minds; and for this reason amongst others, that it seems to

*See the Analogy of Religion, &c., part ii. ch. 6. Paley's Evidences, part iii. ch. 6.

have been the very intention of Providence that doubts and perplexities on the subject of Religion, (different also to different minds,) should remain as parts of our probation. This however does not forbid us to attempt the solution of any difficulty, whether to relieve our own doubts, or to have somewhat to offer for the satisfaction of a brother Christian. To return therefore to the consideration of that perplexity which many believers probably experience in the very *indirect* method observed in the New Testament for teaching the Christian doctrines.

Partially then, and, as it should seem, only in part, this difficulty is answered to believers by its *utility*, and by its *analogy* with the mode of delivering the *moral precepts* also of the Gospel.

The true believer without question, under whatsoever difficulty, never doubts but that the methods of nature or of grace are really the best adapted to their ends by the all-wise Father of heaven and earth; "whose way is in the sea, and His paths in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known;" (Ps. lxxvii. 19.) though "clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne;" (Ps. xcvi. 2.) but it is pleasing also to detect even the most obscure traces of the steps by which His mercy and wisdom have gone: and in the present instance the want of system in the delivery of the Christian doctrines in Scripture—besides its extreme use, (before insisted upon,) in placing the *proofs* of those doctrines above the suspicion of corruption—may no doubt be useful as a mode of trying our humility and our faith; and evidently also answers a great purpose

in promoting research, and raising the curiosity, of learned men especially, who might have slighted a study less intricate and arduous; whilst the very disputes and errors consequent upon obscurity have kept alive the spirit of Christianity upon the whole; and, however hurtful frequently to the individuals conversant with them, (through their own fault,) have been eminently instrumental in spreading wider, or rooting more deeply, the great truths of Revelation in other minds.

It is pleasing also to observe the analogy between the delivery of Christian doctrines and moral precepts: as those are to be gathered chiefly from incidental notices of them, from facts, and from arguments upon occasional topics, so the moral precepts also are taught in Scripture with far less of system than in the least exact works upon moral subjects; they are rather to be gleaned than readily gathered from history, from examples, from detached remarks, reproofs, and exhortations.*

But—not to mention that there is in fact somewhat more of direct and systematic teaching in the practical, than in the doctrinal, instructions of Holy Writ—it may be very fairly objected that we have an advantage in the one case not perceived in the other, and which goes far to set aside the whole analogy between them. For have we not the aid of the moral sense and of reason, which, although far from unerring guides, but requiring continual reference to Scripture to correct their deviations, and supply their deficiencies—still of themselves

* See Paley's Moral Philos., I., iv., upon the moral instructions of Scripture.

may lead us into the principles of moral truth, and enable us further to comprehend, and turn to the best advantage, the more enlarged morality of Holy Writ? But we seem to look in vain for a corresponding guide to the higher principles of faith, confessedly opposed as these are to very many natural feelings, although perceived, *when known*, to be admirably adapted to the wants of human nature; and of whose very essence it is, although never contrary to our reason, yet to be undiscoverable by human capacity, and often to be above our reason. It would appear to be in the want of such a guide that the very difficulty complained of consists; so that if a corresponding assistance could be pointed out, we could have scarcely any cause to feel, and confess, the alleged want of clearness in the revelation of the Christian doctrines.

Now exactly such an aid and guide may surely be found in *tradition*, the traditions conveyed from age to age by the Church in general. They are allowed by the most orthodox divines* to be “a good help” to the study of the Scriptures, why may they not have been *intended* to assist us? Common experience and common practice seem to declare that some assistance of the kind is *needful* and *reasonable*, why may not this assistance have been designed for us from the first—as from the first *in fact* almost every Christian has been by such aid introduced to Christianity? In a word, why may it not have been the general design of Heaven

* See, for instance, Abp. Synge's Gentleman's Religion, p. 54; Burnet on the Articles, p. 95, Oxon., 1805; Nelson's Life of Bp. Bull, p. 190. Oxon., 1816.

that by early oral, or traditional, instruction the way should be prepared for the reception of the mysteries of faith; that the Church should carry down the *system*, but the Scriptures should furnish all the *proofs* of the Christian doctrines; that tradition should supply the Christian with the *arrangement*, but the Bible with all the *substance* of divine truth?

(II.) It is most important that this point should not be misapprehended; it may appear perhaps to one, a truism,* to another, heresy; yet upon further

* Those who might be inclined to prejudge the following argument as simply unnecessary, are requested to consider whether the principle maintained in it is not both neglected in practice, and virtually denied in conversation, and in printed works enjoying a considerable popularity. The following extracts for instance have been taken from the *fifth edition* of Saurin's Sermons translated by Robinson, vol. III (preface.)

"The religion of nature is not capable of establishment; the religion of Jesus Christ is not capable of establishment; if the religion of any church be capable of establishment, it is not analogous to that of Scripture or of nature." p. 11. "The world and revelation, both the work of the same God, are both constructed on the same principles; and were the book of Scripture like that of nature laid open to universal inspection, were all idea of temporal rewards and punishments removed from the study of it, that would come to pass in the moral world which has actually happened in the world of human science, each capacity would find its own object, and take its own quantum," p. 20. "I have sometimes imagined a pagan ship's crew in a vessel under sail in the wide ocean; I have supposed no one on board ever heard of Christianity; I have imagined a bird dropping a New Testament written in their language on deck. I have imagined a fund of uneducated unsophisticated good sense in this company, and I have required of this little world answers to two questions: 1st, "What end does this book propose? answer, This book was written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through His

consideration will be found, it is hoped, neither unreasonable, nor unscriptural, nor unimportant.

In the first place this opinion is not in the least connected with the errors of the Romanists, since it claims *no independent authority* for the traditions conveyed to us by the Church. Their error consisted in claiming an authority for tradition equal or even superior to that of the Scriptures themselves;* they did not allow the possibility of their traditions being either fallible or corrupted—but we perceiving that tradition has often been corrupt, and must be by its nature liable to corruption, and therefore fallible, allow it no proper independent authority whatsoever.

We perceive that traditions may be contradictory to the Scriptures, and then we absolutely reject them; or they may be unsupported by the Scriptures, and then we allow them no further, than as they coincide with the dictates of reason; or they may be supported by the sacred writings, and then

"name." p. 23. "I ask, 2ndly, What means does this book authorize a foremast man who believes to employ to the rest?" &c., &c. "Should he oblige the cabin-boy to admit his explanation of the book, he would be unlike the God who requires "the boy to explain it to himself;" &c., &c., p. 24.

* According to the theory of the Romanists, tradition, or, as they define it, the unwritten word of God, is of equal authority with the written word or the Scriptures; but in practice tradition often obtains with them an authority paramount to that of the Scriptures, as the Bp. of Llandaff has shewn in *The Comparative View* of the Churches of England and Rome, 2nd ed. p. 15. The reader is referred to this work for a full account of the ideas concerning the nature of tradition entertained by the Church of Rome both in former times and at the present day. See *Comparative View*, p. 12, 17, &c., and the authorities there cited.

we respect them as the original sentiments of the first believers—as derived indeed from the true and only authority. In this manner the outline of revealed truths, which we have now exhibited to us in the Apostles' Creed, has been of eminent service to Christians in tracing the system of their faith—and this, although the precise words of the Creed so called were perhaps for some time used by the Church of Aquileia alone: but not a single article in this, or any Creed, should we admit as our belief, unless supported by the authority of the Scriptures themselves.* Any uninterrupted tradition indeed of any given doctrine brings with it a reasonable *presumption* in its behalf; this it were most uncandid not to allow: of this kind is the tradition of Christ's divinity, now at least proved by the labours of Bp. Bull and Bp. Horsley to have been uninterrupted. But even prior to the proof that any particular tradition is derived from a sacred and unquestionable authority, some slight, some faint presumption in its favour surely may be demanded, if the Church present it to our notice—and more than this is not claimed: it is only urged, that it was intended from the first, that we should receive from such traditions the rudiments of the faith, and with this aid continually approach the Scriptures to ascertain the truth of the traditions; or, to speak generally, that the Church should *teach*, and the Scriptures *prove*, the doctrines of Christianity.

Wide as this opinion is, however, of the fundamental error of the Church of Rome concerning the

* See Art. vi. and Homily.

authority of her traditions, it is more than probable that an excessive dread of the papal heresy has caused the just and legitimate use of traditional instruction to be continually overlooked by pious Protestants.

Because the Romanist has raised tradition to a level with inspired authorities, the Protestant has often neglected, or denied, its natural use and value. That great errors should produce their contraries has been indeed so constant an evil, that every prudent person feels it necessary to guard his own mind against such an effect: and it is matter of notoriety that, when the papal error respecting tradition was first refuted, the wildest notions sprung up on all sides in the opposite extreme. Hooker is obliged to apologize even for the use of the word tradition, though it were only in respect of indifferent customs or ceremonies;* and even if history had been silent, it might have been inferred from our thirty-fourth Article, that there had previously existed very wide deviations on this subject from the plainest dictates of common sense. But we are not concerned at present with any extreme opinions either of our own or former times: there is an implied exclusion of assistance from any traditional instruction in such sentiments as the following, which many persons probably have heard from the lips of pious and sincere believers—
 “that they allow that such or such a doctrine is
 “completely proved in the New Testament; but
 “that they must needs confess that, had they not
 “previously heard the doctrine stated, they should

* Eccles. Polity, ii. p. 296. Oxford, 1793.

“scarcely have themselves collected it from the “sacred books.” This is perhaps no uncommon feeling respecting more than one important doctrine, and then upon many minds the painful question will obtrude itself, “Could the All-wise have intended “that the doctrine, however true, or however “important, should *thus* be taught to His weak and “erring creatures?”

To all this might we not fairly answer, True, our heavenly Father did not leave us exposed to so much difficulty; He did not intend that we should ordinarily thus be taught the Christian doctrines, but that, receiving the outline of them from the traditions of His Church, we should ascertain their truth by the unerring standard of His written word.

And it will be allowed by thoughtful members of the English Church, that it is a comparatively light and easy task to *prove* the important doctrines of our faith from Holy Writ, when once we have received them in a definite form with that presumption, how low soever, in their behalf, to which they are justly entitled, even because they have been handed down to us through the medium of the Church. With this guide before us, passages become often as clear as prophecies whose completion is known, which like those before the event would otherwise seem dark or contradictory. The parallel is more close than may at first sight appear; as the prophecies concerning the greatness of the Messiah’s kingdom, apparently opposed to those which announced His humiliation and sufferings, were a stumbling-block to the Jews, although to Christians the true sense of both appears exceedingly simple and evident; so likewise are there

doctrines in the orthodox creed of Christianity which furnish a key to passages in the New Testament otherwise irreconcilable, and which indeed, to those who want or refuse this aid, are yet sources of perplexity and error.*

Again, it cannot but be *reasonable* that this should have been the appointed method, when it is exactly similar to the course which every wise instructor pursues in almost every branch of human knowledge. Even when subjects have been treated in the most exact and systematic order, with an express view to instruction on the part of the author, we seldom even then commit such treatises into the hands of others (especially where persuasion is our object) without some oral, some preliminary, view of the contents of the work.

Were the intention of Heaven admitted indeed, we need not discuss its reasonableness; but prior to the proof of the intention, it may at once afford a presumption in its favour, and a satisfaction to our own minds, to shew that the practice, which would follow such an intention, is analogous to the course pursued in other cases of instruction; and that in the case of religious instruction also it is the practice *actually recommended* by the best authorities. Hooker in his observations upon the design and usefulness of catechising might be referred to for a complete corroboration of these remarks. In the

* Pour entendre l’Ecriture, il faut avoir un sens dans lequel tous les passages contraires s’accordent. Il ne suffit pas d’en avoir un qui convienne à plusieurs passages accordans; mais il faut en avoir un qui concilie les passages mêmes contraires. Pensées de Pascal xiii. 12. la Loi figurative. Tradition, yet still without authority, often supplies this sense.

same place he has these words,* “As the decalogue of Moses declareth summarily those things which we ought to do; the prayer of our Lord, whatsoever we should request, or desire; so either by the apostles, or at the least wise out of their writings, we have the substance of Christian belief compendiously drawn into few and short articles, to the end that the weakness of no man’s wit might either hinder altogether the knowledge, or excuse the utter ignorance, of needful things.”

What is this in effect but to confess the want of system in the Scriptures respecting what we have to *believe*, compared with what we have to *do*, or to *desire*; and to suggest traditional instruction as the obvious supply of the want?

No authorities, however, need be quoted to prove that practice reasonable, which it is alleged was intended, since we are beginning, *as a nation*, to acknowledge the propriety of reverting universally to systematic and preparatory religious instruction, if we would hope to secure to the mass of the community the purest knowledge of the most important truths: and it has already been suggested, that the want of system in the revelation of the Christian doctrines has probably not been felt, or perceived, by many, only because they have *in fact* been introduced to their knowledge of them by the very mode, and under the very guidance, which most Christians now admit to be reasonable, and which it will hereafter appear perhaps was intended from the first for our assistance.

But again, in reverting as a nation to this

* *Eccles. Polity*, vol. ii. p. 56. Oxford, 1793.

practice we do but resume the too-much neglected *principles of our Reformers*.

By the express provision which they made for catechetical instruction, their opinion of the reasonableness of assisting the knowledge of divine truth by human and unauthoritative teaching is evidently shewn. We might almost refer for the same point to their Liturgy, and Homilies, and the express sanction which they gave in the Articles to the ancient creeds—always supposing indeed that “they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture.” (Art. viii.) Even the sixth Article, the fundamental Article of the Protestant faith, whilst it asserts “the sufficiency of the holy Scriptures for salvation,” and the consequent nullity of any doctrine which “is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby,” almost implies the proposed use of unauthoritative tradition; to suggest namely what is not directly or obviously read in the Scriptures, but still to suggest only what may be proved thereby. But what was the conduct of these Reformers in their own case? Did they, (and they had perceived the full mischief of the Romish doctrine concerning traditions, but) did they set themselves to the task of culling for themselves the important points of faith out of the wilderness of Scripture truths, abandoning all that they had heard concerning them? or did they not more soberly and wisely, yet with no less freedom than piety, examine by the standard of Scripture the traditions which they had received, and so, discarding those which would not bear the trial, gratefully retain the doctrines of sterling weight and value?

They could scarcely have done more, had they been most firmly persuaded, that it was the original intention of Heaven in all ordinary cases, that we should trace the intricacies of revealed truth with the clew of tradition for our guide.

The principle of that practice which, in itself reasonable, was intended by the English Reformers for our benefit, and observed by them for their own advantage, comes recommended to us in no slight degree. But we have higher authority. For let us consider what was the conduct of the *primitive Church* with respect to tradition. It was of course, it could not indeed be otherwise, to receive the faith of Christ first by the spoken word, and then by the written authorities. "Therefore, brethren," says the apostle to the Thessalonians, "stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our Epistle." (2 Thess. ii. 15.)

But it will instantly be objected, that the "word," the oral teaching of St. Paul, has nothing in common with the traditions conveyed by the Church, the instructions of a divinely inspired apostle, with those of his weak and fallible successors. Most certainly the cases are distinct; it was quite necessary that those instructions, which were to lay the foundation of all doctrine, should be themselves infallible; but there is no such necessity, when there is ample authority written by St. Paul and the other apostles, that after-tradition should have any independent authority at all; or should be otherwise, than it most surely is, and we allow it to be, quite fallible—yet still it may be just and rational, that this fallible tradition

should be accounted *useful*, (always indeed in strict reason a presumption of truth, but) useful at least, and *intended* to be so, in introducing us to those doctrines, which Scripture, the only authority for doctrines now, does not so readily *teach*.

In one word, as has been the necessity, so seems the supply of it to have been distributed: to the first age infallible oral instructions from inspired teachers with less of written authority—to after-ages fallible previous instructions with full and complete written authority in the last resort.

To this obvious distinction the Romanists pay no regard; and hence their pernicious errors, respecting the authority of their doctrinal traditions. Accordingly the Romish writers in general consider the passage above cited (2 Thess. ii. 15.) as decisive in their favour; the note to it in the modern editions of the Rhemish Testament exclaims, "See here that the unwritten traditions of the apostles are no less to be received than their Epistles." And Bossuet refers to it with the same view in his "Exposition of the Catholic Faith."* When the necessity however for tradition entitled to independent authority was removed, the possibility of establishing its claims ceased also. We may admit that the apostle here recommends tradition in the sense of the Romish apostolical tradition; and whilst its origin was known, and its authority accredited by the miraculous powers of the teacher, it was doubtless equivalent to the Scriptures themselves. But the Church of Rome entirely fails, and from the very nature of the case cannot but fail, in

* See Comparative View, 2d ed. pp. 61, 62, 63.

establishing a similar origin for what she calls the apostolical or the divine traditions of doctrines, of any doctrines at least which are not also contained in the holy Scriptures.*

From *authoritative* tradition therefore, which was only needed, and could only be established, in the apostolic age, we turn to what sufficiently supplies the wants of after-ages the use of *unauthoritative* tradition.

The actual transition indeed from the one to the other was exactly analogous to, probably cotemporaneous with, the change from the possession of miraculous powers by the Christian teachers, to their enjoying only their natural advantages assisted by the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit.

But it will be objected again that tradition, or oral teaching, though implied in the Scriptures, could have no place after the whole volume of Scripture was complete.

But how is it complete? Fully sufficient we gratefully acknowledge it to be for every purpose

* See Comparative View, ch. iv., and Whitby on 2 Thess. ii. 15, &c., &c. The Bp. of Llandaff indeed contends, that by the term tradition in this place St. Paul intended discipline, and not doctrine, "from the explanation which he himself has given "of this very term after an interval of only seven verses." (Comparative View, p. 64.) It is probable, however, that most even of those, who are, very properly, unwilling to differ from a Prelate of so great learning and acuteness, will allow with Macknight and Whitby that the term in the first instance does relate to doctrines; that there is indeed a manifest change of subject between the two places in which the term occurs; (ch. ii. 15. and iii. 6), and that the tenour of the former chapter, particularly of the verses immediately preceding (ii. 13, 14.) obliges us to understand the term in that place in the sense of doctrinal traditions.

of proving, confirming, establishing our faith, and amply complete for innumerable other purposes of never-ceasing benefit to man; but how is it complete for *teaching*, when daily experience shews the frequent need of other aid, which it were fanaticism to deny, and which never is denied by the best authorities in the English Church,* and when the difficulty under our notice itself implies, that for teaching the faith it scarcely is sufficient?

And let us consider for a moment of what the volume of our faith consists—mainly, in that part at least whence the doctrines are principally to be gathered, it consists of Epistles to various Christian converts in every instance supposing them previously informed of the Christian doctrines, in short always *implying previous oral teaching*. This will not be denied even without adduction of examples: but why are we to assume that this implied knowledge was not to be supposed after the age of its inspired authors was passed away?—Who shall prove that the universal expressions of this nature have no meaning now, no reference to our previous knowledge—though undoubtedly to be understood with such modifications, as the change of the case from certain and infallible traditions to uncertain and unauthoritative teaching in all reason requires? The objector surely should be called upon for strong proof on his side of the question, that this constant implication of previous instruction was not meant to extend to us in the subordinate sense already men-

* See for instance Hooker's Eccles. Polity, vol. I., p. 271, 275, &c., Oxon. 1793. Burnet on the Articles, p. 95, 102, &c., Oxon. 1805.

tioned, that is to say, without continuing to oral tradition now that authority, which could only be claimed for the instructions of inspired teachers.

And let it be observed (for this point can only be handled summarily in these pages), the General Epistles, and the latest written, where we might least expect it, continue to hold this language, and point out this object of the Epistles themselves. To take a single instance for both points: in the Second Epistle General of Peter he declares that the object of that and of his former Epistle was "to stir up the pure minds" of his Christian brethren "by way of remembrance," (2 Pet. iii. 1) though, as he says, "they knew the things" of the kingdom of Christ and "were established in the pre-sent truth." (2 Pet. i. 12.) This Epistle is considered to have been written in the year of our Lord 65, only one year antecedent to the date of the latest of St. Paul's Epistles, the existence and authority of all of which (*i.e.*, of all except the last, as we may reasonably conclude from St. Peter's expressions, (2 Pet. iii. 16) the apostle directly acknowledges; yet he is so far from pointing out that they were intended at once to teach the unconverted, that he observes "the unlearned and unstable" Christians "wrest them, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction,"* (2 Pet. iii. 16); whilst of his own intentions in

* Though St. Peter begins with mentioning only some parts of St. Paul's Epistles, "some things hard to be understood," yet the words "the other Scriptures also" make the sentence of force towards the present argument: and Bp. Conybeare takes the passage in the same extent in his excellent discourse on Scripture difficulties.

writing that Epistle (and this nearly the latest of those divine productions), he only says, that "he will endeavour that they," *i.e.* Christians, "may be able after his decease to have these things always in remembrance." (2 Pet. i. 15.) Compare this again with the express intention of St. Luke's Gospel (itself one of the latest written of the historical books of the New Testament, and which may fairly be considered as declaratory of the intention also of the Acts, and not a little indicative of the opinion of St. Paul himself upon the subject), let us compare what has been above mentioned with St. Luke's express declaration that he wrote his Gospel to Theophilus, "that," he says, "thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed, *περὶ ὧν κατηχήθης λόγων*"— (Luke i. 4), and we may possibly admit that the object of those sacred writers was much less to teach, than to enforce and establish what had been taught before. The historical Scriptures indeed do not even contain all the doctrines of the Christian faith;* and of the Epistles generally, whence this deficiency is to be supplied, the same description may be given, which Lock has applied to those of St. Paul in particular. "The providence of God," says he, "hath so ordered it, that St. Paul has written a great number of Epistles, which though upon different occasions, and to several purposes, yet are all confined within the business of his apostleship, and so contain nothing but points of

* See Bp. Gibson's third Pastoral Letter, Macknight's Prelim. Essay, i., p. 50. 4to. Edin. 1795, quoted also by Mr. Sumner, Apostolical Preaching, p. 33, 2nd ed.

“Christian instruction, amongst which he seldom fails to drop in, and often to enlarge upon the great and distinguishing doctrines of our holy religion.”* Yet when St. Paul designed to teach, we may learn from the history of his teaching at Athens how systematic his method of instruction was, how regularly deduced from the first elements of religious knowledge. (Acts xvii.) We know also from history what length of time it was usual with the apostles to employ in teaching the word at one place; as at Antioch a year and more, (Acts xi. 26) at Corinth St. Paul continued “a year and six months teaching the word of God,” (Acts xviii. 11) at Ephesus two years and three months (compare Acts xix. 8, 9, 10, and xx. 20—31), at Rome two whole years “preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Acts xxviii. 30, 31.) In a word, the history corresponds exactly with the structure of the Epistles: to Christians thus instructed were those communications addressed, which continually from the earlier down to the later writings imply previous oral teaching.

Imperfect as these hints must necessarily be, when the true force of the argument can only be apprehended after a general examination of the New Testament itself; still it was necessary even here to refer to the several parts which compose the sacred volume, lest the inference about to be drawn from the implication of tradition in the later Epistles

* Preface to Comment., vol. III., p. 111, ed. fol. 1722, cited by Bp. Gibson, third Pastoral Letter, p. 287, vol. II., Enchirid. Theol. Oxon. 1812.

should be supposed to be invalidated upon either of the two following pretences: either upon the plea that these Epistles, although of a subsequent date, were yet addressed to Churches which had not at the time received the earlier works—or, if they had received them, that to the direct instructions in the earlier writings the indirect allusions of the later Epistles referred. In either of these cases it is evident that we could not infer the present use of oral instruction from any implication of it in the later Epistles; but both these forms of objection lose their force, if every separate part of the holy Volume be found to imply previous oral instruction.

There is yet another objection to be noticed, which, if it were just, would indeed be fatal.

Is there still then a suspicion that the Scriptures condemn tradition, that our Lord Himself condemned it, and in the severest language which the lips of mercy could express? Without doubt He did, but that, and only that, tradition which presumed to rank itself with inspired authority, or worse, which set aside that authority altogether. These were His words, adopting those of Esaias, “In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men;” and again He said unto the Pharisees and Scribes, “Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.” (Mark vii. 7, 9.)

Had Christ indeed done more than this, He might have appeared to contradict the injunctions of the Old Testament—for it seems quite apparent, that the Law was positively ordered by Moses himself to be taught by the fathers unto their children, as often as the external rites of that religion excited the curiosity of after-ages.

This is the continual language of Moses, and of Joshua, when they have even in the clearest manner recorded a miracle in their writings, or appointed its memorial: "And it shall come to pass, "when your children shall ask in time to come, "what mean these statutes? what mean ye by this "service, or this monument? that ye shall say, "Thus and thus hath the Lord delivered thy "fathers, thus and thus hath He done mightily for "us." (see Exodus xii. 26. xiii. 14. Deut. vi. 20. Josh. iv. 6, 21.) Christians surely ought not to require the outward sign, or service, (though the mercy of Him, who knew what was in man, did not leave them destitute of these also, when He ordained the Christian sacraments,) that they may be induced to excite by them the earliest curiosity of their children concerning that faith, which confesses a greater deliverance than that from Egypt, and looks to better promises than those of Canaan!

But, indeed, we have already seen what use the inspired witnesses of the New Covenant both made, and implied, of traditional instruction. And it is a very remarkable fact, under all the circumstances of the case, that, after hearing continual invectives against the improper use of traditions, the disciples should yet so constantly imply in their writings the use of traditional teaching—that such a verse indeed, as the one before cited, should be found in the New Testament at all—"hold the traditions "which ye have been taught, whether by word, or "our Epistle."*

* And this in a chapter (2 Thess. ii.) often supposed to convey censure upon that very Church, which has chiefly mis-used tradition, and caused its opponents sometimes to forget what tradition *was*, in shewing what it *was not*.

If then the foregoing account of the Scriptures be correct, we cannot but admit the object of those sacred books to have been much less to teach, than to enforce and establish what had been taught before. Nor must this remark be applied to the apostolical age only, (for with respect to that it is undeniable,) but to later ages also, under the modification already mentioned concerning the *authority* of tradition. It seems difficult to avoid this conclusion, unless indeed it appeared that the *necessity* for such an introduction to the faith of Christ had since been *unfelt*, or the *supply of the want withheld*.

The reverse of both these suppositions is the fact. The *necessity* for previous or traditional instruction is generally felt; it governs the conduct of some, obliging them to resort to this assistance; it almost deters others from reading the Scriptures, or distributing them to the bulk of the community; it is a source of perplexity to some even of those who best understand the sacred Volume; and is one among the reasons why the sacred pillar of our faith, while it "gives light by night" to some, is "a cloud and darkness to others;"* so far then it does not appear why this very mode of supplying the deficiency complained of might not have been intended.

In fact also it is thus that the deficiency has in all ages been supplied, and almost in all cases where the saving truths of Christianity have been indeed admitted. Even the prevalence of great heresies for a season is no absolute objection to

* Compare Exod. xiv. 20 with Isaiah viii. 14, 2 Cor. iv. 3.

this; evidently not, if the traditions accompanying them superadded strange doctrines to the genuine creed, and not even when they abandoned some of the true doctrines, so long as they continued to be controverted—and in this way it seems that even corrupt Churches, provided they do not suppress the Scriptures, or disallow them as the *only rule of faith*, may still afford to many of their members the means of correcting their errors, and ascertaining the essential truths of Christianity.

The constant *existence* then of this aid is alone a presumption, that this use of tradition was intended. But there is another fact which almost raises this presumption to a demonstrative proof; the fact, namely, that ample *provision* for this supply of the want was at the first secured by Christ and His apostles, when they established a perpetual *succession of ministers* and teachers.

This is an argument which requires no comment; it asks only to be considered: the Christian ministry indeed was not ordained for this purpose alone, but that one department of its duty, one end of its appointment, was to watch over the purity of the faith, and initiate new members in the rudiments of Christianity, will be denied by no one, who allows that the ministerial order was indeed appointed.

We have thus the Scriptures implying traditional instruction; we have the necessity for such aid continually felt, and the assistance itself continually afforded to the Church; we find also an order of men appointed from the very beginning of Christianity, whose duties cannot but comprehend the care and distribution of this aid to all who need it. Surely, then, it is difficult to conceive that this

use of tradition was not also from the beginning contemplated and intended by the founders of Christianity.

Let it be particularly observed, that this opinion by no means claims any undue rank for ecclesiastical interpretations of Scripture; it would rather remove a difficulty from the path even of the unlearned in their own interpretation of Holy Writ, by suggesting to them the most natural, the clearest, the easiest method of discovering its meaning for their own conviction. At the same time this temperate, and unauthoritative, use of tradition desires not to *prejudice* the learner (if believers could use the term at all in its invidious sense); but here by this use of tradition nothing more is sought, and nothing more is likely to be produced, than that presumption in favour of doctrines so conveyed, which the strictest reason must allow to be properly demanded here, as indeed it forms the sole proof of many propositions upon profane subjects which are generally admitted as true. Upon this basis, which seems at once to take away the difficulty conceived from regarding the sacred oracles as first teachers of the faith, upon this basis let the structure of our faith be raised by the fullest examination, and canvassing of its doctrines by the only ultimate authority, the holy Scriptures.*

* Even in the exact mathematical sciences it is useful to find the propositions simply stated, before the demonstrations are given; or if the absence of such enunciations raised no difficulty, yet important truths *incidentally established* might frequently pass altogether unobserved, if the corollaries were not expressed; and the case of the Christian doctrines is often parallel with this. But whether or no the mathematician met with the

Yet though it were no overweening arrogance, which should consider the ecclesiastical order as the main channel of traditional instruction for the good of the whole Christian Church in every age, even this is not asserted here; it has only been assumed that, as a provision from the first for the perpetuity of traditional instruction, the appointment of the ministerial succession may well be conceived to have been intended. There are offices indeed confided to the clerical orders alone; but they are by no means the sole depositaries, or sole vehicles, of unauthoritative tradition, although upon the whole they have been efficient guardians of it: * here, however, the laity of both sexes will be guilty, if they also do not in this acknowledge the blessing of their inheritance, and the consequent duty imposed upon them of transmitting their trust to all, who have a natural, or civil, right to instruction from them.

Every Christian, who receives the doctrines of his faith, becomes by the very nature of the case the keeper of tradition, so far as he knows the Christian doctrines; and it is not more his duty,

enunciations or corollaries in the *same work* with the demonstrations would be matter of no consequence to him, provided he could readily meet with them in any other quarter: he allows the statements or inferences *no authority* by themselves, he admits no proposition without proof; but neither would he refuse to acknowledge the *utility* of correct statements or corollaries, although they should be by any chance intermixed with others either untrue or not proved: much less would he conceive that these invalidated the true propositions, however other persons might have confounded the true with the false, or admitted the propositions equally with proof or without it.

* See some remarks to this purpose in Leslie's Letter to a Converted Deist.

than his glorious privilege, to assist in spreading wider the blessings which he has received. It were devoutly to be wished that every guardian, every master or mistress of a family, every mother, felt how much was due from them in this particular; for thus it surely is that Christ would have every one of His faithful servants both interested, and *engaged*, in the great work of spreading the elements of Christian truth; and thus also did He probably intend a great advantage to every succeeding period, by providing instruments of instruction *accommodated to all ages and all characters*. Thus may we discover two important advantages inherent in the just use of traditional instruction. For although the Deity might undoubtedly have supplied mankind with written authority accommodated to the first teaching of every human being; such a method would not have harmonized with the general plan of His providence, either in the simplicity of the design, or in the provision which runs through all the economy of life, for making human beings perpetually dependent upon one another for happiness and improvement. There will be another opportunity for enlarging upon this topic. But little insight can he have into the general plan of God's dealings with mankind, who is not pre-disposed to admire a system, which supposes the intervention of human agency, wherever it can be effectual, for human good; * still less of Christian feeling must

* Quoniam (ut præclare scriptum est à Platone) non nobis solum nati sumus, &c., atque ut placet Stoicis—homines hominum causâ esse generatos, ut ipsi inter se aliis alii prodesse possent &c. *Cic. de Off. i. 7.*

he possess, who does not rejoice in being required to bear a part, however humble, in promoting the progress of Christianity.

We should not fail to observe, moreover, and with gratitude, that in perfect harmony with this design, and as if to secure the conveyance of religious instruction to persons of that age, when the great *natural* requisite for the reception of all instruction, an humble and docile spirit, may with the most reason be expected, has the baptism of infants been appointed; that they may not want a claim, so soon as they can catch the first glimpses of truth, to that *divine* assistance also, without which all teaching must be vain.

After all it may be allowed, that some may be little capable of obtaining by any means a very systematical view of the Christian doctrines; and it may be true, that a more exact, and systematized, understanding of Scriptural truths is sometimes demanded by men, than the Divine Inspirer of the faith requires from all believers;—there may, in a word, be a practical and saving faith, with a very unsystematic knowledge of its leading doctrines; as many a peasant practically observes the rules of physic, or mechanics, who yet knows nothing of their respective sciences; and as many men observe numerous moral precepts, who could give no tolerable account of an ethical system. And what is this but another point of comparison between the methods of Providence respecting the principles of faith and of morality, whilst the analogy between the two cases would, if this argument were admitted, appear complete? For admitting the intention concerning tradition, which has been contended for, it

supplies an introduction to the Christian doctrines, analogous to that which reason, or the moral sense, affords towards acquiring the principles of moral duty;* but neither of these aids is entitled to definite authority; from both the appeal must be perpetually made to the tribunal of the Scriptures: with exact systems again either of duties or of doctrines the Scriptures do not present us; and a very unsystematic knowledge of both may often be consistent with a true practical faith, and conduct truly Scriptural.†

Perhaps the original difficulty, so far as it respects the want of system in the Christian Scriptures, may have been occasionally exaggerated, where persons have entertained too strict and exact ideas of the degree of systematical acquaintance with the doc-

* “That position” (viz. that of Socrates, ‘who held that the seeds of all truth lay in everybody’) “will not hold in Christianity, because it contains things above nature: but after that the Catechism is once learned, that which nature is towards philosophy, the Catechism is towards divinity.” Herbert’s Country Parson, c. xxi. See also Bp. Wilson’s Charge, 1747, p. lxxxvii. ed. 4to. 1781.

† There are those whom affliction will have taught to apply these sentiments with a painful but lively interest, whilst they mourn for the amiable and the virtuous snatched away from life not untried, yet after a short probation. Believing that there is no *certainty* of eternal happiness to accountable human beings except through “faith working by love,” they will, however, feel convinced, that persons in early youth, before they could apprehend the evidences of Christianity, or could receive the Bible itself as authentic, except upon the authority of those at whose hands nature had taught them to expect every good—they will feel convinced, that the youthful mind upon that authority, under Grace, might have acquired a sufficient faith, a faith in Christ, active, fruitful, and without doubt sufficient to lead to the promised happiness.

trines of Christianity requisite on the part of every believer. However this may be, the admission just adverted to ought not to be made without the insertion of a reasonable caution, much more obvious than generally regarded. What may be to one an all-sufficient knowledge, may in another be a criminal ignorance: to be unacquainted with the principles even of various human arts, which the unlearned may practise by nature or by habit quite sufficiently, may to educated persons be accounted disgraceful; but what in these cases may be merely unbecoming, in respect of religious knowledge will be hazardously sinful.

The degree indeed of systematic acquaintance with the articles of Christianity befitting different individuals involves a question foreign to the present argument, if not impossible to be determined by men; yet how greatly would the standard of religious knowledge be advanced, did men admit, and act upon a principle, to all appearance no less just, than obvious; did they perceive themselves bound to aim at a proficiency in religious knowledge correspondent to that which they can severally attain in human learning or science! How manifestly then, for example, would it appear the personal and positive duty of every student in a British University, and not merely his transient and academical interest, to acquire a clear and systematic knowledge of the Christian codes of duties or of doctrines!

To return, however, to the subject before us, and draw the argument to a close, which will already perhaps appear to many minds more than sufficient to its proposed purpose. Let us *suppose* then for a moment that the reasonable use of tradition here

suggested *had been intended*; that it had been the method appointed in all ordinary cases by the Holy Spirit from the first, that the Church should *teach* the faith, the Bible *prove*, confirm, establish it—and what in such a case should we have expected, which has not now been shewn to exist?

We might then have expected, that the method should have been obvious, easy, natural, analogous to the best modes of introduction to other branches of knowledge, yet with peculiar uses of its own—this probably has appeared to be the case. We might then have supposed, that a necessity for following this course should have been generally felt, and that perplexity would arise where more was sought in the Scriptures than their design included—and is not this the fact? Whether the principle itself were expressly recognised or not, would be matter of no moment; we should, however, have expected, that a good Providence would so order things, that through a sense of the necessity of the case, or other similar cause, the general practice of Christians should actually be what the original intention of Heaven required—and this also has been the fact—traditional teaching has in reality been in all ages the ordinary introduction to Christianity. Yet again we might have expected, that the Scriptures themselves should at least have hinted that this course was intended—and we find it accordingly ordered expressly under the Old covenant, and implied under the New. We should have expected also, that, if intended, provision should have been made for its efficacy—and this also was secured, or intended to be so, by the ministerial orders; that is to say, should even every

other class of Christians forget or betray their honourable trust, refusing to communicate to others in their several provinces the elements of those truths which they have themselves received.

Lastly, we might have expected, that, like all other gifts and appointments of Heaven, this also should be sometimes abused or perverted, and next, because abused by some, undervalued or abandoned by others—and we may trace both these effects likewise in the present instance: and whilst the Pharisees formerly, and the Romanists in the later period, pushed the pretensions of tradition to superstition, or impiety, we may well admire and bless that good Providence, which caused our Reformers to second and further its proper, and practical utility; as also in the first establishment of Christianity its inspired teachers had begun and implied for ever, even in their latest Epistles, the reasonable use of traditional instruction.

It was indeed an instance of singular moderation in those who had just perceived the whole stupendous error of the Romish Church respecting their traditions, (so similar in all its character to that of the Pharisees of old,) that they should draw the true boundary-line between the provinces of authoritative proofs, and the unauthoritative transmission of doctrines; that they should still allow its full practical use and value to fallible tradition. And as of old the Christian ministry may seem for this purpose amongst others to have been first appointed, that some might never be wanting to guard, and teach, the genuine traditions of the Christian doctrines, so did our Reformers admirably bend their efforts towards the same end by the just importance which

they attached to Creeds and Catechisms, and the perpetual provision which they at least intended for Catechetical instruction. And if to have received by such means the outline of the Faith, the system of the Christian doctrines, (the Scriptures themselves never being kept from sight meanwhile,) and so to have proved the faith by the authority, the duly ascertained authority of Holy Writ—if this be the conduct which justly entitles us to the appellation of “Hereditary Christians,” the members of the English Church may exult and be thankful that they thus are Christians; each of them may well exclaim with the Psalmist, “My lot has fallen “to me in a fair ground, yea, I have a goodly “heritage.” (Ps. xvi. 6.)

It may again therefore be demanded, supposing that this had been the course intended for us by our Lord and His apostles, what further proof, than now exists, of the intention could have been desired? We seem to have every reasonable proof short of a declaration in terms of that intention in the Scriptures themselves. And this, it is scarcely too much to say, would have been impossible. Had we been so required to use or respect tradition generally, who does not perceive the opening which would thus have been made for the presumptuous daring of the Church of Rome; or how could we ourselves have escaped from her pollutions? And, after all, the declaration had been nugatory, unless the equivocal term tradition had been defined; in other words, unless the exact traditions had been expressly prescribed; or, which is the consequence of this, that in place of the present form of the Scriptures, so direct and systematical a form had

been adopted, as must have excluded merely human or oral traditions altogether.

But had this been so, where had been all the peculiar advantages of the present mode? Where the beginnings of instruction accommodated to every variety of age and capacity; where the honourable employment, which now appears devolved upon almost every Christian man and woman, of spreading in their several spheres the dawning lights of the kingdom of their Lord; where the beautiful provision for instilling the elements of faith into the young and tender mind, and when docility, the natural requisite for receiving instructions, may best be looked for—whilst in exact harmony with the supposed intention, the baptism of infants may confer on them that higher requisite, without which all instruction will be unavailing—where, it may be asked, were all these advantages, without the reasonable use of tradition? Yet will it surely lead us into no hurtful error, whilst Scripture is confessed to be the *only authoritative rule of faith*: and, further, admitting all that has been urged, every advantage usually acknowledged to arise from the actual form of the Scriptures, as requiring diligence, exciting curiosity, rewarding study, awakening attention, excluding fraud, all these advantages will still remain.

Upon the whole, this very slight and imperfect sketch of so considerable a subject may suffice perhaps to recommend the view of Providence, which has been taken, if not to the adoption of the reader, yet to his candid consideration.

It never can be unimportant to look for a solution either of our own difficulties, or those of honest and

sincere fellow-Christians. The existence, however, of the difficulty, of which they complain, is not to be admitted solely upon their testimony; but should be ascertained, (as well as the correctness of the argument from Scripture in the preceding pages,) by an examination of the Scriptures themselves; which will be found, it is imagined, to confirm what has been above maintained.

Those indeed who have long acknowledged the truth of the Christian doctrines, or who have never felt the difficulty under consideration, may find it somewhat difficult to place themselves in the situation of men perusing the sacred writings without external aid. In so far as they can do this, however, if they discover upon examination so much *indirectness* in the mode of *teaching* particular doctrines in the New Testament, and so much general *want of system* concerning them, as may often perplex honest minds, they will then consider whether the resolution of this difficulty is not to be found in the assistance of *unauthoritative tradition*;* whether

* Theologians possibly will object to the use of the term tradition as loose and vague, and as the unnecessary occasion of much fruitless discussion. If it be admitted, however, that the Scriptures really presuppose a certain knowledge of the Christian doctrines which uninspired men must supply in all ordinary cases, and which men can supply to the complete satisfaction of the want or deficiency, the thing contended for will have been admitted, by whatsoever name we may choose to designate this communication and transmission of doctrines by human agency. No single term perhaps will express this so readily to common apprehensions as “tradition;” and although undoubtedly employed in a loose manner, compared with the peculiar and strict acceptations of the term in the language of controversy, the word will nevertheless be sufficiently guarded from misrepresentation by the epithet “unauthoritative;” whilst there is

this, which has in fact been the constant aid of Christians, and has usually been found competent to the purpose, may not have been *intended* for them from the first—whilst the Scriptures thus regarded will be our only *authoritative rule of faith*, and will appear precisely in the form which is most convincing and satisfactory for *proving* and *establishing* the faith.

It would be easy to dilate upon the advantages resulting from the actual structure of the sacred writings, if the difficulty attendant upon their present form be considered to be removed; indeed, circumstances might be pointed out that would thus appear advantages, but which would otherwise be themselves viewed in the light of difficulties. Something of this kind has been already hinted, and the subject might be pursued to a great extent.

It has been observed, for instance, that uneducated persons cannot well imbibe and apprehend moral instruction, when presented to them in a very systematical form;* the remark might have been extended to doctrinal instruction also, and the New Testament will thus appear adapted to the peculiar wants of the poor; whilst so much of system nevertheless as they, or others, can receive with advantage, will be readily supplied by unauthoritative tradition. Some, again, have remarked, that “The uneducated, the idle, and the careless must of

a manifest advantage on the side of charity in adopting, so far as truth will allow, and with the necessary distinctions stated, the terms which controversy itself has endeared to our mistaken brethren.

* See T. Burnet's treatise de Fide et Officiis Christianorum.

“necessity be instructed in their faith from the conviction of others; and to act in conformity with the religious belief they thus adopt is to them a sufficient trial,”* but were the Scriptures perfectly explicit, perfectly direct and systematical, believers would be much less disposed, even than they now are, to instruct others from their own conviction, since want of faith would then appear the offspring of positive sin, or obstinacy; but sin is less the object of compassion, than ignorance, or even carelessness. Disputes indeed would be precluded by the direct form of writings, the authority of which was admitted; but doubts would be precluded likewise, which at present continually lead to study, and study to conviction. Neither is it by any means a disadvantage, that the indirectness of the Scriptural method of teaching imposes upon us a necessity for continual study of them, if only that we may keep up our conviction of the genuine faith of Christ.

Hence we are led to remark another advantage of no mean importance to very many even of educated persons in the present state of Christianity who cannot be expected to be conversant with the details of Biblical criticism, or competent indeed to decide between contending critical authorities. The actual form of the Scriptures ought to make such Christians independent of controverted texts: let their faith be indolently established upon a few isolated passages, and they are confounded when in these days of flippant and unlearned disputation they are abruptly told, that their

* Sumner on the Records of Creation, vol. ii. p. 386.

favourite texts are doubtful or controverted. But whilst the attacks of partial scepticism are levelled of course against the more express declarations of particular doctrines, the doctrines themselves are most satisfactorily proved by indirect allusions to them, and continual implications of them throughout the Scriptures ; they are interwoven with the tissue of the sacred writings, and must be acknowledged, until the authority of the entire fabric shall have been annihilated. Let the persons then, whose situation has been described, study this proof of the orthodox creed ; however incompetent to critical and learned researches, they may yet compare Scripture with Scripture, and study the Bible as a whole ; it is within their power, and it is their duty, to learn the sentiments of the sacred writers by a plain and continued perusal not of detached parts, but of entire books, entire Gospels, entire Epistles. Let them thus, like the people of Berea, search the Scriptures whether the things that have been taught them be so ; (Acts xvii. 11.) and thus, "be it not done in pride or in presumption," but with humility and sincerity and consequently with the blessing of Heaven upon their labours, will the faith of members of the English Church be securely established, and remain undisturbed by the cheap arts of vulgar controversy, and unimportant attacks upon some few separate sentences of Holy Writ.

(III.) But we have already dwelt too long upon the advantages conspicuous in the present form of the Scriptures, supposing the immediate difficulty attendant upon their actual structure to be removed ; the subject itself indeed, like every other dispensation of Providence, requires only to be examined, to

display a continued series of similarly beneficial results.

The direct *use and application* of the principle unfolded in the preceding pages has been already anticipated, but if any doubt upon the subject yet remain, a very few words will suffice to remove it.

Perplexity, it is said, may arise either from the want of system in the Scriptures respecting the Christian doctrines generally, or from the indirectness in the mode of teaching some particular article of faith. In the first case there has been a continual resource in the creeds of the whole Catholic Church, or in the Catechisms and Confessions of faith of any national Church ; a resource sufficient for the occasion, yet just and legitimate so long as all authority is disclaimed for these traditions, as such, and the enquirer is referred for all the proof of the system presented to him to the Scriptures alone. In the second case in like manner if unauthoritative tradition clearly suggests a particular doctrine, which, once suggested, can be proved from inspired authority to the satisfaction of the candid enquirer, he has no reasonable cause of complaint on account of any indirectness in Scripture touching the doctrine in question ; no ground for suspicion that it was not intended to be taught, or not to be taught generally, because less explicitly delivered than he might antecedently have expected ; since the apparent deficiency was obviated by other means, by means provided from the first, and probably intended from the first, for his assistance.

The mystery of the ever-blessed Trinity would perhaps be instanced by many orthodox Christians,

as a doctrine less directly taught in the book of life than its supreme importance and fundamental character would have led them to anticipate. But in proportion to its awful importance would tradition be active in suggesting a doctrine, which, when thus suggested, is established to the satisfaction of the great majority of thoughtful Christians by continual implication of it throughout both the volumes of revelation. In general, too, the more fundamental the doctrine, (unless it were a point particularly controverted at the time,) the more likely would it be rather to be implied, than directly taught, in the writings of the apostles addressed to societies of Christians, instructed without doubt by previous oral communication in the more elementary articles of belief. The mathematician in the higher treatises does not reiterate at every step the elements of his science; nor does the apostle, writing to the Hebrews, desire to "teach them again the first principles of the oracles of God;" and again he exhorts them, "leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, to go on unto perfection," to a more perfect understanding of the higher mysteries of the Christian faith. (Heb. v. 12. to vi. 3). But the rudiments of the doctrine instanced would of necessity be amongst the earliest taught, if only that the form of baptism might be intelligible to the new convert: Eusebius accordingly, in his epistle from Nice to his church at Cæsarea, (which could not but be a judge of the truth of his assertions,) declares the form of his faith, which he there exhibits, and which contains at least the outlines of this doctrine, to be not only that which "he had learned from the divine Scriptures, had believed

"and taught as Priest and as Bishop," but to be that also which "he had received from the Bishops "his predecessors, both *when he was catechised, and "when he received the washing of baptism:"* whilst, in the conclusion of this profession of his faith, he naturally refers his readers to the form of that sacrament, "in the name of the Father, and of the "Son, and of the Holy Ghost," as it was enjoined by our Lord Himself to His disciples.*

A similar application of tradition, but of tradition always without independent authority, may be made to any doctrine conceived to be indirectly taught in Scripture. To enumerate those which stand in need of such assistance is unnecessary; nor would different individuals agree in the account; wheresoever the difficulty is felt, there let the solution be applied.†

* See the Eccles. Hist. of Socrates, i. 8. p. 24. ed. Valesii. 1668. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. vi. 3. It will be observed of course, that Eusebius is only cited to shew the early existence of a practice, for which he may be thought the better authority, because perhaps, so far as his own faith was concerned, he did not himself derive the full advantage from it. But see also Bp. Bull's Defens. Fid. Nicæen. Procem. §. 3. Patres Nicæni certe ignorare non poterant elementariam de SS. Trinitate doctrinam (catholicam sc. de personâ Jesu Christi doctrinam) etiam *Catechumenis tradi solitam*, aut quid ipsi eâ de re à majoribus accepissent.

† Our Saviour, reproving the Sadducees for their disbelief of the doctrine of the Resurrection, cited the expression recorded in the book of Exodus, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." But, whatever variety of opinion may exist concerning the indirectness with which any particular Christian doctrine is delivered in the Scriptures, not the most controverted article of the orthodox creed can easily be conceived to be so indirectly taught, as the doctrine of a future state in the passage referred to. It should seem, however, that

And here the discussion might be closed with respect to the difficulty first brought under our consideration; enough, or too much, it may be feared, in the estimation of many readers, will have been urged upon the proof, explanation, and use, of the answer proposed to it in the preceding pages.

There are certain practical consequences, however, of the principle developed above, which at the present period especially demand attention; and one more caution must be added, lest the preceding doctrine should be misapplied.

Let nothing then of what has been said be construed into approbation of the practice of deriving our notions of religion from human comments to the neglect of the only authority upon which they rest; indolence may seek compendious

our Lord did not intend to reprove the Sadducees, because they had not *learned* the doctrine from this or any similar passage; the principles upon which His censure was founded were rather these: the Sadducees, as well as the rest of their countrymen, *had heard* of a resurrection, (it matters not from what source of information,) but they had tried the doctrine only by their own weak reason and limited views of the divine perfections, or if they had resorted to Scripture at all, they had only sought there for captious objections to the received faith; "do ye not therefore err," said our Lord unto them, "because ye know not the Scriptures, neither the power of God?"—"ye therefore do greatly err." Surely then, admitting the indirectness of Scripture in the delivery of any Christian doctrine, we have the justest reason to be alarmed for those of our brethren, who, allowing the authority of the Bible, with the full benefit of tradition proffered to them, have not yet advanced so far as to admit some of the elementary doctrines of Christianity; we cannot but dread, lest they also should be tried and condemned by the same Judge upon the same principles. (See Matt. xxii. 23. Mark xii. 18. Luke xx. 27. Exod. iii. 6.)

modes of study, vanity may be enamoured of whatever conduces most to reputation of learning; but be the motives to such a practice what they may, it is decidedly repugnant to plain sense, and piety, and the spirit of the Protestant faith. Let not only the theological student therefore, but every Christian be ready to give a reason for his faith from the only authority for it, the inspired Scriptures; nothing less than this is either a Protestant, or a Christian procedure.

After such a protest against an error in one extreme, the observations which will follow upon *the distribution of the Bible* may be hazarded with a better grace, although they will imply censure upon mistaken opinions in the opposite extreme. If there be any truth in the foregoing representation of the Scriptures, there *is* a deficiency in them regarding the first teaching of the Christian doctrines, very far removed indeed from that imperfection, which has been rashly or impiously attributed to them by some Romish writers,* yet not allowed at all by many zealous Protestants of the present day. Those who recollect the language occasionally used in some recent controversies, will be able to justify the last remark. The Scriptures, in a word, although a sufficient authoritative rule of faith according to the principles of the English Church, appear incomplete for teaching the faith according to the sense of the same Church exhibited in her practice; and unauthoritative tradition seems required in general to introduce men to the records

* See the Comparative View, p. 11—14, and the writers quoted there by Bp. Marsh.

of salvation. The consequences are almost truisms, and have always accorded with the practice of sensible men, yet have been disregarded by enthusiastic zeal.

Wherever the best and true traditions precede or accompany the distribution of the Scriptures, there they never should be wanting; and there, if the gift be slighted or abused, the donor nevertheless will have so far done his duty.

Wherever, too, Christianity has been preached, although the traditions shall have been corrupted, or the true doctrines overlaid with error, there may the Scriptures also be distributed with the hope of advantage; and distributed unaccompanied, if nothing more be feasible; but surely if more be practicable, (unless those who perceive corruption are indifferent to its existence,) the Scriptures will be accompanied in this instance by more just reports of their contents. In all the countries, however, where Christianity is taught at all, however imperfectly or corruptly taught, some tidings of the elementary doctrines of the Faith are heard by every individual; and some hope there is that, with the Scriptures in his possession, each may embrace the essential truth, if not altogether divested of erroneous additions.

But where tradition cannot be extended at all, there, if we are able to circulate the sacred writings, we shall not abstain indeed from embracing the very faintest chance of contributing to the best and highest good; but we shall recollect, that what we thus effect is but a single link in the chain of necessary means towards that important end.

To propagate, improve, or confirm the genuine principles of Christianity, is the object in either instance, and in one only is the circulation of the Scriptures alone sufficient to the end in view. But in every case the danger is not so much in what we do to others, as to ourselves, from confounding the end with the means, and hence indulging in a fond complacency, as if we had secured the most extensive good, when we have only abridged our real duties, or performed them only in part—a danger so much the more imminent, as the object proposed exceeds every other in magnitude and splendour.

No limits therefore to the distribution of the Bible but those of inability will upon these principles appear justifiable; but very different degrees of good must hence be likely to ensue in different cases: to these distinctions in the probable consequences of our efforts we must continually attend, if we would avoid encouraging false opinions or exciting false expectations in others, and desire not to rush blindly ourselves into exultation at once groundless and delusive. We must go on, therefore, wherever it is permitted us to do more; and rather rejoicing, than surprised, that human beings are required to aid, by uninspired tradition, oral or written, the progress of the word of God, we must study to prepare the way for its reception, as well as to promote its genuine influence when received.

True piety and real charity, we know, may err in the means to which they have recourse, when their objects are the most excellent and pure; and true piety will assuredly feel the necessity of self-

examination, even whilst engaged in pursuits the most strictly meritorious. In excuse of error likewise on these subjects we might refer to the causes already pointed out as contributing to conceal from the view of Christians the real nature of the sacred Volumes, and the actual process by which they themselves have been introduced to the knowledge of divine truths: with them Christianity has been long identified with the Bible; and it is not strange that they should sometimes think that they communicate the one, when they distribute the other.

The same principle again may be brought to throw additional light, if additional light be possible, upon the importance, the necessity of *catechetical instruction*. That it should have grown into disuse extensively in the English churches is a fact rather to be deplored than accounted for. Assuredly its value has not diminished since the days of those admirable men who framed our Catechism; nor can authority be stronger than the testimony continually borne to the absolute necessity of catechising by the wisest and most pious of the English Church, who have taught or exemplified the pastoral duties.

“By preaching, and catechising, and private intercourse, all the needs of souls can best be served; but by preaching alone they cannot,” says Bishop Taylor: “Without catechising,” says Bishop Bull, “preaching will not be sufficient.” It is needless, and would be infinite, to multiply authorities in favour of this neglected practice.*

* See the uniform sentiments of numerous eminent men upon this point in one popular collection only upon the practical

Let the appeal be made to history, and there will be little cause to dissent from the judgment of those who have attributed “the monstrous looseness of opinions, and profane enormity of manners,” which have occasionally overwhelmed the face of this country, to “the defect or omission of orthodox catechising,” which has preceded these disorders.* But perhaps an appeal to individual experience may avail more to individual conviction than any authorities—let the thoughtful Christian look around him, and he will be fortunate if he do not discover within his immediate circle of observation some example of persons of talent, and general information in various branches of polite learning, frequenting our churches moreover, joining in the Liturgy, listening to sermons, free from outward moral disqualifications for religious knowledge, but rather appearing to desire it—and yet after all ignorant of some main article of our faith, or foundation of a Christian’s hopes.

duties of ministers, the Clergyman’s Instructor. See also the 59th Canon; Wheatly on the Book of Common Prayer, ch. viii. Nelson’s Life of Bp. Bull, p. 48. ed. Oxon. 1816. Secker’s Charges, ii. and vi. particularly ii. Vol. V. p. 333. ed. 8vo. 1811. Bp. Wilson’s Charge, 1747. p. lxxxvi. 4to. ed. 1781. That apostolical Prelate has a single passage not a little at variance with modern ideas upon this subject, in his Letter to a Clergyman on a scheme of an afternoon sermon at Douglas: “Your scheme—would in a great measure set aside the express duties of catechising, bound upon us by laws, rubrics, and canons; which, if performed, as they should be, with that seriousness and pains in explaining the several parts of the Catechism, would be of more use to the souls both of the learned and ignorant than the very best sermon out of the pulpit.” Life, p. lxxvii.

* See the Bp. of Rochester’s discourse to his Clergy, 1695, in the Clergyman’s Instructor.

One such instance, the very existence of which is scarcely credible prior to actual observation of the fact, one such instance traced to an original defect of elementary instruction will speak volumes. Neither are the young alone the objects of the beneficial influence of public catechetical instruction; in how many ways it is important to older hearers also has been often observed by competent judges of the fact.* Hence it may be mentioned, but with all humility, that a mode of performing this duty, which has happily attracted considerable attention for some time past, does not, excellent as it is, comprehend all the advantages of the ancient practice: the church, and not the village school alone, should be the frequent scene of catechetical instruction, if the benefit of all who need elementary assistance, in an indirect as well as direct form, is to be regarded. Still there has been a defect of this instruction generally; and who shall say how much of the guilt of schism itself, nay, of infidelity, unbelief, or misbelief, will lie with us if we have aided it? And how much greater will be our shame, if that neglect of early and catechetical teaching, which reason, experience, and authority condemn, shall appear opposed to the very intention of our heavenly Teacher? There cannot be a more important season for endeavouring to point attention to this topic than the present, when policy and benevolence combine to reduce, or take away from

* See particularly Abp. Hort's Instructions to the Clergy of the Diocese of Tuam; and Herbert's Country Parson, ch. xxi. in the Clergyman's Instructor. Hence probably the alteration in the time appointed for catechising at the last review of the Common Prayer Book. See Wheatly, ch. viii. sect. ii. 2.

the nation, another of the various causes of schism or infidelity; nor could a stronger motive be supplied, for the increased adoption of catechetical instruction, than the persuasion that this was the mode of imparting the truths of Christianity not only most necessary, but from the first intended for the propagation of the faith.

Let it not be forgotten, however, that the duty of communicating the traditional knowledge of the Christian doctrines, does not devolve upon the Clergy alone. Public instruction (not to mention some sacred duties peculiarly confined to their order) is their province; and public instruction in religion comprehends not only the introduction to the elementary doctrines, but the explanation and enforcement of these and higher subjects, a work more than sufficient for the most strenuous labours of a distinct portion of the Christian community. But every member of this body has his allotted employment in the great work of advancing the knowledge of true religion. Private religious instruction thus becomes involved in the circle of almost every Christian's duties at some period or other of life. Masters of families or of schools, and parents in a more especial manner, are bound to contribute their services to the common cause;*

* Compare Deut. vi. 7. with Eph. vi. 4. The following extract from the memoirs of Evelyn illustrates the whole subject. "On Sunday afternoon he frequently stayed at home "to catechise and instruct his family, those exercises universally ceasing in the parish churches, so as people had no "principles, and grew very ignorant of even the common "points of Christianity, all devotion being now placed in "hearing sermons, and discourses of speculative and notional "things."

women may here perceive their appropriate and important province; it would be difficult to overrate their usefulness when discreetly employed in this career.*

There are indeed two general classes of Scriptural difficulties, one of which long attends the Christian in his course, and which must be met or resolved either by learning or by faith; † the other, which has here been treated of, is rather a preliminary difficulty antecedent to faith, and often requiring no learning for its solution, but the rational use only of unauthoritative tradition. And for the latter description of difficulties the private instruction of very humble individuals will often be sufficient.

In general the more clearly we perceive the necessity for the intervention of merely human agency in paving the way to Christian knowledge, the more distinctly we shall admit the consequent necessity for the due *recommendation* of instruction so conveyed. Parental and domestic teaching possess obvious advantages in this respect above every other vehicle of tradition. In other instances we must usually appear desirous to benefit the hearer in many ways besides the actual gift which we would induce him to accept; he will be grateful for increase of mental cultivation in a civilized

* Compare 1 Tim. ii. 12. with 2 Tim. i. 5. and iii. 15. Compare also 1 Cor. xiv. 34. with Acts xviii. 26. See Whitby on 1 Tim. ii. 12.

† See each branch of this first class of difficulties treated, the one by Bp. Conybeare in his discourse on Scripture difficulties, and the other by Miller in his Bampton Lectures.

country,* or, in a ruder state of society, the acquirement of a new mechanical art, long before he conjectures the value of the religious advantages offered to his acceptance. The Jesuits in Paraguay, and the Moravians in their various missions, appear almost singular in their practical application of so very obvious a remark. The wonderful works indeed of the first teachers of Christianity, whilst they were miraculous in order to establish their authority, were beneficial in order to recommend their instructions: their followers must imitate them where they have still the power. But the first Christians possessed another recommendation equally necessary in our age, but which has not always descended as it ought to have done to accredit the instructions of succeeding Christians. *A good life* is essential to the teacher of Christianity at home or abroad: and if tradition be proposed to the heathen in distant regions, or to unbelievers within our own community, † with little of moral recommendation accompanying it on the part of many professors of Christianity, the genuine converts to our holy faith must ever be few.

The frailty of the guardians of tradition has been the real cause, why some have neglected or forgotten its natural use and value: without doubt it has been corrupted and debased, but corruption should induce circumspection, not make us abandon our guide; it is decisive against the authority of

* See the preface to Poole's Village School improved, p. 7. on the extent of instruction requisite for religious ends in parish schools.

† See a letter from a Prussian Jew to the Rev. Lewis Way, in the appendix to his Letter from Moscow, 1818.

tradition, not against its frequent utility: as well might we discard at once the measures or the currency of commerce, because the one is often imitated, and the others are falsified; but we have power to detect the fraud, and we have means likewise of assaying tradition, or of comparing it with the legitimate standard. And after all, tradition is only entrusted to the same weak and frail beings, to whom (although as yet but a small, a very small portion of the world) Christianity itself has been entrusted; by whose poor agency nevertheless, since the Bible is with them to correct the corruptions of tradition, and preserve the essence of the Faith, we hope the Gospel will at length, slowly but certainly, be made known to every creature.

There remains one subject only, which it is desirable to consider in connexion with the preceding principles: the case, namely, of *educated men of mature years*, or in the evening of life, *not yet fully convinced of the truth of Christianity*, but not indisposed to candid religious inquiry.

And such is the actual state of society, that there are but too many, who from residence in foreign Christian countries, or in our own colonial establishments, where they have been conversant with every shade of false or corrupted religion, but have seen little of the true—or have been too deeply engaged in political or commercial scenes to bestow a reasonable attention on any religion whatsoever—many also even in our own country from similar causes combined with an original defect of early religious education—there are very many, it is to be feared, who have to commence the important work of founding their religious principles upon a solid basis

at a period of life, when it is too late to trifle, although not too late to acquire so much of true religious knowledge, as may shed a cheerful light upon their waning years, or on the bed of death. Nor have we yet a just conception of the extent of the evil, unless we add to this the probable influence of persons in this unhappy state upon the religious feelings of their immediate connexions or dependents. For although we do not put the case of profligate men, or open sceptics, but of those who, when in an unsettled state of mind themselves, can perceive that it were baseness in them to undermine the conviction of others—yet even the reserve and caution of wavering minds will not always check these casual expressions of distrust, which may be fully capable of working deep mischief in weaker understandings.

What then is the usual danger to which these persons are exposed, and what the resource provided for them in the right use of Scripture and of unauthoritative tradition?

At the very commencement of their religious inquiries they are probably assailed by the common floating objections, which may be distributed for the most part into two principal classes, doubts of the authenticity of the Old Testament, and of the leading doctrines of the New. In no other instance perhaps besides that of Religion do men commit the very illogical mistake of first canvassing all the objections against any particular system, whose pretensions to truth they would examine, before they consider the direct arguments in its favour. As if in a question of probability there could not be truth, and truth supported by irrefragable argu-

ments, and yet at the same time exposed to objections numerous, plausible, and by no means easy of solution.* Sensible men, however, in the situation described will leave this preposterous course to boyish disputants; really desirous of discovering the truth, they will perceive that reason directs them to examine first the argument in favour of that side of the question, where the first presumption of truth appears. And the presumption is manifestly in favour of that religious creed already adopted by the country itself, the established religion, in short, that professed by the majority in ability and learning as well as numbers. Their very earliest inquiry therefore must be into the direct arguments for the authenticity of that book, upon which their country rests its religion. When religious truths are imparted to children, this consideration must of necessity be deferred; but for enquirers of matured reason it is so manifestly the primary step, that it is matter of wonder as well as grief that it should be continually neglected or postponed. It is of no slight importance, however, that the authenticity of the Old Testament should in this case be established upon its simplest foundation, the authority of the New, when this shall itself have been proved to the satisfaction of the enquirer. He will not then be perplexed at the outset by confused accounts of the loss, or concealment, of the books of the law; by insinuations derived from astronomy, geology, or anatomy, against the truth of the Mosaic histories;

* "There are objections," said Dr. Johnson, "against a plenum, and objections against a vacuum, but one of them *must* be true."

or be staggered by apparent anomalies in the moral government of mankind. Points of this description would lose their force as antecedent objections, and, even when unanswered, would shrink into their just dimensions, as minor difficulties.

Let the first step then have been securely planted, let him have ascertained the paramount authority of the Holy Scriptures. But they are often intricate, it will be said, perplexed, indirect, unsystematic; they are urged in defence of various opposite doctrines, and contending systems of faith:—be it so, and this representation of them is not altogether destitute of truth:—but there is a second step to be taken; he must now have recourse to unauthoritative tradition, and, having proved the authority of the Scriptures, he must now by them prove the correctness of tradition. Moreover, in this case a reasonable man will not first seek objections to an established religious creed, but rather enquire in the first instance what is the tradition proffered to his acceptance by the Church of his country; in order, be it remembered, that he may try the validity of her system by what he had previously admitted as the only authoritative rule of faith; and thus that he may abridge her creed, or add to it, or embrace it, as that rule shall give him occasion.

But this, we are told, is to *prejudice* his mind when it should be kept most free, and most unbiassed. Must he then, who thirsts for an acquaintance with chemistry or astronomy, institute experiments of his own, or set on foot an independent investigation into the works of nature, before he reads the productions of those celebrated men who have most advanced these studies, lest they

forsooth should prejudice his mind? It is not surely necessary, that he must be prejudiced in favour of one or other of the contending systems of Ptolemy and Copernicus, who had heard them stated and explained, before he considered for himself the phænomena of the heavenly bodies. Why is that termed prejudice in an enquiry into the truths of Revelation, which is plain sense and honesty in the pursuit of natural philosophy? And yet the absurdity is much less in the illustration, than in the actual case to be determined: for the Scriptures themselves *presuppose* tradition; the New Testament *implies* a previous acquaintance with the outline of its doctrines. Be it allowed, that they might, in some instances at least, be learnt originally from the sacred Volume alone; yet the task of so extracting them is not imposed upon any individual, nor has it been imposed upon mankind from the very earliest periods of Christianity. Let no one expect more from the Scriptures than they were designed to afford, or spurn at that assistance which they themselves imply.

This appears to be that just use of unauthoritative tradition which they must make, who labour in sincerity to correct the deficiencies of early instruction in the Christian doctrines; and this is in fact the use which has been ever made of it, where religious education has been conducted upon the genuine dictates of Scripture and of common sense. Nor is there aught in such a method, which can with any propriety be said to restrain the freedom of the human understanding, or to forbid that a Christian, who acquiesces in the established religion of his country, should yet have ascertained its truth

by the most enlarged exercise of his faculties. It seems but too probable that much of the prevalence of schism is to be ascribed to the neglect of these simple principles; and melancholy indeed has been its increase, until by strangely confusing the analogies of the natural and the moral world, and the permission of evil with the appointment of it, men have proceeded so far as to praise and celebrate schism itself, as such, and to suppose the divine Author of truth to be most pleased with varieties of error.*

Those, we may gratefully observe, in conclusion, have been eminently favoured, who have been led from earliest infancy through the plain and rational course which leads, and was intended to lead, to the knowledge of genuine Christianity; who have met with no preliminary obstacles to the acceptance of divine truths, and whose path has been perplexed with those difficulties alone, which were doubtless appointed to be trials of their humility and constancy.

* See the accounts of a meeting in London in 1817, to commemorate the æra of the Reformation. But the sentiment had been in verse a century before, having then indeed been put into the mouth of a Tartar Prince and a Mahometan.

— no law divine condemns the virtuous
 For differing from the rules your Schools devise.
 Look round, how Providence bestows alike
 Sunshine and rain, to bless the fruitful year,
 On different nations, all of different faiths;
 And (tho' by several names and titles worshipp'd)
 Heaven takes the various tribute of their praise;
 Since all agree to own, at least to mean,
 One best, one greatest, only Lord of all.
 Thus when He viewed the many forms of nature,
 He found that all was good, and blest the fair variety.

Tamerlane, Act iii., sc. 2.

SUPPLEMENTARY EXTRACTS
FROM
THE BAMPTON LECTURES
FOR THE YEAR MDCCCXL.

BY
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I.—WHILE we hear so much of the “Religion of the Bible,” and of “God’s Word,” as opposed to human creeds and human teaching, it is exceedingly remarkable that not only the history and circumstances of the various books of the New Testament, but their very form and structure, tend to establish an opposite conclusion. Instead of the Christian Scriptures excluding human teaching, they imply it; instead of teaching Christianity in the first instance, they are addressed to Christians previously instructed in the faith; instead of being composed after the manner of works designed to impart the rudiments of knowledge, they are indirect and unsystematic: thus, even of themselves, going far to negative the assumed propriety of an independent study of the sacred volume, and to demonstrate the use, and, in general, the need of human uninspired teaching, in conjunction with that of the inspired word of God.

It is obvious that all the several books of the New Testament were addressed to *Christians*, and *presuppose an acquaintance with Christian doctrine*.

The first verse of almost every Epistle states the fact. They were addressed, for example, "to all that were at Rome called to be saints, whose faith was spoken of throughout the world;" "unto the Church of God which was at Corinth;" "unto the Churches of Galatia;" "to the Saints which were at Ephesus; at Philippi; at Colosse;" "unto the Church of the Thessalonians;" by St. Paul, again, to Timothy, Titus, Philemon, his "own sons in the faith;" by St. Peter to those who were "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;" to those, again, who had "obtained like precious faith with him through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ;" by St. John to the "elect lady and her children;" or, to "the well-beloved Gaius, whom he loved in the truth;" by St. Jude to "them that were sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called."

In every instance where the Gospel was planted, a *Society* was also established; Teachers were appointed; and, in addition to those strong natural and religious obligations by which Christian parents and Christian masters are required to teach the truth of salvation to their children and households, over and above all this, express provision was made from the very first for the religious instruction of the whole community, by the selection and appointment of *Ministers of the Word*, who were "to give

"attendance to reading, exhortation, doctrine;" to "preach the Word;" to be "apt to teach;" "to labour in the word and doctrine;" "to be ministers of the new covenant, ministers of the Gospel."

Yet, again, it is equally evident that express provision was also made for a *continual succession of Christian Ministers* to preach the Word in every Church, and to all conditions of men. And this, it should be observed, not merely before the completion of the Christian Scriptures, but afterwards.

"The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses," writes the Apostle Paul to the first Bishop of the Ephesian Church, "the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." No one will suppose that similar injunctions were not equally addressed to all who held a similar station: but this passage occurs in one of the latest of the Epistles, written after the completion of the whole volume of the New Testament, with the exception only of the Gospel of St. John, and his Epistles, the Epistle of St. Jude, and the Revelation—that is to say, for all the purposes of this argument, (since these are not the writings, certainly, to supply elementary instruction introductory to the rest), this continual succession of Christian Ministers was appointed after the Christian Scriptures were complete.

Our Heavenly Father did not send forth a Book to evangelize the world—He would have living teachers of the word of truth. Man was to teach man. None were to be independent of their brethren. And almost all in their various spheres, not Ministers alone, but Parents in an especial de-

gree, and Mothers almost more than Fathers, and not only these, but Teachers, Catechists, Masters, friends, neighbours, have been permitted to share in the Heavenly employment of communicating to others the blessed truths which they have received, and of adapting them, moreover, to every capacity and every age.

Suppose, in order to prove the doctrine of Regeneration in Baptism, we throw several texts together, as our Lord's commission to His Apostles, "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them," with His words in another place, "Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God;" and with those of the Baptist, "Christ shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost;" and of St. Paul, God has "saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;" such a combination may afford an easy proof of doctrine: but would such a collection of texts have readily suggested itself to every student of the Bible, or would the doctrine have been easily gathered from any one of them by itself? At any rate, in no one of these passages, nor in all of them together, do we find such a direct statement of the doctrine as is conveyed in a Catechism, or an Article of faith. "The inward and spiritual grace of Baptism is a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness." We are hereby "made the children of grace."* And this we

* NOTE.—Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15, 16; Matt. iii. 11; Mark i. ; Luke iii. ; John iii. 5; Titus iii. 5. Compare Article 27: "Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration, or new Birth, whereby," &c.

should do if we would ascertain whether or not particular statements are direct or systematic; we should compare them with those which evidently are so, inspired or uninspired.

And when uninspired men would explicitly state or teach Christian doctrines, they draw up Creeds, Articles of Faith, Catechisms, Broken Catechisms, taking all possible pains to render them direct, explicit, simple, or systematic, as the case may be; but there is nothing like a formal creed or catechism throughout the whole volume of the New Testament.

The structure of the New Testament exactly accords with the circumstances under which it was composed. If there is an absence of direct and systematic teaching, which we should have little anticipated, perhaps, in a written Revelation from the Most High, and which is by no means consistent with the language of many Protestant writers, yet what can be more in harmony with the other facts of the case,—the several books all addressed to Christians, to those who, it is implied, had been previously initiated in the Christian doctrines, and for whose instruction especial provision had been made, that provision existing before the Christian Scriptures, and ever afterwards preceding them, accompanying them, formed and appointed to be continued and carried down together with them to every succeeding generation? In such harmonious accordance do we find the *formation of the Christian Scriptures*, and the *institution of the Christian Church*; and the obvious inference is, that we must make use of *the Church and the Scriptures together, as two of the principal means in order to the attainment of Christian Truth.*

The sufficiency of the Scriptures for salvation is, I believe, truly and correctly laid down by the Church of England in her sixth Article. "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." There is nothing here which militates against my present argument; nothing to affirm that every Christian truth must be clearly and distinctly "read in the Scriptures;" nothing to declare that they are our only means of attaining Christian truth. The means of attaining truth the Article does not define; but in declaring that no truth is to be thought requisite to salvation which is neither "read in" Holy Scripture, nor may be "proved thereby," it implies that we may derive our knowledge of the truth from other sources besides the Scriptures, although these, and these alone, in the judgment of the Church of England, supply the proofs of every truth necessary to salvation.

And far, very far, from conceiving the indirect structure of the New Testament to be a defect, we should rather regard it as an excellence, and an additional title to our admiration and gratitude. For the purpose of proof, of proof as distinct from clear statement or primary instruction, nothing is comparable to a train of implications and allusions pervading a whole work, rendering corruption or interpolation impossible, and demonstrating the habitual presence to the author's mind of the important truth which thus runs along like a golden

thread interwoven with the whole tissue of his composition.

And what, if instead of that indirect and un-systematic form which some have lamented in the Christian Scriptures, we had found there definite statements of doctrine, Creeds, Catechisms, Articles of Faith? Assuredly there is enough and too much in the Church of Christ of that strong tendency to formalism in ourselves, and uncharitableness towards others, which contents itself with repeating the language of orthodoxy, or exacts from other men the most scrupulous and literal adherence to every word and phrase in our own Confessions of Faith. And yet at present for the most part we acknowledge them to be after all, however useful or necessary, or admirable, the compositions of uninspired men. It is no fanciful alarm with which we may imagine the superstitious, the almost idolatrous, reverence with which our Creeds would have been too often regarded had they been indeed and confessedly the very language of inspiration.

The actual form of the Scriptures, meanwhile, by its very indirectness, want of system, and apparent adaptation to local and temporary circumstances, tends to a variety of important moral results; awakening attention, stimulating curiosity, promoting research, rewarding diligence, humility, reverence, and conducing to the growth and strength not of mere belief, but of a genuine religious Faith, "to that excitement of the best feelings, and that improvement of the heart," to borrow the language of Archbishop Whately, "which are the natural and doubtless the designed results of an humble, diligent, and sincere study of the Christian Scriptures."

And "How admirable," he continues, "do the pro-
visions of Divine Wisdom appear, even from the
slight and indistinct view we obtain of it! It has
supplied us by Revelation with the knowledge of
what we could not have discovered for ourselves;
and it has left us to ourselves precisely in those
points in which it is best for us that we should be
so left."

Nothing is so easy as to forget that texts may imply a truth without suggesting it. The Resurrection of the dead, for example, is shown in that appellation, "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob;" but had any one discovered the doctrine in these words, until our Lord unlocked their secret sense? And so of the prophecy to Abraham, "in thee shall all nations be blessed," this the Apostle describes as the very preaching of "the Gospel;" for indeed it implies the universality of the Gospel-covenant and the Gospel-doctrine of Justification by Faith. Yet so far were the Jews from having imbibed either of these great truths, that nothing was so difficult as to lead them to the evangelical doctrine of Justification, whilst as to the Universality of the Gospel, even the Apostles were not without difficulty instructed, and this seven years subsequently to the descent of the Holy Spirit, that to the Gentiles also had God "granted repentance unto life."

There were Defects and Omissions in the Law, which may well be conceived to have been designed beforehand to lead reflecting minds towards a "better covenant established upon better promises," or at the least to incline them to hail its approach with gladness, when it should at length arrive.

Thus, throughout the whole Law, there are only

three instances in which the great natural duty of Prayer is enjoined; only one in which a blessing is promised to Prayer; and not one, in which the injunction is applicable to the whole people. Yet more remarkable is the fact, that the books of Moses, a collection of writings nearly equal in extent to the whole volume of the New Testament, contain no one express revelation of the Immortality of the soul; whilst the Law did not comprehend a future state of Retribution among its sanctions, and did not afford one promise of Eternal life. The legal atonements, although they removed the stain of ceremonial offences, only so far put away moral guilt that they procured acceptance for the worship of the sinner; enabling him indeed to approach the presence of God and not die, but not procuring for him the promise of forgiveness. Neither did the Law, although it taught the efficacy of national repentance in order to national restoration, declare that personal Repentance should avail for the forgiveness of personal guilt; nor would the sinner discover under the Law any complete and sufficient Justification. The import of the typical institutions of the Law was unperceived or misinterpreted by the Jews, notwithstanding that their Evangelical interpretation had been in part supplied by the Prophets, and that mysterious veil in part withdrawn. Even the Prophets themselves "enquired and searched diligently, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." How, then, should their predictions be otherwise than obscure to those who have neither the inspiration of

the Prophet, nor the knowledge of the Christian? "They pierced my hands and my feet—they part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture:" interpreted by the event, and by the Spirit in the New Testament, these words indeed, together with the Psalm which contains them, bear certain and evident testimony to Christ: what would they suggest to one who has not been already brought to Christ? And yet this twenty-second Psalm is described by Luther as a kind of gem among the Psalms that contain prophecies of Christ and His kingdom. "David," he says, "does not seem to be delivering a prophecy of the future, but a history of the past; he speaks of Christ nailed to the tree, and the piercing of His hands and His feet, as if the whole had taken place before his natural sight." Just so the heading of the hundred-and-tenth Psalm in the English version is, "The kingdom, the priesthood, the conquest, and the passion of Christ;" and Luther again declares concerning it, "There is not a Psalm like it in the whole Scripture; and it ought to be very dear unto the Church; seeing that it confirms that great article of faith—Christ's sitting at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. For Christ is here declared to be a King and Priest; sitting at God's right hand, not only as truly man, but also as properly God, the Propitiator and Mediator between God and men; the Omnipotent and the Eternal!" This is the commentary of a Christian, when the Psalm had been interpreted by Christ Himself; but was not our Lord's interpretation evidently received by the Jew as a new and surprising doctrine? For the Jew did indeed expect in the Christ the son of David,

but not his Lord. One eminent writer takes the fifty-third chapter of the prophet Isaiah as the very clearest example of ancient prophecy, and of which another declares that "this chapter, or, perhaps, a single text in it, 'Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,' comprehends more of the real disclosure of this Christian principle (the Atonement) than could be previously gathered from all the Law and the Prophets," yet we know that the Ethiopian, zealous as he must have been in the pursuit of truth, was constrained to ask, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man?"—a fact pregnant with instruction to those who would study the Scriptures, with no man to "guide them." Nay, we know who it was that opened the Scriptures to His Disciples, and how "slow of heart" had those Disciples been, "to believe all that the Prophets had spoken," until their "hearts burned within them," as their Lord and Master, "beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." But indeed, they had lost one of the very keys of the ancient prophecies, which in general, are then most distinctly perceived to be Evangelical predictions, when they speak of the calling of the Gentiles, and that Universality of the Gospel covenant, which in so marked a manner distinguishes it from the transitory partial covenant of the Law; but this very doctrine, notwithstanding the teaching of the Prophets and of Christ Himself, even Apostles had not recognised until seven years after the ascension of the Lord. So vast is the difference between the anticipation of events and their accomplishment, between the disclosure of doctrines by

prediction, and by direct instruction ; and so true is it that the Old Scriptures are indeed “able to make us wise unto salvation,” but “through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

In the Old Testament Religious Truth is indeed written in characters of light, but *not* Christian Truth ; truths of revelation of deep interest and importance, but *not* Christian doctrines. Nay, Christian doctrines are written there also, and to the eye of the Christian, vividly and distinctly written, but they are dark and enigmatical to the uninstructed ; the Old Scriptures being wonderfully adapted to *confirm* the faith of the Christian, but not, in general, to *introduce* the religious enquirer to Christian truth. Not that we are to withhold them, even from children. There is nothing I believe so suitable, even to the tenderest years, as the very words of the Scriptures of both Testaments, explained, of course, illustrated, introduced by the voice of the Christian teacher. The theory of *the exclusive, independent study of the Scriptures* is untenable, and opposed to the intention of the Scriptures themselves, whether we regard the New Testament or the Old—the New Testament requiring some previous introduction to the Christian doctrines ; the Old Testament, although in various ways preparatory to the Gospel, and abundantly confirming its sacred truths, not affording that introduction to them which the Christian Scriptures require, and which the Christian Church supplies—both the volumes of Holy Writ, in a word, leading us to one and the same conclusion, and pointing out the true path to the attainment of Christian Truth in *the combined use of the Scriptures and the Church.*

How is it, then, that to us the great doctrine of the *Christian Atonement* is taught in every page of the New Testament, and confirmed by the united voice of the Law and the Prophets, and yet others cannot read it there? That to them the Scriptures proclaim Eternal life, and Christ is their Prophet, and their future Judge, but He is not their Saviour? One reason is surely, that the Scriptures have been regarded as the exclusive source of Christian instruction ; that recourse, accordingly, has been had to the Scriptures alone both for the statement and the proof of the doctrine ; and, the statement not appearing sufficiently direct and clear, neither does the proof appear sufficiently convincing.

THE ATONEMENT.

II.—Let it be granted that the Christian Atonement is not declared in the Scriptures with sufficient clearness. The Church can state the doctrine with all the distinctness of which the subject is capable ; and nothing but the living voice of the Church, could adapt the statement, to every mind of every age and capacity simply by declaring the revealed fact that Jesus Christ, by His Blood upon the Cross, effected the Reconciliation of a guilty world to their Maker, and procured for them Pardon and Acceptance.

If it has been provided that the disciple shall thus receive the statement, what place is there for surprise, whether it reaches him from the Scriptures or the Church? Let him, then, “search the Scriptures” with all diligence, “whether these things are so.” He reads in the New Testament,

almost in every page, and under a remarkable variety of expressions, that Jesus is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;" His blood, "the blood of the New Covenant, shed for many for the remission of sins;" that "we are justified by His blood;" that "when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, by whom we have now received the Atonement;" that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;" that we, "who sometime were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ;" that "He is our peace;" "He reconciles both (Jew and Gentile) unto God in one body by the Cross;" "through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father;" we are "sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ;" "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;" "He is the propitiation for our sins;" "His blood cleanseth us from all sin;" "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many;" He "gave Himself a ransom for all;" ἀντίλυτρον a ransom instead of all; hence we are "bought with a price," by Him, namely, who "was slain, and has redeemed us to God by His blood," who "was offered to bear the sins of many;" who "His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree;" who "loved us, and gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God;" for He was "a merciful and faithful High Priest, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people;" "by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us;" and by virtue of His

unchangeable priesthood, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

The Holy Scriptures of both Testaments combine to demonstrate and enforce the extreme *importance* of the doctrine of the Atonement; not simply by the long course of preparation studiously carried on during four thousand years for its ultimate reception, but by the remarkable fact that it was made, as it were, the basis of religious sentiment and action, even before it could be revealed as an explicit article of faith. For the sentiments and principles of faith were taught and acted upon, through the media of promises and types, long before the explicit revelation of Evangelical truth. And why was this, but because it is *the* religion of man fallen; and it reconciles together the Holiness, and the Justice, and the Mercy of Almighty God. Hence our earnest and continual prayer, that we, and all who acknowledge the unspeakable "love of God in the Redemption of the world by Jesus Christ," may always most thankfully receive that His inestimable benefit, and may also show forth our thankfulness, not only with our lips, but in our lives; "loathing the sin and the sinfulness which required the sacrifice of the Son of God," and daily endeavouring ourselves to follow the blessed steps of "His most holy life;" looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" having our con-

science cleansed "from dead works, to serve the
"living God."

THE DIVINITY OF OUR LORD.

III.—There are certain presumptive arguments in favour of the Divinity of our blessed Lord, (and applicable also to other doctrines in various degrees) of such a kind as must, in the judgment of a reasonable mind, affect the estimate of the nature or amount of the proof itself.

Of this class is the general, the almost universal, reception of the truth, not in this country alone, or in this age, but to the east and west, and north and south, throughout all Christendom in every Church, and from our own times upwards, so far as the records of Christianity extend; interrupted only by dissentient voices, not of any national Church, but of individuals, or of small societies.

Does anyone doubt whether a presumption of this nature ought to be entertained at all by the free, unprejudiced enquirer? Let him only for one moment consider what would have been the natural and just effect of opposite circumstances. Suppose that now, in our own age, eighteen centuries after the Revelation of the Gospel, the Divinity of Messiah had been put forth as the new discovery of some diligent student of the Scriptures; what a weight of argument and evidence would be required to induce anyone to believe that so momentous a doctrine had up to this day lain dormant in the book of Revelation! Or suppose that the general belief of all ages and Churches had not extended beyond the simple Humanity of Messiah, and that His

Divinity had been maintained only by a few zealous men, not without learning and ingenuity, but whose efforts and talents had never achieved anything more than a limited and occasional success, had never won the consent of a single National Church: would not a reasonable mind consider their ill-success as some argument against their creed? Then, is there *some* deference due to the general belief of the Church at large; and universal consent, or an approximation to it, justly affects our estimate of the nature and amount of the Scriptural proof of doctrine. When we look back to the era of the Reformation and observe the whole of Western Christendom engaged in one momentous discussion concerning the first principles of faith and worship, bringing all their powers, erudition, and piety to bear upon the great truths of the Gospel, with the result that in every Church the truth of this great doctrine was solemnly and repeatedly asserted, is it possible that the Confessions of Faith put forth by the various Protestant Churches at so momentous an æra, agreeing both with one another and with the Universal Church as to this truth, as well as to all the other associated doctrines touching the mystery of the Unity in Trinity, can be examined by anyone, and the belief be still entertained that there is nothing in such remarkable consensus of judgment? Several of these Confessions of Faith, as those of Helvetia, Augsburg, Saxony, in the very midst of their appeal to Scripture, their assertions of the sufficiency of the Holy Scripture, their repudiation of human traditions, and their remonstrances against Roman Errors, dwell, nevertheless, upon their having retained the true Scriptural faith of the

Church Catholic. The force of their unanimity in this doctrine, it is obvious, is greatly heightened by their pointed discrepancies upon other subjects. Compare, for example, the Confessions and Articles of Faith of the Churches of England and Scotland, differing exceedingly, not merely in some important particulars, but in their general tone and spirit; or compare all the Confessions of the Protestant Churches with one another, and again with those of the Greek Church and the Church of Rome, and consider their disagreement upon so many points, even of great importance, and their universal agreement in this doctrine, and judge whether some deference is not justly due to an unanimity so remarkable; and to this must be added the fact that we can trace the doctrine of the Divinity of the Messiah in writer after writer throughout each preceding century up to the very age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles; and this not as the belief of individuals alone, but as the expression of the faith professed by the Church at large, not in one country alone, but at Antioch, Sardis, Ephesus, Athens, Rome, Carthage, Alexandria, in almost every branch of the then existing Church.

The more startling the doctrine of the union of the Divine and human natures in the person of the Messiah, the eternal Word made very man, "God manifest in the flesh"—so much the less will the earnest enquirer deem it probable that such a doctrine could have been acknowledged and maintained, century after century, by "the holy Church throughout all the world," without an overwhelming proof in the word of Revelation.

With the view to the more complete illustration

of the use of the Scriptures and the Church together in the investigation of sacred truth, it may not be unprofitable to offer a few suggestions upon the mode in which the declarations of Holy Writ should be examined, and applied more or less directly, in proof of the teaching of the Church.

Assuming Jesus Christ to have been in truth "God dwelling among us," we could not expect that He should openly declare His Divine nature so long as He appeared in this world under the veil of the nature of man. His words upon earth would rather be strange, startling and mysterious, fitted to excite awful expectations of the truth, such as devout men would muse upon, and lay up in their hearts, even until He was exalted and glorified. Such a preparation for the doctrine, accordingly, we discover not merely in some few insulated passages, but even in His usual and accustomed turns of expression. To this purpose is His frequent designation of Himself as "the Son" as contrasted with "the Father," and that Father the Most High. "All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any one the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." "But of that day and that hour knoweth no one, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." He does not employ this language only in parables,—"last of all He sent unto them His Son;" "having yet one Son, His well beloved,"—but in His most explicit declarations of fact and doctrine: "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world.—God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that

“whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” “As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will. For the Father judgeth no one, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.” “The Son abideth ever; if the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” Again the truth is indicated in that other remarkable designation of Himself as “the Son of man,” evidently employed to signify that He was also more than man. “The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins;” “the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day;” “of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” This designation, in a word, implies His humiliation; and His humiliation implies His previous glory.* But these frequent and peculiar expressions are only unfolded, or rather preparation is made for their being fully unfolded at the proper time, in those passages which plainly invite the attention of the people to the dignity of Messiah’s person. As in the text, “What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?” And when the Pharisees reply in terms applicable only to His human nature, they are at once remanded to their own Scriptures and pressed with the argument, “If David then call Him Lord,

* Paley observes that the expression, Son of man, is never used except by Christ to Himself, and never of Him or towards Him by any other person. It occurs seventeen times in St. Matthew’s Gospel, twelve times in St. Mark’s, twenty-one times in St. Luke’s, and eleven times in St. John’s, always with this restriction.

“how is He his son?” To the same purpose the question to the Disciples, “Whom do man say that I, the Son of man, am?” and the emphatic blessing pronounced upon St. Peter for that confession of faith, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” which in effect declared that He was both the Son of man and the Son of God. And again the striking instances in which our Lord intentionally adopts expressions, which to those who knew not His Divine Nature must, and did, appear profane and blasphemous: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was I am;” “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;” “The Father is in me, and I in Him;” “I and my Father are one.” It has been objected that the form of expression in the two verses last cited, being precisely the same with those in which our Saviour described the union of His disciples with one another and with God, they cannot therefore be adduced in proof of His Divine nature. But how were they understood at the time? “For a good work,” said the Jews, “we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” We must not therefore cite words like these apart from their context. Viewed with their context and with their effect upon the hearers considered, and that effect clearly foreseen by our Lord, they become arguments of His meaning and intention. And that awful sense assigned to them at first by the Jews, and by the Church ever afterwards, what is it but a solution of other expressions otherwise inexplicable, as in our Lord’s latest prayer and last command: “And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world

“was;” and “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Explained by the doctrine of the Church all these passages are consistent and intelligible. And however difficult that doctrine, it is at least incomparably more easy than to suppose a mere man, being yet a Prophet, a true and inspired Prophet, thus to speak and to pray, and to command His disciples thus to be baptized, according to the Socinian hypothesis, into the name of God, and of a man, and of a Divine energy or operation.

Let us turn to the indications of the doctrine existing in the Old Testament, for the Divinity of the Messiah is not a discovery of these latter days, it was not altogether a new doctrine even at the first preaching of our Lord. In the Psalms and Prophets there are many expressions applicable to the Messiah. As in the Psalms: “The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” And Isaiah: “A Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Again, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” And again, “The voice of Him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God:—say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!” And Jeremiah: “This is His name whereby He shall be called, The Lord (that is

“Jehovah) our Righteousness.” Zechariah: “Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Sion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord.” And Malachi, “The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.”

There are many other passages in which the Messiah (as learned Jews themselves acknowledge) is named “Jehovah,” or is in various ways represented by the Prophets as God, as the Lord, as Immanuel, “God with us.” Such texts as have been cited are obvious and direct, of a nature forcibly to arrest the attention of the devout enquirer. Further, in the Gospels he will observe the Saviour not simply speaking, but acting as Divine; familiarly displaying, even during His sojourn in the flesh, the attributes of God. The nature of some of our Lord’s miracles have always been considered as remarkable corroborations of His own expressions, and those of Holy Writ concerning Him. Was it believed that God alone could forgive sins? Was the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Most High? Was it emphatically written of God, that He createth the wind, stilleth the noise of the seas, treadeth on the waves of the sea, declareth unto man what is in his thoughts, revealeth secrets? The Son of Man also walks upon the seas, controls the waves, communicates miraculous powers, inspires the Holy Spirit, knows all thoughts, and discovers that He knows them. Why, one such instance happening to us as to Nathaniel, would have doubtless forced from us, as from him, the instant confession, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of

“God; thou art the King of Israel.” And it was but the natural effect of other miracles upon the minds of men who knew the Scriptures which prompted those expressions of wonder and awe, “Who is this that forgiveth sins also?” “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?” “What a word is this! for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out;” or which threw His disciples at His feet, exclaiming, “Of a truth thou art the Son of God.” Yet this was not all: to heighten this impression, and to justify it, He confirmed by express miracles His most remarkable assertions of Divine authority. He causes the sick of the palsy to take up his bed and walk, to this end, that they might “Know that the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins.” He not only asserts that He “has power to lay down His life, and has power to take it up again,” but thereupon He is “declared to be the Son of God, with power by the resurrection from the dead.” He not only breathes upon the disciples, and saith, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” promises that He will come to them, and be ever with them; promises that when He is departed He will send the Holy Spirit from the Father, but after His departure He fulfils these glorious promises, and visibly sheds forth those manifest gifts of the Spirit which are an earnest of His unseen presence in the Church “even unto the end of the world.”

Now, the effect of these considerations is twofold. They go far to establish the truth of that mysterious confession of the Church, “that our Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and

“man.” But they do more. They prepare the mind for the teaching of the Apostles, which appears to be the natural expansion and application of what had been taught before. Do the Apostles assert the doctrine in the most startling terms, or do they act upon it, worship Him, pray to Him, bless His people in His name, conjointly with those of the Father, and of the Holy Spirit? We can treat none of these things with suspicion or distrust. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; All things were made by Him.” And yet “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;” “by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist;” and yet “He is the head of the body, the Church;” “being in the form of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God:” and yet “He made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:” “He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham: for as much as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.” Nevertheless He is “the first and the last;” “glory and dominion are unto Him for ever and ever.” The Baptist acknowledges, “He that cometh from above is above all.” Thomas addresses Him as his “Lord and his God;” Stephen, “full of the Holy Ghost,” breathes his last prayer to Him and to

Him commends his spirit; even to Christ, "who is over all," says St. Paul, "God blessed for ever. Amen." None of these things, however mysterious, can we receive with distrust, when we also are full of the language of the Holy Spirit, speaking not only by Evangelists and Apostles, but by the Prophets of old, and in our Lord Himself, for we feel that the structure of our faith is strong and sure, built upon the foundation of the Scriptures, New and Old, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.

After this manner, then, by comparison of Scripture with Scripture, and of the New Testament with the Old; weighing well the force and design, not of mere words, but of passages taken together with their context, and illustrated by others, all equally proceeding from the same Inspiration, may we hope by the Divine blessing to attain the Truth.

Few and simple as are the Christian Rites and Institutions as they proceeded from our Saviour and His Apostles, and striking as is the contrast in this respect between the Gospel and the Law; still the Gospel is not, and never was devoid of appropriate and very important outward Ordinances. Nor are the Christian Institutions unconnected with Christian Truth, and therefore with our belief. We must now, therefore, endeavour to develop the office and uses of the Christian Church with regard to *the Truths immediately connected with the Christian ordinances*, or rather, as before, *the uses of the Church*, in this respect, "*in conjunction with Holy Scripture.*"

The office of the Church is obviously far more

extensive in relation to Rites and Institutions than in the instance of Doctrines. Less is prescribed to her; more, consequently, committed to her charge and her discretion, "Let all things be done unto edifying;" "Let all things be done decently and in order;" such are the directions addressed by St. Paul to the Church of Corinth; in the Church of Crete an individual is commissioned "to set in order the things that are wanting." Our Lord Himself prescribes two Rites, and only two; but neither does He, nor do His Apostles, bequeath to the Church any instructions concerning the time or the details of their celebration.

Most unreasonable, indeed, would it be to imagine that the Church was left at the close of the Apostles' ministry with no other than these general directions, no models for the edifying and orderly administration of her religious Ritual or Polity. Titus, of course, did "set in order," in the Church of Crete, "the things that were wanting." St. Paul having given to the Corinthians some of the most important precepts respecting the celebration of the Eucharist, and having promised besides that the "rest he would set in order when he came," did no doubt prescribe such points of order and decorum as would tend to check in practice, as well as in principle, any future profanation of that holy ordinance. Nevertheless it remains true that a very large discretion was still allowed to the Churches as expressed in our Articles: "the Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies," and that the particular Forms of Divine worship, and the Rites and Ceremonies appointed to be used therein, are things in their own nature indifferent, and alterable, and so acknowledged.

When, however, the Divine Origin or Obligation of a Rite or Institution, as of the Sacraments or Episcopacy, is the point in question; or when matter of Doctrine is immediately concerned, the means by which Truth may be attained become the proper subjects of enquiry.

HOLY BAPTISM.

IV.—To pass from these general remarks and try the principle in a particular example, let us enquire upon what grounds *The Baptism of Infants* is to be maintained? For is the practice anywhere enjoined in Holy Scripture? Do not the Scriptures, on the contrary, prescribe conditions for the due reception of Holy Baptism, sometimes faith, sometimes repentance, sometimes both; how then do we presume to administer the rite to those who are incapable of either? And do we not, in fact, perceive every day that the unauthorised observance produces no fruit, or fruits of bitterness, a fatal confidence, a reckless life?

Now, all these plausible objections—some of them, indeed, are altogether unwarrantable, for who are we that we should pretend to determine by any man's conduct after Baptism, what it would have been had he remained unbaptized, or judge by any external signs at one time of what passed within the soul of another being at another time? but these objections, so far as they are plausible at all, derive their only force from a misconception of the real question. That question is not whether we shall introduce a new practice, but whether we shall reject the ancient and established practice of

the Universal Church. Doubtless, we should need the most overpowering arguments for the introduction of some new administration of the Sacrament, professing to be founded upon some new discoveries of the sense of Scripture (such as Calvin's appointment of lay-presbyters, for example, based upon a novel exposition of a solitary text*), but here the question is, whether the received practice is not warranted by the nature of the case and authority of Holy Writ, and, therefore, whether we may presume to lay it aside.

This plain and practical distinction, accordingly, the Church of England bears in mind when she declares, that "The Baptism of young children is "in any wise to be retained in the Church as most "agreeable with the institution of Christ." To be "*retained*," be it observed, not introduced, not adopted, not even revived, but retained. For what was the fact? At that time, as at present, the Baptism of Infants was the universal practice of all the Churches of Christ; and a practice neither rejected nor questioned by any considerable number of individual Christians. The Baptism of Infants could be distinctly traced to the Apostolic age. About one hundred and ten years after the death of our Saviour, Justin speaks of persons then alive, of sixty and seventy years of age, who had been made disciples to Christ from their infancy: (*εμαθητεύθησαν*, the word employed in the institution of Baptism). They had therefore been made disciples to Christ in their infancy within the Apostolic age. Is it doubted whether they had also been Baptized?

* 1 Tim. v. 17.

Irenæus, about thirty years later, whose practice it is to speak of Baptism as our "Regeneration," expressly states, that infants were among those who were regenerated unto God. And the practice of the Apostolic Church could not be unknown to Irenæus, a Christian Bishop, at this time nearly eighty years of age, himself the disciple of Polycarp, as Polycarp had been of the Apostle St. John.

Passing by then, the multitude of early writers by whom these well-known testimonies are succeeded and supported, we turn to the Scriptures, and inquire—Do the Scriptures justify the Church? Do they sanction the universal practice? Nay, do they prohibit it, or justify us in laying it aside? For that is the point at issue. True it is, that in the comprehensive language of Scripture, "Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them," or such and such a person "was baptized, he and all his, straightway," the Baptism of Infants is neither commanded nor recorded. Yet is it not excluded. And the history relating to the conversion of grown men might be silent respecting Infant Baptism, and leave no inference to be deducted from that silence. But then Baptism was, undeniably, the gate of admission into the Christian Church; and the admission of believers was immediate; Jew, and Samaritan, and Proselyte, and Gentile, were no sooner converted than they were baptized, "straightway," "the same day," the same night; and they who administered the rite were Jews, accustomed to an earlier covenant into which the infant children of Jewish parents had ever been admitted. How could they suppose that the children of Chris-

tian parents were excluded from the New Covenant, when they had no command to shut them out? And if admissible, how receive them except by the appointed door? Nay, and if they could have forgotten Circumcision, and its obvious bearing upon the corresponding rite of admission into the New Covenant, they could not but remember the displeasure of their Master, when they had been disposed to debar the young children from His presence, and those touching words, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."

We "doubt not," therefore, "but earnestly believe, that the same blessed Saviour will favourably receive, and will embrace with the arms of His mercy" the infant children of Christian parents brought unto Him at this day by Holy Baptism; for we conclude that an absolute prohibition would have been required to prevent the Apostles themselves from commencing that "charitable work;" in one word, that the practice of the Church began upon Apostolic authority—provided only that there was nothing in the very institution of Christ to forbid the practice. True, the child is incapable alike of Repentance and of Faith; but of repentance he has no need; and the faith of his parents may be accepted for his own by Him who forgave the sins of the paralytic for the faith of his friends. Nay, and if the goodness of God were indeed restrained within the letter of His promises, the adult convert would be equally incapable of Faith and Repentance in order to Baptism, since they are not to be attained without some portion of that spiritual aid to which he has only

through Baptism a covenant-title. If there be any other semblance of deficiency attaching to Infant Baptism, that the primitive rite of Confirmation seems expressly calculated to supply. The inestimable blessings, meanwhile, of Baptism itself, the remission of the sentence consequent upon our natural corruption, the reconciliation, the new birth, the adoption, the title to spiritual grace, the inheritance of heaven—of all these the infant is as evidently capable as he is absolutely in need. Who shall say how early moral agency begins, and how early, therefore, spiritual assistance is required? Or where is the Christian parent who doubts that his child, if he died to-morrow, would be capable, through Christ, of being admitted into heaven? How, then, shall he doubt that he is capable of admittance to-day into the Church of Christ upon earth? Or how presume, upon the ground of some plausible theory, to withhold his child from the presence of that Saviour who would “presently embrace him with the arms of His mercy?”

EPISCOPACY.

V.—Again, with respect to another very important subject, viz., what we believe to be the Divine Institution of Episcopacy, the general conduct of the argument is as before. In this instance, indeed, the Scriptural evidence appears to be far more distinct and clear than in the preceding example. But the method of investigation is the same. We should still begin with a universal practice of the Church, and trace it upwards to its origin in the Scriptures of truth. Let this method be reversed;

let men examine the Scriptures first, perplex themselves with the meaning of terms, denoting ministerial offices and functions, before the terms had acquired their technical senses, and then proceed by these to interpret the records of the Primitive Church, what do they but involve the subject in gratuitous difficulties? And yet, observes an excellent writer, “this method of expounding an ancient record has been made the principal ground on which arguments against the Apostolical institution of Episcopacy have been supported.”

But nothing can be clearer than the distinct existence of three Ministerial Orders in all Episcopal Churches at the present day. Other terms there may be—Patriarch, Archbishop, Archdeacon, Curate, Acolyte, with whatever else has been adopted to denote a peculiar charge, or precedency, or subordinate ministry; but no enquirer fails to recognise the existence and the essential functions of the three distinct Orders of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. Nor, again, is it either doubted, or disputed, that three hundred years ago every Church in Christendom, acknowledged the same threefold institution of the Christian Ministry; that the first Reformers, wheresoever they departed from the general usage, openly expressed their reluctance, and pleaded necessity as their sole excuse. Nay, that Calvin himself pronounced those to be worthy of every anathema, who should not reverently observe and obey such an Episcopacy as should be subordinate to Christ, and dependent upon Him; and, in fine, that, tracing the historical evidence of Episcopacy from the Reformation up to

primitive times, we find it universally established in all the Churches in the second century. But it cannot be pretended that Episcopacy had its commencement in that century. If we cannot prove, as I think we cannot, that at the close of the first century every considerable Church had its Bishop as well as its Presbyters and Deacons, for the Church of Corinth, from whatever cause, appears from the Epistle of Clement to have been at that time an exception—there is at least abundant evidence that it was the ordinary practice; and that evidence, moreover, extends to the very age of the Apostles themselves. The earliest Ecclesiastical historians enumerate the first Bishops of the Churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Smyrna, Alexandria, Rome, and trace them in each case from the Apostles. Polycarp is expressly said to have been appointed Bishop of the Church in Smyrna by the Apostles; Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, within the lifetime of some of the Apostles. The well-known testimony, therefore, of both these Fathers, although written in the second century, belongs to the first, and reaches back to the very age of the Apostles. And language cannot be more full, and express, and particular, than is the testimony of Ignatius, in his Epistles to the Churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Philadelphia, Smyrna, and to Polycarp himself, not merely to the bare existence of Episcopacy, but to its importance and sacredness, its value even in conjunction with the holy Eucharist, as a prime bond of Christian unity.

Such is the broad historical testimony to the universality and antiquity of the institution; its universal adoption so early as the second century;

its general adoption earlier still; its antiquity and its origin traceable up to Apostolic times, and to the Apostles themselves. Now it is not a little difficult to account for facts like these, except upon the hypothesis of the Divine origin of Episcopacy. If they stood alone they would supply such a very strong presumption in its favour as could not be set aside by any devout enquirers after the will of God. But they are far from standing alone. It is Scriptural testimony which crowns the argument from history; whilst the light of present facts, and the history of the past, clear away every shadow of obscurity from the pages of Scripture. Knowing what we thus know, we cannot be perplexed by the fluctuations of language or of offices; extraordinary offices discontinued with the cessation of extraordinary gifts; terms not as yet used with technical precision when they had not as yet become technical—Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Teachers; Apostles termed Presbyters, and Presbyters Bishops—in all these things we see only the natural change of words and things corresponding with the changes of events and circumstances, and through them all we discern, with perfect clearness, in the New Testament itself, and in the very infancy of the Church, the two distinct ecclesiastical offices of Presbyter and Deacon; and, again, the Apostles evidently exercising a jurisdiction over both; and, lastly, as the Churches multiplied, the only Apostle of whose labours and cares we have any full account in the sacred pages, delegating to other men a portion of the same office and jurisdiction, such portion as uninspired men could exercise, and such exactly as we behold committed to Bishops at the

present day; authority to reprove, rebuke, exhort, to maintain sound doctrine, reject the heretic, to lay on hands, to continue a succession of faithful teachers, judge of the qualifications of Presbyters and Deacons, appoint elders in every city. Finally, we observe these acknowledged functions of the Episcopate, which the Apostles had indisputably exercised themselves, committed to Timothy and Titus, at the close of the ministry of the Apostles, at the very time, namely, the most natural and reasonable for the continuation of the office, if it was indeed to be perpetuated. We see it continued, probably, during the lifetime of the last of the Apostles in the "Angels," as they are called, of the Apocalyptic Churches; we see no trace of this method of Church Government having been superseded; and whilst this was sanctioned, we find no other enjoined. Combining, therefore, present facts, and continuous history, with Apostolic usage, and remembering by whom the Apostles had been themselves ordained, we derive from the whole evidence, Historical and Scriptural, a sufficient and satisfactory proof of the Divine origin of the Institution.

The above method of investigation has not been sufficiently observed. The advocates for Episcopacy, for instance, often appear to reject the more simple and obvious proceeding; dwelling upon the sacred pages first of all, instead of making well known facts and admitted history the natural commentary upon Holy Scripture. Nevertheless, however reasonable the principle, we have need of caution in applying it; the tradition of *facts* must not be confounded with tradition of *doctrine*. Outward

Ordinances, the constitution of the Church, the Baptism of Infants, the Lord's Day, may have been committed to the safe keeping of the Church, and so, with some Scriptural sanction, although without any specific command, superadded to universal practice, they may carry the conviction to our minds of their Apostolic origin. Yet will it by no means follow that Doctrines also are likely to have been thus committed to tradition with similar imperfection in the Scriptural proof of their Divine authority.

Whilst, on the one hand, the recognition of an ordinance in Holy Scripture, even without express record of a command for its observance, sets it upon an eminence far above those on which Holy Scripture has been silent. Yet, on the other hand, the absence of a specific command is not to pass unheeded, whensoever the authority of an ordinance is the subject of controversy between ourselves and our brethren in Christ.

In such a case, and with reference to them, the obligation of Episcopacy, for example, is not to be compared with that of the Sacraments. The argument may be abundantly sufficient and satisfactory to *us*, which we may not expect to carry conviction of necessity to other minds. This is the plain practical distinction which the Church of England appears to have observed with respect to this very instance of Episcopacy. In her Articles and her Ordination Services she is definite and decided, as to the constitution of the Church, which she had received, and which she preserved inviolate. She judged an Episcopal succession to be among the "things that were wanting" in some sister Churches, and deeply lamented the interruption

even of external union in the body of Christ. Nevertheless she cautiously abstains from the condemnation of others, and does not so define a visible Church, or a lawful Ministry, as to exclude the Churches which had not retained Episcopacy. Let us, her children, imitate her moderation and her charity! Let us not imagine that Christian Unity will be better promoted by a more earnest zeal. Truth is but one, and the Church of Christ should be one; and, in our love of truth, and the fervency of our daily prayers for Christian unity, there can be no excess. But the known principles of human nature may well assure us that few things are better calculated than arguments overstrained, or the very appearance of authority unduly assumed, to perpetuate Disunion, and retard the much-desired progress of Christian Truth.

It is with our spiritual, as with our natural birth, with our second birth as with the first; we are not born, neither are we born again, insulated, independent beings. Nor are we dependent upon our Maker alone, His protection or His grace, but mutually dependent upon each other; nay, even the governor is in many ways dependent upon the governed, and the teacher upon the disciple. And our dependence upon others does not cease when we can walk alone, or think alone; it continues throughout the whole period of our probation; we are born, and we continue, members of civil society as well as the domestic, and we are born again by Baptism into the Church of Christ, and when we shall have attained, if we do attain, "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," we are yet to live on in her communion, and die in her communion.

So it was at the first preaching of the Gospel. We hear of disciples "added to the Church," and continuing in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Yet even at first there might be no inconsiderable danger lest the fellowship of Christians, and the unity of the Church should be unheeded or undervalued. The Greek might imagine that he was to become, not a member of a community, but a partisan of certain philosophical opinions; and even the Jew, accustomed to bonds of union more narrow and external, one race, one nation, one temple, might be slow to apprehend a spiritual society embracing all the world: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, by which all alike, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, are "by one Spirit baptized into one body." And there was corresponding care to counteract the danger. A visible form and polity were given to the new society; the Sacraments appointed to be the means and bonds of spiritual communion; all the brethren bound by a new commandment suited to their new spiritual brotherhood; their union and communion illustrated and enforced by the most expressive figures, the "vine and the branches," the one body in Christ, and every one members one of another; the one spiritual and "holy temple in the Lord, in whom all are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Nay, the building up a holy church is described as the very purpose of God in Christ, and all those things which are literally true only of individual Christians, the constituent parts of this one society, are in a figure transferred to the society itself, and Christ is said to have "loved the Church and given Himself for

“it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, holy and without blemish.”

It is evidently essential to the existence of any particular branch of the universal Church of Christ that she should exercise what has been called an authority of *Order*, not merely with respect to discipline and ceremonies, but also with respect to matters of faith. For she must determine how difficult and responsible soever may be the office, and most responsible it is, she must determine who shall, and who shall not, be members of the society; in other words, she must settle *the terms of Church Communion*, and require a concurrence in that judgment on the part of her *Pastors and Teachers*. Thus, the Church of England, whilst openly disclaiming all pretensions to infallibility, yet, acting as a society, requires the assent of all her members to the Apostles' Creed and the Church Catechism, and besides, of the Ministers of the Word, to her larger “Articles of Religion.”

In her twentieth Article she declares that she has “authority in controversies of faith.” Who is there who does not admit some notion of Church authority? The deference which it implies is the same in kind with the respect due from the child to his parent, the young to the old, the rude to the skilful, the unlearned to the learned, the individual to the society of what kind soever to which he may belong; the dictate alike of Nature and of reason, and may be an auxiliary and a guide to truth.

It is a great privilege that we are born into the Church; that we are no sooner Christians than we are members of a Christian society; never insulated, but introduced at once into a system of mutual dependence; never left to wander at large in quest of truth, without a beacon or a guide, but travelling in a company, the road ascertained, leaders and guides provided. We are inheritors of Christian truth, and we enjoy the very perfection of our privilege when we are baptized in early infancy, and imbibe the truths of Christianity with our earliest knowledge, at the very time when the force of natural authority is the strongest, and the disposition to doubt the weakest. And why? Not in order that we may never enquire, and examine, and try the foundations of truth with all accuracy; but because it is a blessed privilege to believe before we can enquire, and pray as Christians, act as Christians, be Christians, long before we can arrive at the capacity and opportunity to weigh evidence and arguments,—and yet, which especially deserves our regard and admiration, not without our having already acquired a covenant-title to that spiritual aid which is essential alike to holiness and to faith. For thus it is that the systems of nature and of grace agree in perfect harmony; and the institutions of the Church, the gifts of grace, the capacities and dispositions of youth, and the natural authority of parents and instructors, all conspire, not to exclude enquiry into the truth and tenets of Christianity, but to bless us with Christianity itself before enquiry is possible.

And what if enquiry never should be possible? or if it should be exceedingly partial and incom-

plete, from imperfect powers, or slender opportunities, or premature departure out of this preparatory scene? Does any considerate Protestant imagine, strangely as our sentiments have been misconceived, that the youngest member of the Church of Christ, who departs this life in His faith and fear, is the less a Christian because he could not have ascertained the correctness of his creed by his own individual examination? We do not thus confound the end with the means; nor do we teach the duty of enquiry, except in proportion to the age, and capacity, and circumstances, and opportunities of the believer.

THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

VI.—We have the blessed promise of *Divine assistance*; the great, the peculiar, privilege of the Christian, the illumination of the spirit of truth to develop our judgment, aid our reason, and guard us against the innumerable frailties of our fallen nature. May we never fail to make a devout and grateful use of this “unspeakable gift!” Without this everything else is vain and fruitless. Without the “holy inspiration” of the Lord we can neither think those things that be good, nor without His merciful guidance can we perform the same. There never was any Church of Christ which did not distinctly confess and teach the existence and Divinity of the Holy Ghost, and the necessities of His gracious influences in order to our faith and obedience, and therefore our salvation; not an Ancient Creed has come down to us that does not declare the belief of the Church in the Holy Ghost; not a primitive writer who does

not state or imply the same doctrine, which was indeed that faith in which holy Martyrs offered up their souls to God, and into which every individual Christian was baptized. The scanty remains which have been preserved from early Christian writers are, however, far from being so full and explicit upon this great subject as the Scriptures themselves. Clement, Polycarp, and Ignatius do not teach the doctrine with the clearness and frequency of the Apostles Paul, and Peter, and John. From the Apostolical Epistles, as might have been expected of a truth which was embodied in the form of Christian Baptism, it is plain that with this doctrine even the least instructed, the very babes in Christ, were expected to be familiar: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? Know ye not that ye are the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?” The whole tenor of the Epistles speaks to the same effect. The book of the Acts is a history of the personal intervention of the Spirit in the economy of our salvation, bearing His testimony to Christ, completing the Christian revelation, and teaching the Apostles where, and to whom, and in what method, to spread the faith. And even the history in the Gospels of the ministry of the Saviour contains His explicit revelation to His disciples concerning “the Comforter,” “the Spirit of truth,” “the Holy Ghost,” as might by themselves, even without the introductory teaching of the Church, initiate the humble student of Holy Scripture into the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel covenant concerning the grace of the Divine Spirit.

It was to be clearly shown that He was “the

Spirit of Christ" as well as of the Father. Our Lord was Himself to send the Spirit from the Father; and not until He "ascended up on high" did He "lead captivity captive, and give gifts unto men." Then was that great outpouring of the Spirit which was to set the seal to His religion, and enable the Apostles and first teachers of the Gospel to preach the word "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." And then also were all Christian men to have their birth not of water only, but of "the Spirit;" to be "all baptized by one Spirit into one body;" builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit; enabled to bring forth "the fruits of the Spirit," "sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption."

But yet further, in this last dispensation, and not, so far as we are informed, before, was the great mystery of the Personality, as well as the Divinity, of the Holy Spirit to be revealed as a distinct article of faith. All Christians were now to be baptized into His holy name. One with the Father and with the Son, proceeding from both, indifferently termed "the Spirit of God," "of the Father," or "of the Son," yet in some mysterious way distinct from both, He was now to be "worshipped and glorified with the Father and Son together." And accordingly He is now described by the inspired writers as exerting a distinct personal agency—if we may presume to speak in such a term of this heavenly mystery—discharging peculiar offices in the gracious economy of the redemption of mankind; or, in the words of inspiration, "dividing" His wonderful gifts "to every man severally as He will"—"searching all things, yea, the deep things of

"God;"—"making intercession for the saints according to the will of God." The same mysterious doctrine was not obscurely intimated by our Lord Himself before His departure: "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth.—I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you.—If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.—The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my Name, He shall teach you all things.—When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me."

Without the grace of the Holy Spirit we cannot believe. "No one can come to me," says our Lord, "except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him."—It is written in the Prophets, and they shall all "be taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.—No man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father." And so of our continuance in the faith, as well as our approach to it: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me—without me ye can do nothing." But we know, and have already seen, that the mode by which we abide in Christ, or He in us, is by "the Spirit of God dwelling in us." And all the truth of God is darkness to

him who is not taught of God. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he them, because they are spiritually discerned."

He has revealed His will to man, but without His continual aid and light man has not sight or strength even to comprehend the knowledge of His truth. Thus when the Apostle first made his open confession of that great prime truth of the Gospel, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and our Lord, therefore, pronounced him "blessed." He added, "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." And what was true of him is true of us all, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." And, universally, of all Christian truth as of all Christian men, "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth." But blessed be God for His great mercy, there is not one sinful soul of all our sinful race whom He is not willing and desirous to draw unto Himself.

And what is the practical consequence of all these considerations but that we must seek the aid of the Spirit by the devout use of *the appointed means*? "God will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." Have we any ground to hope that He will give His grace to those who can, but who will not ask Him? But what is true of one of the means of grace is true of all. We have no warrant to expect His aid but through our devout use of all the appointed means with which He has blessed us. Why has He "caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning," but that we may "hear

"and read, and mark and learn them?" Why permitted us to pray, but that we may use our great privilege? or given us opportunities of public worship, but that we may employ them to our good and to His glory? or appointed the blessed Sacraments but that they may begin and sustain our new and spiritual life? or built up the ark of His Church but that within it we may be saved?

Those who are interested in the present enquiry are of course *Christians*; they have already been baptized; they already believe all the great truths of the Gospel, and they seek to prove them; or they believe in part, and are desirous to apprehend all Christian truth; their humble prayer is, "Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief;" and they have a covenant-title to that gracious aid which will be granted to their earnest prayer, yet not to their prayer alone, apart from their use of the Scriptures, the Church, the Sacraments; not to their prayers as insulated beings, but as members of that one Christian body which is the body of Christ, and the abode of His Spirit. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body; *and have* all been made to drink "in one Spirit." In one word, the means of Truth, the means of Grace, the means of Salvation, are all indissolubly connected; all parts of one common and harmonious plan by which salvation is to be wrought out, and the creature brought nigh to his Creator, the sinner to his Saviour, the rational and free but weak and corrupt being of this brief period of trial prepared for life eternal, through the mercy of Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

In these pages an attempt has been made to state the very simple and obvious principle of combining

all our advantages in order to the attainment of Christian truth. If few would deny the principle in the abstract, the practical neglect of it is the very characteristic of the great leading errors of different portions of the Christian community. It is not only the enthusiast who employs one of the means of truth and casts away the rest, seeking the aid of the Spirit, but neglecting Reason, and the Church, and the Scriptures: the Romanist exaggerates the uses of the Church till he lays the Holy Scriptures practically in abeyance; large classes of Protestants, and individuals in all classes, pushing the principles of Protestantism to extravagance, exalt the Scriptures till they virtually forget the Church; the Rationalist begins by setting the Church aside, and ends by degrading Holy Scripture to the level of mere human compositions.

And so it is also with the various parts and details of several of these great means of truth. Practical errors are ever growing out of some partial, or exclusive, or exaggerated use of various portions of the whole system. Even the different parts of the Scriptures themselves are not exempt from this treatment. The Gospels are valued to the exclusion of the Epistles; or St. Paul is extolled, St. James forgotten; or the New Testament alone is studied, the Old practically set aside. Or again, the entire volume is studied as if it were one work of one age, with no discrimination made between the different Books and the different dispensations to which they more especially belong. Or in our use of Church privileges the modern Church alone is valued, or the Ancient alone, the Reformers or the Fathers, or some one exclusive

school of theological writers, to the practical depreciation of the Sacred Scriptures.

And surely as these things are among the causes of Heresy, Dissent, and Schism, and Party strife, may we not entertain some hope of their alleviation by a more considerate use of all our privileges in their due connection, under the gracious aid of the Spirit of God? An anxious endeavour has therefore been made to draw attention not simply to the uses, but to the *connected uses*, of the four Principal Means of attaining Christian Truth—the Inspired Scriptures; the Church of Christ; our own natural powers; and God's preventing and assisting Grace in proof of some of the more prominent instances of controverted truths; viz.—

The Divine origin of Infant Baptism, and of Episcopacy; the doctrines of the Christian Atonement; the Divinity of our blessed Lord, and the Personality of the Holy Spirit—the main elements of that comprehensive principle of Christian faith, the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity.

These are apparently the most important of all truths. They are, moreover, those by which we are separated from our brethren, and the most widely separated, from the Romanist, for example, and the Protestant Dissenter; from the Presbyterian, the Baptist, the Socinian, and Unitarian. The very sum and substance of Christian doctrine is made up of these and but a few other kindred truths.

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