

APPENDIX.

NOTE A, *page* 5.

BELIEVING AND DISBELIEVING.

“It is wonderful,” says Archbishop Whately, “how many persons, not wanting generally in good sense, overlook the obvious truth, that to *disbelieve* is to *believe*; belief of the falsity of any proposition being a belief of the truth of its contradictory. Excessive credulity and excessive incredulity, though opposed in reference to each separate proposition, are the same mental quality. If one juryman is so strongly prepossessed *against* a prisoner, and another in his favour, that the one is ready to condemn him, and the other to acquit him, on slight evidence or on no evidence at all, then the one is credulous as to his guilt, and incredulous as to his innocence, while the other is equally credulous and incredulous on the opposite side. Even so, to *disbelieve the superhuman origin* of Christianity is to *believe its human origin*; and *which* belief demands the more easy faith, is the very point at issue.”—Whately’s edition of Paley’s Evidences, Annotation, p. 34.

This remark of Whately is worthy of consideration by those persons who tell us that “they cannot believe the mysteries of Christianity because they do

not understand them," and yet have no hesitation in *disbelieving* them. For we are quite as incompetent to decide that a doctrine is *untrue*, as to decide that it is true, if we do not understand it. The circumstance of our not understanding it is no reason for pronouncing *unfavourable* judgment upon it, but rather a reason for declining to pronounce any judgment whatsoever with respect to it, in so far as regards its intrinsic merits.

NOTE B, page 40.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE REASON AND THINGS WHICH ARE AGAINST REASON.

This distinction is maintained in the following terms by Leibnitz, in opposition to Bayle, by whom it had been disputed: "Je m'étonne qu'il y ait des gens d'esprit qui combattent cette distinction, et que M. Bayle soit de ce nombre. Elle est assurément très bien-fondée. Une vérité est au-dessus de la raison, quand notre esprit, ou même tout esprit créé, ne la saurait comprendre; et telle est, à mon avis, la sainte Trinité, tels sont les miracles réservés à Dieu seul, comme, par exemple, la création; tel est le choix de l'ordre de l'univers, qui dépend de l'harmonie universelle, et de la connoissance distincte d'une infinité des chose à la fois. Mais une vérité ne saurait jamais être *contre* la raison; et bien loin qu'un dogme combattu et vaincu par la raison soit *incompréhensible*, l'on peut dire que rien n'est plus aisé à comprendre, ni plus manifeste que son absurdité."—Théodicée, p. 39.

Dean Stanhope makes the following just remarks on

the same distinction: "He that declares a thing to be *above* reason, implies no more thereby than that he does not comprehend or see *how it can be*; but he that pronounces a thing to be *contrary to reason*, implies that he perceives either such an inconsistency in the thing itself, or such an incongruity with other certain and acknowledged truths, as plainly shows him that *it cannot be*. Again, to be *above* our own, or *above* human reason, means no more than that we, or others of the same faculties with ourselves, cannot perfectly know what we affirm to be so; leaving it in the meanwhile undetermined whether the thing in itself be true or false, or whether other beings of a more extensive understanding than our own may not discern and know it fully, though we do not. But, to be *contrary to reason* infers that neither we, nor any larger capacity whatsoever, can perceive and know it to be true. For reason, in the several sorts of minds that partake of it, differs according to the measure only (as each of these minds have it in greater or less perfection), but cannot contradict itself in any; and consequently, whatsoever is *indeed contrary* to the reason of one mind, cannot but be so to the reason of all minds. Accordingly, as much difference as there is between saying that the same thing cannot be known and that it is perfectly well known by the same person—or, as much difference as there is between being possible to be true or false, and being impossible to be true; so great and so real a difference is there between the idea of a thing *above* reason, and that of a thing *contrary to reason*."—Stanhope's Boyle Lectures, Sermon X.

These remarks fully confirm the statement I made (*supra*, p. 40), that "the circumstance of a thing being *above reason* precludes the possibility of *our* proving it to be *against reason*."

NOTE C, page 50.

MYSTERIES IN MATHEMATICS.

“Mathematicians can demonstrate that a space *infinite* in one respect may, by its rotation, generate a solid of *finite capacity*; as is the case with the solid formed by the rotation of a logarithmic curve of infinite length upon its axis, or with that formed by the rotation of an Apollonian hyperbola upon its asymptote. They can also show, in numerous instances, that a variable space shall be continually augmenting, and yet never become equal to a certain finite space. And they frequently make transformations with great facility and theoretical elegance, by means of expressions to which no definite idea can be attached. Can we, for example obtain any clear comprehension, or, indeed, any notion at all, of the value of a power whose exponent is an acknowledged *imaginary quantity*, as $x\sqrt{-1}$? Can we, in like manner, obtain any distinct idea of a series constituted of an infinite number of terms? In each case the answer must be in the negative. Yet the science in which these and numerous other *incomprehensibles* occur is called *Mathesis*, THE DISCIPLINE, because of its incomparable superiority to other studies in evidence and certainty, and, therefore, its singular adaptation to discipline the mind.

“How does it happen that, when the investigation is bent towards objects which cannot be comprehended, the mind arrives at that in which it acquiesces *as certainty*, and rests satisfied? It is not, manifestly, because we have a distinct perception of the *nature* of the objects of inquiry; but because we have such a distinct perception of the *relation* which those objects bear one towards

another, and can assign positively, without danger of error, the exact relation as to identity or diversity of the quantities before us, at every step of the process. . . . No mathematician can tell the precise value of $\sqrt{2}$ or $\sqrt{5}$, while every one can tell the precise value of $\sqrt{4}$ or $\sqrt{9}$; yet no one has any more hesitation in declaring that $\sqrt{5}$ exceeds $\sqrt{2}$, than in declaring that $\sqrt{9}$ exceeds $\sqrt{4}$ —that is, that 3 is greater than 2.

“Again, we cannot possibly know *all the terms* of the infinite series $\frac{1}{a} - \frac{c}{a^2} + \frac{c^2}{a^3} - \frac{c^3}{a^4} + \frac{c^4}{a^5}$ &c., *in infinitum*; neither can we know *all the terms* of the infinite series $\frac{1}{c} - \frac{a}{c^2} + \frac{a^2}{c^3} - \frac{a^3}{c^4} + \frac{a^4}{c^5}$ &c., *in infinitum*. Yet we can show that these series are equal to one another. For we can demonstrate that the first series is an expansion of the quantity $\frac{1}{a+c}$; and that the second series is an

expansion of the evidently equal quantity $\frac{1}{c+a}$. In like manner, we can have no clear conception of the quantities $\sqrt{-a}$, $\sqrt{-b}$; yet we are as certain that $\sqrt{-a} = \sqrt{-b} \times \sqrt{\frac{a}{b}}$, as that $20 + 30 = 50$, since we can demonstrate that equality subsists in the former expressions as completely as we can in the latter. Every mathematician can fully prove that the conclusions he obtains by means of these quantities, although he cannot comprehend the quantities in themselves, must necessarily be true. He therefore acts wisely when he uses them, since they facilitate his inquiries; and knowing that their *relations* are real and ascertainable, he is satisfied, because it is only in these relations that he is interested.

“In like manner (if we may venture to make such a comparison), we cannot, with our limited faculties, comprehend the infinite perfections of God, or reconcile His different attributes, so as to see distinctly how ‘mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other ;’ or how the majestic Governor of the universe can be everywhere present, without excluding other beings. But we know, or at least *may* know, if we do not reject the instructions He hath given us, His relation to us as our Father, our Guide, and our Judge. Again, we cannot comprehend the nature of the Messiah as revealed to us in His twofold character as ‘the Son of God’ and ‘the man Christ Jesus.’ But we know, or may know, the relation in which He stands to us as the Mediator of the new covenant, who ‘was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, and by whose stripes we are healed.’ . . . By pursuing this course of reflection, I am persuaded that the result of it will come in aid of our religious belief, by showing that the difficulties attending Christianity are of the same kind, and ought to be referred to the same cause—namely, the weakness of our faculties—as those which envelop all the fundamental principles of knowledge.”—*Letters on the Evidences, Doctrines, and Duties of Christianity*, by the late Olinthus Gregory, LL.D., Professor of Mathematics in the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. Seventh edition, p. 56-61.

NOTE D, *page* 53.

PHYSICAL THEORY OF LIFE.

A masterly discussion of this subject will be found in the treatise entitled, ‘As regards Protoplasm, in rela-

tion to Professor Huxley's Essay on the Physical Basis of Life,' by Dr J. Hutchison Stirling; and also in the very able review of Dr Hutchison's work, by the Rev. Dr Martin, in the 'British and Foreign Evangelical Review' for January 1870.

I have said that it is unnecessary to my purpose to discuss the soundness or unsoundness of this theory, inasmuch as, though it were ever so well founded, it does not render the phenomena to be accounted for in any respect less mysterious than they would otherwise be. I may add that it does not seem to be a matter of essential importance to the defence of either natural or revealed religion, that the possibility of life being produced, in some of its lower forms, by merely physical appliances, should be controverted. It is a well-known fact, indeed, that the production of living organisms from inorganic matter, without the need of a parent germ, was earnestly maintained by the great body alike of philosophers and theologians until within the last three centuries. And Francesco Redi, by whom the doctrine of "spontaneous generation" was first controverted, was charged with setting at nought the authority of Scripture; his adversaries affirming that the generation of bees from the carcass of a dead lion, as asserted in Judges, xiv. 8, 14, was inconsistent with the notion that a living germ is necessary in all cases to the production of animal life.

"There is really no ground," says Dr M'Cosh, "for the fears of the timid believer on the one hand, nor on the other hand for the arrogant expectation of the atheist, that he will by this physical theory of life be able to drive God from His works. Spontaneous generation is not to be understood as a generation out of nothing—an event without a cause—an affair of caprice or chance. It is a production out of pre-

existing materials by means of powers in the materials —powers very much unknown, working only in certain circumstances, and requiring, in order to their operation, favourable conditions, assorted (so all religious people think) by divine wisdom. Spontaneous generation, supposing it to exist, cannot be a simple, but must be a very complex process, involving properties possessed by matter, and a concourse of circumstances working to the production of an intended end. . . . The question, Whether there is or is not a separate vital principle, is a question for science to settle. And, whichever way it may be settled, there is room (I am sorry to say) for irreligion; but there is room also for religion. The assertion that there is a vital principle capable of originating and perfecting all that is in the organism, may be quite as irreligious as the denial of a separate vital potency. Proceeding on the existence of a vital force, which they suppose pantheistically to inhere in nature, there are some who imagine that they have thereby explained everything connected with the development and growth of vegetable and animal organisms. I am inclined, on the evidence of science, to believe that there is a vital power as different from the chemical as the chemical is from the mechanical; but I do not believe in an independent power called the vegetable or animal life, capable of producing all the beautiful forms and adaptations which we admire in the living creatures. It can be shown, whether we do or do not call in a vital principle, that there is need of a whole series of nice arrangements of part and power before the organism can fulfil its functions, and yield seed after its kind. Whether there be or be not a vital power distinct from visible forces, is a question to be decided by naturalists, and not by theologians. . . . Religion can afford to wait till this point is decided.

When once a law has been established so as to stand the tests of scientific induction, then theologians may reverently use it in expounding the traces of design discoverable in the universe."—M'Cosh's Christianity and Positivism, p. 36, 39, 40.

NOTE E, page 182.

THE UNITY OF GOD.

We have said that the statements of Scripture on this subject, if they can be viewed as at all referring to *unity as an essential attribute of the divine nature*, do not *define* or *explain* this attribute, so as to give us any distinct conception of what it really is, or wherein it exactly consists. We ought to add, however, that some *approximate notion* of this essential *oneness* of the divine nature may be reached *by way of inference from the numerical unity of God*, which is unquestionably declared in Scripture. We may thence reasonably infer that the unity of the Godhead is something more than a mere *generic oneness of nature*—that is to say, something more than a mere participation in the same divine qualities or attributes by several beings who are altogether distinct and separate from one another. For it seems evident that a plurality of distinct and separate beings, all alike partaking of generically the same divine attributes, would be equivalent to a plurality of Gods, and, as such, inconsistent with the numerical unity of God. On this account we seem to have no alternative but to conclude that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—besides being *generically* of the

same divine nature, as three human beings are generically of the same human nature—must at the same time be joined together in a union of the most intimate and indissoluble kind.

It must be confessed, however, that this inference from the numerical oneness of God, although it seems to be altogether reasonable, throws but little light on the subject to which it relates. For, of the nature of that intimate and indissoluble union, by which the divine Triad are joined together in the one Godhead, it does not in the least help us to form any distinct conception. This is a matter which far transcends our comprehension; and any one who is rash enough to attempt an explanation of it, is sure to “darken counsel by words without knowledge.”

NOTE F, page 192.

ATTEMPTED EXPLANATIONS OR ILLUSTRATIONS
OF THE TRINITY.

Attempts have been made to explain this great mystery by certain supposed analogies to it, which are to be found in the constitution of man, or in the phenomena of nature; but it must be owned that such attempts have not led to any satisfactory result. The union of the bodily frame, the animal soul, and the rational spirit (though, doubtless, a mystery almost as unfathomable), is no fair counterpart to the divine unity in plurality; for the three things thus united in the human constitution cannot in any respect be regarded as *consubstantial*, nor can they be held as fur-

nishing any resemblance to what may, even by the faintest approximation, be denominated "the union of three *persons* in one Godhead." No less inappropriate is the illustration which has often been drawn from the coexistence of the intellect, the will, and the conscience in the human soul; for the faculties of our mind are not different subsistences, but only different attributes possessed, or different modes of activity exhibited, by one and the same personal being. Equally defective is the favourite analogy of the Nicene Fathers, taken from the alleged union between the sun and the light which radiates from it. For even if we suppose light to be a material substance emanating from the sun, it is plain that any portion of this luminous substance ceases to be one with the sun as soon as it has left him. It cannot be said, therefore, of the ray of light which reaches our organ of vision, that it is one with the orb which has emitted it, any more than that the water of a flowing stream is one with the fountain from which it has proceeded.

Of metaphysical illustrations of the Trinity, it may suffice to notice one given by Dr Chauncey, as quoted in 'Dick's Theological Lectures,' vol. ii. p. 63: "The First Being," he says, "living a most perfect life of fruition in communion, and being but one infinitely pure act, doth most transcendently comprehend and conceive Himself, beholding His own most glorious image by His infinite understanding; reflecting on Himself as the chiefest good, which He enjoys in the highest mutual love and delight. God thus reflecting upon and conceiving Himself, is God in the person of the Father; God conceived as His own most glorious image, is God in the person of the Son; God enjoying Himself as His own chiefest good in the relation of Father and Son, with ineffable love and delight, is the third per-

son—the Holy Ghost.” It is astonishing that this writer did not perceive that the metaphysical Trinity which he thus describes amounts, so far as it is intelligible, to pure Sabellianism; for the Son is merely the Father contemplated by Himself, and the Holy Spirit is only the Father experiencing love and joy in this act of self-contemplation. There is no distinction here beyond what may be held to subsist between the several acts or states of one and the same mind—the Son being a mere idea, and the Holy Spirit a mere emotion.

The truth seems to be, that there is nothing in the universe, nothing at least within the range of our intelligence, that is in any respect analogous to the Trinity, and consequently, nothing by a reference to which our efforts to comprehend it can in any way be assisted. And what cause for wonder have we if this should be the case? Where is the cause for wonder that a Being who is certainly possessed of many other incommunicable and (to our limited minds) incomprehensible attributes, should also in His mode of subsistence be distinguished by a combination of unity with plurality, so perfectly unique and peerless that it cannot be matched, and, withal, so deeply mysterious that it cannot be fathomed? May we not rather say, that the very circumstance of this plurality in the divine nature being *out of all analogy* to anything that comes within the sphere of our intelligence, is but another proof that the triune Jehovah is that only God to whom none else can be likened?

Be this as it may, it ought to be remembered that the Trinity is but partially revealed, and that the mystery attaches to it *in so far as it is unrevealed*. Now we have already seen (*supra*, Lecture III.) that there is nothing unworthy of God, or incompatible with a revelation proceeding from Him, in His giving us *some*

information about divine things—as much information as He deems needful for His own wise and good purposes—without giving all the information in regard to them which a speculative or inquisitive disposition might have wished to receive.

Nor let it be forgotten that the Trinity, notwithstanding all the mystery connected with it, is a most precious truth, indissolubly bound up with those things which most vitally concern our faith and hope. It underlies the whole scheme of our redemption—a scheme originating in the Father's sovereign love, accomplished through the mediation of the Son, and effectually applied by the agency of the Holy Spirit. It meets us at the very threshold of the visible Church, into which we are received by baptism administered in the sacred name of the triune God. And it goes with us from all our devotional assemblies in those words of apostolic benediction, wherein the departing worshippers are commended to "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the love of God the Father, and to the communion of the Holy Spirit."

Wherefore, though unable to comprehend the manner in which this great truth is to be explained, it becomes us to thank God for that measure of acquaintance with it which He has been pleased to give us in His Word, and to pray that He would keep us steadfast in the faith of it, and enable us ever, with the confession of a true heart, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and to worship the one God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. "Building up ourselves on our most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Ghost, let us keep ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude, 20, 21).

NOTE G, *page 279.*

MORAL SUASION.

Besides the remarks made in the preceding pages (273-279) on the theory of "moral suasion," as explanatory of the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, it is proper to inquire, *What is exactly meant by that theory?* For, however plausible to some persons it may appear to be, when set forth in vague and general expressions, it will probably assume a different aspect when its precise import is somewhat more minutely scrutinised. What, then, are we to understand by the Holy Spirit "presenting truths, arguments, and motives, which are calculated to produce a salutary change upon the sinner's heart"?

1. Does it mean that *He imparts any new revelation?* Such a supposition would be derogatory to the sufficiency of Scripture as a rule of faith and practice. And whatever may be thought by some visionary enthusiasts, no such idea receives the least countenance from any of those with whom we are concerned to argue.

2. Does it mean that *He operates in any way on the truths already revealed to us in Scripture*, so as to make them better fitted than they would otherwise be to make a salutary impression on the sinner's heart? This supposition may be thought to receive countenance from the manner in which we are wont to speak of the Holy Spirit as "*making the Word* an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners." But when we so speak, we must not be held as meaning that *any change is wrought by Him upon the Word*. There is nothing wrong in the Word that needs to be corrected, nothing defective that needs to be supplied. It is not in the Word that the fault lies, when sinners slight it, or mis-

conceive it, or reject it; but in the blindness or hardness of their own hearts. There is in the Word a sufficiency of light, and power, and excellence, and preciousness, if the minds of men were only capable of discerning it. But *this* they cannot do, until there be exerted on them a divine influence, opening their minds and hearts to those things which "the natural man receiveth not." The Word of God is said to be "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. iii. 12). But how can this spiritual weapon be made to pierce *the stony heart*? Not surely by *sharpening the sword*, which is already as sharp as sword can be; but by *softening the heart*, which at present is impenetrable. The Word is also likened to "good seed." But good as the seed may be, the soil must be congenial to it, or else, however profusely it may be scattered, it will not spring up and yield the desired increase. If the place in which it is sown be a naked rock or a sandy desert, it must be fertilised by a change directly wrought upon it, or else all the seed that may be sown upon it will be sown in vain. In plain language, it is the sinner's mind, and not the Word, that needs to have some change wrought upon it, in order that the things revealed in Holy Scripture may be faithfully received and heartily complied with.

3. Does, then, the alleged "moral suasion" of the Holy Spirit consist in *the presentation to the sinner's mind of those very things which are set forth in the Word*, precisely as we find them there revealed and no otherwise? This view of the matter would seem to place the Holy Spirit on the same footing with any faithful *human* expounder of revealed truth; certainly it places Him on a level with those *inspired* teachers, who spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and thereby it seems to preclude the supposition that

the truths of Scripture can have any greater efficacy, when suggested by the one agency, than when presented by the other.

It may, perhaps, be argued that the Spirit being a divine agent, can use the same Word more effectively than any human agent is able to do, inasmuch as He can commend it to us *with more than human authority*, and can urge it upon us *with more than human power*. This argument seems plausible at first sight; but its apparent force will disappear if we examine it somewhat more carefully.

It is argued, on the one hand, that the same revealed truths, if directly suggested to us by the Spirit of God, would have *greater authority* than when addressed to us by a human agent. Undoubtedly they would. But then, it is obviously necessary to their carrying this "greater authority" along with them, *that we should be able clearly to recognise them as presented to our minds by the agency of the divine Spirit*. It will not be alleged, however, by any experienced Christian, or by any intelligent reader of the Scriptures, that the agency of the Holy Spirit is perceptible by the subjects of it, or that they are able to discriminate it from the natural operations of their own minds. Accordingly, they have no apparent ground for attaching to the suggestions of this divine monitor aught of that supreme authority which, if fully recognised as proceeding from Him, would belong to them.

It is argued, on the other hand, that a divine agent can wield the same instrumentality of truths and motives with *greater force* than is competent to any human agent, so as to counteract or overbear all resistance. But those who thus argue overlook the distinction between *physical force* and *moral influence*. Additional energy may be imparted to a *physical in-*

strument, which operates by impact or pressure, in proportion to the power of the agent by whom it is wielded. A sword will pierce more deeply, or a hammer will strike more forcibly, in the hand of a strong man than in that of a feeble child. But it is not so with the influence of *moral causes*, such as the truths and motives of religion. *Their* influence results from their *adaptation to the character and disposition of the persons to be affected by them*, and cannot be increased, consistently with their own nature or with the constitution of those minds on which they are to operate, in any other way than by *increasing this adaptation*. And how is this increase of adaptation to be accomplished? Not, certainly, by any change wrought upon the Word of God "which endureth for ever" (1 Peter, i. 25), but by a change to be wrought upon the sinner, whereby he may be prepared for the reception of it. It must be admitted, indeed, that God is able, if it so pleased Him, to overbear the enmity of the carnal mind by an irresistible exercise of almighty power, so as to *enforce* its reception of revealed truth. But such an overbearing exercise of power would be unsuited to our nature as reasonable and moral agents. And I need scarcely add, that it would be as far as possible removed from that "*lenis suasio*," which the Arminians hold to be the only method of operation by which God seeks to recover the confidence and homage of His fallen creatures.

A somewhat singular hypothesis has been suggested by the late Dr W. Anderson, in his able 'Treatise on Regeneration' (2d edition, p. 157, 158), in order to explain the manner in which "the Holy Spirit, by a direct operation on the mind, causes the truth of the Bible to be believed in spite of existing prejudices and aversions, which prejudices and aversions the truth,

when once received, proceeds to quell and to eradicate." "With all humility," he says, "I venture the suggestion, that there may be some special avenue, some *via sacra*, belonging to the original constitution of the human mind, which the Creator reserves for His own sovereign use, and by which He transmits vividly to the believing faculty those ideas with which He designs it to be impressed."

It will be observed, however, that this suggestion of a *via sacra* is purely hypothetical. We have no ground, either reasonable or Scriptural, for believing in its existence. Neither have we any reason for supposing that divine truth is not suited to reach the mind by the same avenues as other kinds of truth, unless it be that the *depravity of human nature has closed these avenues against its entrance*, or that the mind in its unregenerate state is *morally indisposed and incapacitated* for the reception of it. This, beyond all question, is the real obstacle. And why, then, should we suppose that the influence of the Holy Spirit is directed otherwise than to the removal of this real obstacle? If the Word is hindered from reaching the sinner's heart by the blindness, hardness, and deadness of his carnal nature, we well may regard *the incipient renovation of that carnal nature* by the agency of the Holy Spirit as the primary step taken to bring him to a faithful persuasion and reception of divine truth.

While making the above remarks, we would not be held as affirming that the influence of the Holy Spirit is *never* exerted in the way of "moral suasion,"—that is, by suggesting the truths, precepts, warnings, and promises of Holy Scripture to the sinner's mind. All that we are concerned to maintain is, that such "moral suasion" is *not of itself sufficient, apart from that subjective influence on the inner man* which the Scriptures speak of

as an "opening of the heart," an "enlightening of the eyes of the understanding," a "renewing of the spirit of the mind," and without which, in the actual condition of our fallen nature, the "moral suasion" would have nothing congenial on which to operate.

NOTE H, page 321.

PERMISSIVE PURPOSES OF GOD.

We may quote as to this subject some striking remarks of the late Thomas Erskine, Esq., in his treatise on the 'Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel' p. 81-83, where, notwithstanding his decided opposition to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, he expresses himself in the following terms:—

"The course of nature, the elements, the order of events, the existence and movement of all matter, are the direct actings of God. And are not the existence and movement of mind, too, His actings? Surely it is so, and it must be so; but yet I feel that my will works contrary to His. *My will* is the sustained creature of *His will* from moment to moment, incapable of a single act without power communicated from Him; and yet I am conscious that it works contrary to Him, and is morally responsible for so doing. This is too wonderful for me; I cannot attain unto it. . . . I am sure that I have never formed a thought, nor uttered a word, nor done a deed, to which He has not been most intimately present, and in which He has not been Himself the actuating power, enabling me to speak, and think, and do. And here is the great marvel. I am conscious that these thoughts and

words and deeds have been full of sin; yet my conscience acquits Him, and lays the undivided blame upon myself."

The like sentiments are still more forcibly expressed by another writer of the same school, Mr Scott of Woolwich, in his 'Three Discourses,' p. 22-24.

"Whatever is done," he says, "even when that is committed which is in extremest contrariety to the will of God—still, without God, and except by the power of God, it could not be done. When the murderer conceives malignity in his breast, He, in whom that murderer is living and moving and having his being, is at that instant sustaining the capacities of affection, so turned to evil. When he plans the means of luring his victim to destruction, of accomplishing his death, and of effecting for himself a safe retreat; the understanding he uses is not only a gift once given by God, but at this moment continues to exist and act only because God continues to actuate it. When he wills the stroke, when he raises his arm, when the weapon descends into the heart of his victim, it is not enough to say that God at that moment upholds the bodily life and strength of the murderer; that by Him he breathes, by Him he moves, that by Him his arm is nerved—nay, that by Him the dead metal of his dagger is furnished and continues in being only by a continued exercise of divine power; but, beyond this, the very *will* of the murderer himself is also more than a gift once given by God; for by the act of God alone could it also continue to subsist. Is anything, then, in the whole process, *the murderer's own*? For, unless there be, God cannot be opposed to him, inasmuch as God Himself would be the sole agent. Yes. *That* is the murderer's own, and his exclusively, in which the moral character, the evil of the act, resides. God enables him

to think ; but it is himself that thinks. God sustains his faculty of will, his electing power ; but it is himself that wills, that chooses evil."

These striking remarks, while powerfully advocating *the freedom of the will*, as exclusively originating all that can be properly considered as possessing a moral character, or as constituting the evil that resides in the sinful actions of men, are no less explicit and forcible in affirming that the divine procedure with respect to such actions, amounts to something more than an *otiose permission* of them ; and necessarily imply that the divine purpose to permit them must be held as comprehending a purpose to uphold the agents in the possession of all those natural powers, both of body and of mind, without which the actions could not be performed by them.

NOTE I, page 358.

THE PURPOSES OF GOD RESPECTING THE NON-ELECT.

In the foregoing lectures we have but slightly alluded to this mysterious aspect of the divine purposes. But as we have no wish to ignore or evade the subject, we venture, with much diffidence, to subjoin the following remarks.

1. That the *election of some* persons to everlasting life, and to all the means and requisites for attaining to it, implies the *non-election* or "*passing by*" of others, is much too clear a point to be disputed. Nor can it be questioned that those whom God is thus pleased, according to His unsearchable counsel, to "*pass by*," instead of purposing to confer upon them the grace which is neces-

sary to conversion and salvation, are eventually left in that state of sin, and consequent liability to condemnation, from which His grace alone could have delivered them. It must be observed, however, that this *purpose of preterition* does not exert upon the subjects of it *any positive influence*, to which their unbelief and impenitence, together with the evil consequences thence resulting, can be ascribed. It is simply a purpose to *let them alone*, or to exercise upon them *no converting influence* in the way of hindering them from continuing in their sinful courses. Calvin, indeed, and some others of the early reformers, have now and then used unguarded language on this subject,—to the effect that “the decree of God is the ground of the untoward disposition of the wicked to the means of grace”—that “the cause of men being hardened is the secret counsel of God”—and that “the wicked perish, not by God’s permission only, but by His will and appointment.” But no modern Calvinists, so far as I know, have given countenance to any such statements. Certainly no such statements are to be found in our Confession of Faith; for *there*, as we have seen (*supra*, p. 318), it is no sooner affirmed that “God from all eternity did unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass,” than the affirmation is guarded and qualified by the succeeding clause, “*yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.*” We have seen also that, according to the Confession of Faith, God’s *actual procedure* with reference to the sins which men commit *is only permissive*; from which it unavoidably follows, that His *purpose*, being the exact counterpart of His actual procedure, must be *a purpose to permit them*, and nothing more. And in this respect, as we formerly observed (*supra*, p.

319), the doctrine of our Confession of Faith is fully borne out by the testimony of Scripture: as when it is written of God, that "in times past He *suffered* all nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts, xiv. 16); that "He gave up the Israelites to their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels" (Ps. lxxxi. 12); and that "He endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction" (Rom. ix. 22).

I must add, with reference to the last of these three passages, that there is a marked distinction in the manner in which the apostle speaks of the "vessels of wrath" and of the "vessels of mercy," mentioned in the succeeding verse. Concerning the former he uses the *passive participle*, *κατηρησιαμένα εἰς ἀπώλειαν*, which may be taken as a verbal adjective, indicating merely that they were "fit for destruction," and which, even if taken participially, leaves undetermined the *agency* by which they were "fitted for destruction;" whereas, concerning the latter—"the vessels of mercy"—he employs *the active voice* of the verb, and *expressly ascribes to God* their "preparation for glory" in these words, *ἃ προητοίμασεν εἰς δόξαν*, "which he had afore prepared unto glory." This change of expression evidently seems designed to intimate that the agency of God is very different in the one case from what it is in the other. But even if the participle *κατηρησιαμένα* could be viewed as conveying a reference to God as the agent by whom the "vessels of wrath" were "fitted for destruction," there is but one way in which God can be conceived of as exercising any agency in such a matter—and that is, by withholding His grace from "the vessels of wrath," and allowing them to fill up the measure of their sins. To suppose that He uses any *positive* influence calculated to corrupt them would be to make Him the direct author or promoter of evil; and would at the same time be

utterly incompatible with the "*much long-suffering*" with which the "vessels of wrath are *endured*" by Him.

2. But here it may be asked, Does not the purpose of God, with reference to those who are not the subjects of His electing grace, include something more than this mere *preterition* of them? Does it not also contemplate *their being visited with that ultimate condemnation* to which, by their continuance in a state of impenitence, they shall be exposed?

To this question we needs must answer in the affirmative. The purpose of God, with reference to the non-elect, must be held to contemplate *all things whatsoever that eventually befall them*, whether by the agency of God or by His *permission*; on the principle already laid down and fully expounded (*supra*, p. 312-322), that "whatever God does, He always intended to do; and whatever He permits, He always intended to permit." Now, one thing which eventually befalls the non-elect is, *God's withholding from them His converting grace, to the effect of permitting them to continue in their impenitence*; and accordingly, *this* was contemplated in the divine purpose. Another thing which eventually shall befall them, in consequence of their continuance in a state of sin, is *their ultimate condemnation on the day of judgment*; and hence, *this* also must be held to have been contemplated in the divine purpose concerning them.

There is a distinction, however, which ought not to be overlooked, between these two aspects, if we may so call them, of the purpose of God. The former is a *sovereign and unconditional* purpose, to refrain from conferring upon some persons that grace which (while it is due to none), is freely given to others; but it is, at the same time, merely *negative and permissive*, exerting on the subjects of it *no positive influence*, to which their continued impenitence can be ascribed. The latter, again,

is a *positive* and *effective* purpose, relating to something which God is to bring to pass by His own immediate agency, and not merely by His permission; but then, unlike the other, it is not *sovereign* but *judicial*, having express reference to *the sins* of the non-elect, as the ground of that condemnation which shall ultimately be inflicted on them.

I am unable to see how any one can reasonably object to either of these aspects of the divine purpose respecting the non-elect, so long as he believes in the two great Christian doctrines, *salvation by free grace*, and *the final judgment*. For, according to these doctrines, God *actually does*, when the time has come for doing them, those self-same things which, according to the doctrine of election, it was always His purpose to do with reference to the non-elect. *In the first place*, He abstains from bestowing on them that converting grace which He freely bestows on others, and thereby permits them to continue in a state of impenitence. And, *in the second place*, He ultimately visits them with dishonour and wrath, as the consequence of their continuance in sin. Every one who believes in the fundamental doctrines of salvation by the free grace of God, and of the final judgment, will readily admit that such is *God's actual procedure* towards those who are finally impenitent and who are treated accordingly. And unless he is prepared to take exception to the divine procedure, he cannot with any consistency object to the divine purposes, in which that actual procedure and nothing else was predetermined.