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THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

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No doctrine of the Christian system deserves more careful attention than that which treats of the nature and inner constitution of God. Its right formulation largely conditions not only the intelligibility, but even validity of other doctrines whose practical importance is almost universally recognized. Yet it scarcely receives all the consideration it merits—not even at the hands of professional theologians; less still from preachers; least of all from the reading and thinking laity. Indeed at the present moment, an almost painful silence is observed regarding it.¹ For this state of things several reasons may be assigned, to two or three of which it will be useful very briefly to refer, before entering upon the proper business of these pages.

In the view of some, it is irreverent for man to endeavor to unravel the inner mysteries of the Godhead. Here it behooves him rather to worship than to speculate! But, apart from the consideration that there is no necessary antagonism between speculation and reverence, it should

¹ I refer especially to England.

be remembered that it is, not a question between doctrine and no doctrine, theory and no theory, but between a doctrine or theory worked out by human speculation centuries or *decennia* ago and one worked out by human speculation now. The people who say that it is irreverent *now* to investigate the nature of God, constantly have on their lips statements which embody the result of the similar irreverence of former generations of thinkers. If it was right for St. Augustine or Athanasius to investigate this subject, why should it not be right for us? The fact is, true reverence for the God who gave us the spirit of inquiry, and who has promised to make us "Sons knowing" instead of "servants" simply "obeying," requires of this, yea, of every generation of Christian believers, that they do their utmost to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of hope that is in them.¹

Another reason for the neglect of the subject, is the notion that its discussion can serve no practical ends. What has the doctrine of the Trinity to do with the salvation of the soul, with the generation and sustenance of the Christian life? Directly, it may be, little; indirectly, much. Salvation, in individual men, does not depend on understanding or having a theory either of the Trinity or the Incarnation or the Atonement, any more than the nutrition of my particular body or the curing of my diseases depends on my understanding physiology or medicine. But as far as a generation or community of men is concerned, there can be no doubt that the practical relation to God which brings salvation is conditioned by the view taken of one or the other of these great facts, especially that of the Trinity. Let Christian thought and teaching ignore to-day the *doctrine* of the Atonement, the Incarnation, the Trinity, and the next generation will begin to ignore the *facts* of which the doctrine is the human correlative, explanation, rationale. The faith, practice, and worship of to-day are the outgrowth of the doctrine or

¹ 1 Peter iii. 15.

theory of yesterday. It is so in secular matters: it is so in the life of the church. For my own part, I venture to think that a good deal of the prevalent uncertainty and haziness regarding the position and person of the Lord Jesus Christ, regarding his atonement and regarding the Holy Spirit and his work, are due to the neglect of the doctrine of the Trinity; and, if I mistake not, signs are discernible that even the relation of God to man is being similarly affected by the same cause. One thing is as certain as history can make it, that no preaching or teaching will for long be practical which leaves on one side as useless the more subtle and difficult problems of the Christian system.

But there is a further reason whose bearings are so manifold and important that it must be briefly noticed. By many now-a-days it is held as a dogma, that the human intellect is altogether incompetent to deal with God, even if there be a God; that, as all our ideas and reasonings about him are anthropomorphic, they must needs be untrue. Believing thinkers do not go quite so far as this; yet the confident assertions of outsiders are having a paralyzing influence on their inquiries, not to say, on their faith, especially in relation to this sublimest of themes. Agnosticism is not confined to professed agnostics. This is not the place for a full consideration of this great question of the day; but it may be well just to hint at one or two of the considerations by which, at all events, the friends of Christianity should be influenced.

Appeal is made in favor of the position just described to the fact that no one age or party or even individual agrees with another age or party or individual in accepting any one explanation or doctrine, and that the heresy of one generation or sect is apt to become the dogma of another. But surely the very fact that the human mind goes on correcting itself, is an indication that it is under some sort of guidance; and, that it has the general, though abstract notion of truth as its goal, is a sign that it is

never altogether deluded and shall approximate ever nearer to the object of its effort. Denial, criticism, objection, is as anthropomorphic as affirmation, construction. Human thought is, of course, always anthropomorphic: and if it bear in mind that truth is what commends itself, not so much to the empirical, as to the true *ἄνθρωπος*, it may well maintain that because this or the other conclusion is anthropomorphic, therefore it is true,—not the reverse. Convince man that his thinking must be untrue because it is his, and thinking will be paralyzed; but surely that which paralyzes thought cannot be true for thought. Besides I would reply in the language of Scripture:—

“God created the man in His own image; in the image of God created He him.”³

words which the German philosopher Jacobi aptly applied to this subject when he said,

“Man anthropomorphizes in thinking God, because God theomorphized in creating man.”⁴

And

“The invisible things of God since the creation of the world are seen, being understood by his works, yea, even his eternal power and Godhead.”

What then, let us begin our discussion by asking, is the doctrine of the Trinity? By the doctrine of the Trinity is understood the doctrine that the one true, living God is constituted by three personal hypostases or subsistences or principles:—not merely by three hypostases or subsistences or principles, however real and distinct, but by three *personal* hypostases or subsistences or principles. In the unity of the Godhead there are three personal distinctions. Not only has the one God manifested, revealed himself under three distinct forms; but to each of the three forms of manifestation corresponds an eternally existent, personal hypostasis or principle. These eternally existent, inner, personal distinctions have been revealed to us in the Scripture as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Whether these *names* are to be taken as strictly descrip-

³ Genesis i. 27.

⁴ Von den göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung.

tive of the hypostases in their eternal relation to each other; or as having merely an œconomic force, that is, as descriptive of the hypostases from the points of view of their respective manifestations, scarcely needs to be discussed. The hypostases lying behind the several manifestations, are not only eternally distinct, but even diverse the one from the other, and also personal,—personal, however, as I shall try hereafter to explain, each, not by itself, apart from the rest, but each in and through the others. It is not right, according to the properly understood mind of the church of Christ, notwithstanding many expressions apparently demanding it, to designate the Father God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God; at all events, using the word God as we now, after a long historical development, naturally use it; but Father, Son, and Holy Ghost together constitute God. This is what we mean by the Holy Trinity or Triunity, the mystery of the ever-blessed One in Three and Three in One.⁴

From this statement it will be obvious that it is not correct to charge Trinitarians or rather Triunitarians with saying that God is One in exactly the same sense as he is Three; or with the absurdity of maintaining “that a thing *is* and is *not*, at one and the same time.” No accredited teacher of the church has ever been guilty of such folly. It is easy enough of course to quote in reply the clause of the Athanasian Creed which affirms that “The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God;” but it is as unfair and unscientific as it is common, to ignore the other modifying, supplementary, and explanatory clauses, and to try to saddle it with a tritheism which it most emphatically condemns. Taken in its entirety, with due regard to the difference in the modern connotation of various terms, that creed teaches the Trinity in Unity, as it has been above stated. Whether such

⁴ It is not true that, as Dr. Vance Smith maintains, the church teaches that “each of the Trinity of persons is as much God as either of the others;” that, “each of the Three, separately and apart, is God, exactly as either of the others is so.”—See his “Bible and Popular Theology,” p. 85.

a view of the inner constitution of God is required or tenable or intelligible is another question. Meanwhile, it is always better to assume that one's antagonists mean to be rational and self-consistent, and to allow the possibility that they understand their own terms as well as we do ourselves.

One of the most common remarks made by the critics of this doctrine is that

"nothing really like it is to be found in the pages of the Scriptures any more than is the worship of the Virgin Mary. The one, in truth, has much the same foundation as the other; that is to say, is equally founded, not in the teaching of the Bible, but on Church authority and on creeds which have come to us from comparatively ignorant and corrupt ages—ages, too, of subtle and daring speculation on divine things. . . . The Scriptures do not contain the word Trinity, nor can the idea be expressed in scriptural terms or by any combination of scriptural words."⁶

It is quite true that the word Trinity does not occur in the Bible; it is true also that, though God is very emphatically said to be one, there is no express hint that his unity is constituted by a plurality; nay, more, so far as is known, the first Christian writer to use the word Trias to denote God was Theophilus of Antioch, who died about the year 181; but what does all that matter? The Trinity may be a reality for all that; and for all that it may be grounded in Scripture. The doctrine of the Trinity may be regarded as an "hypothesis," the design of which is to correlate and account for certain facts or phenomena which otherwise remain unconnected, unintelligible.⁷ What hypothesis is in natural, that is it also in theological science, viz.,

"the imagining of some thing, force or cause, or law which underlies the phenomena we are examining, and is the agent in their production, without itself admitting of direct observation;"

and provided a hypothesis be consistent with the laws of thought, or in other words, not, in its very statement, absolutely self-contradictory, it may have to be accepted, however difficult to conceive and understand.⁸ As far as

⁶ Vance Smith, p. 86.

⁷ See Hey's "Lectures in Divinity."

⁸ See Jevons' "Lessons in Logic."

the Scriptures are concerned, they give us their share of the facts which drove the minds of the early Christian thinkers to "frame for themselves some theory as to the mode of their co-existence;" and which have impelled Christian thinkers in all subsequent ages to fall back on a Trinity for the purpose of combining and explaining them. All Christian doctrines, as doctrines, may be said to bear the same character. They pre-suppose facts, phenomena, experiences; and they are the result of efforts to explain the facts or experiences, and to bring them into harmony with facts or experiences drawn from other sources. Materials for the great edifice of human thought are supplied from the two spheres to which man, by his very constitution, belongs, and to which he even now has access,—the spiritual or invisible, and the material or visible sphere. Like all scientific inquirers the theologian takes for granted that the universe is one, and that its various parts are capable of harmonious combination; and so he seeks to combine the experiences of God and his works which come to us by spiritual channels, with the experiences of God and his works which come to us by sensuous channels, into one great system—a reflex in thought of the objective actuality.

This is the point of view from which I shall approach the consideration of the doctrine of the Trinity. My object will be to show, first, that the assumption of the triune constitution of God helps to combine, correlate, and account for a number of otherwise disconnected, inexplicable facts, beliefs, experiences; and secondly, that the assumption or hypothesis has not the self-contradictory character which its critics have commonly attributed to it, that in fact the appearance of self-contradictoriness is an inference from premises which, universal as their acceptance is, are really fallacious. I may here at the outset remark that though I have thought it proper briefly to touch on all the known classes of phenomena, I must not be supposed to attach equal importance to them all;

on the contrary, the truth of the doctrine would not be invalidated if all the phenomena, save those which are furnished by the New Testament, in connection with the person of Christ and the Holy Spirit and certain general designations of God, were set aside as irrelevant.

I. Attention is deserved by what may be called the Trinitarian analogies in the constitution of the world.

"If the Trinity is found in the constitution of the divine nature, it may be expected to diffuse itself to the constitution of all things, according to an ancient and venerable persuasion that the creation is a glass in which the Creator may be seen, and that the whole visible world is a transcript of the divine mind. . . . Not only does the world by its very existence point up to God as its author; but we expect also to find in it anagogical, *i. e.*, upward leading types of the divine essence. If God be triune, then we shall find in creation shadowings forth of this his essence, signs in cipher, which we should be unable to decipher if the mystery of the Trinity had not been unveiled in the work of redemption, but in which we can now discern hints thereof, just as one who has seen the sun recognizes its reflection in every dewdrop."⁹

The more intimate, too, the relation in which we place the world to God, the more fully we recognize its inherent connection with the divine life, the more reasonable will it appear that such hints should be everywhere discoverable in nature—not put there intentionally, after the manner of a trade mark, but putting themselves there, so to speak, unintentionally, spontaneously, after the manner in which the characteristics of an artist impress themselves on his works. As a typical case—typical alike in its completeness, beauty, and significance—I may refer to the fact that in music perfect harmony is constituted by three notes—the keynote, the third and the fifth. Whatever goes beyond is either repetition, reduplication of one or all of the original three, or else is discord. Remarkably enough too, each single note, though in a sense complete in itself, yet contains implicitly within itself two others, the third and fifth, and is never heard to full advantage, is, as it were, never fully itself, till it is sounded in conjunction with its complementaries. Again, the family relation, apart from which the individual life, es-

⁹ See W. Jones' Works, Vol. I., 219 f.

pecially the individual human life, is never at its richest and best, is complete when it comprises three,—father, mother, child; all beyond is reduplication.

II. Remarkable and needing explanation is also the strange sense of the peculiar significance, in particular, of the number three, that possessed the human mind in early ages, and that has tended to revive with every revival of mysticism—of that mysticism which is the outcome of the soul's drawing nearer than usual to its fountain-head, the eternal God. Especially in connection with religious rites and ceremonies has this significance been felt and expressed. By way of illustration we may refer to the following. Dionysius of Halicarnassus,¹⁰ in narrating the battle of the Horatii and Curiatii, says that—

“Three combatants were chosen from each of the two cities, because that number was most fitting for the settlement of a dispute which had in itself the beginning, middle and end.”

Jamblichus, in his “Life of Pythagoras,” accounts for the fact that men sacrifice *thrice*; and that Apollo gives oracles from the *tripos*, by the peculiarity of the number three. Virgil speaks of “God delighting in the number three.” Proclus terms it the “Demiurgic Triad.” Servius, the grammarian, points out that—

“The authority of almost all the gods is indicated by a triple sign—that of Jove by the three-forked lightning, of Neptune by the trident, of Pluto by the three-headed dog.”

Amongst the heathen Germans it was customary to cast lots for the purpose of ascertaining the will of God, on three different days, and to take out three of the rods employed according to a fixed rule. In the Old Testament, too, traces are discoverable of the feeling here referred to, as, for example, in the threefold repetition of praise, blessing, prayer, adoration, and in connection with various important times, seasons, festivals, sacrifices, and the like.¹¹ A similar usage was observed in the presenta-

¹⁰ Antiq. Rom. 3.

¹¹ See Num. vi. 24, 26; Psa. xcvi. 1, 2, 7, 8; Isa. vi. 2-5; Lev. xix. 23; Dan. i. 5; Hos. vi. 2; Jonah i. 17; Exod. xxiii. 14; Lev. xiv. 6, and elsewhere.

tion of drink-offerings in China.¹³ It is easy to make merry over the use to which theologians have put these things,¹⁴ sometimes too, no doubt, undue stress has been laid upon them, especially upon those which occur in the Old Testament; yet surely they have some meaning, and are best explained if we suppose that the soul of man, through contact in its deeper depths with the God in whom it lives and moves and has its being, has been impressed with an inclination, which it cannot itself understand, to attach special sacredness and significance to the number, which is the "adumbration" of the inner divine constitution.

III. A third class of phenomena is formed by the glimpses of a Trinity found in heathenism. It is perhaps scarcely accurate to speak of a Trinity in connection with heathen religions; but one thing at all events is almost everywhere observable, namely, a disposition to segregate three deities from the rest, to assign to three a special position among their fellows, to find a sort of strange satisfaction or repose in three religious or supernatural powers or principles. Formerly there was a disposition to lay too much stress on these glimpses; now there is a danger of running to the other extreme. In the Brahmanism of India, we find successively, Indra, Agni, Soma; Agni, Indra, Surya; and Brahma, Vishnu, and Rudra or Siva.¹⁵ In Buddhist temples what strikes the visitor first is the three gigantic images in the principal hall, called the San Pào, or "Three Precious Ones," interpreted by the initiated to signify "Intelligence personified in Buddha, the Law, and the Church;" by the uninitiated to represent "Buddha, past, present, and to come."¹⁶ In China, Taoist temples contain three vast images, which are called San Ch'ing, "the three Pure or Holy Ones," namely "The

¹³ Legge, "Religions of China," p. 48 f.

¹⁴ After the manner of Vance Smith, p. 95 f.

¹⁵ Tiele, "History of Religions," pp. 113, 126, 149.

¹⁶ Legge, "Religions of China," p. 166.

Perfect Holy One," "The Highest Holy One," and "The Greatest Holy One."¹⁶ The Greeks segregated successively Ouranos, Kronos, Zeus; and then Zeus, Poseidon or Neptune, and Aidoneus or Pluto. The chief gods of the ancient Egyptians were successively Osiris, Set, Thut; Osiris, Rah, Ptah; and Amun-Râ, with his consort Mat "the mother" and Chonsu his son, each of whom again bore a composite character.¹⁷ Pre-eminent in the esteem of the Wends, stood Perun or Perkuns, Patrimpo, and Pecollos;¹⁸ among the Germans Odhinu, Thôrr, and Loki, who together form a triad;¹⁹ which—

"curiously enough corresponds with the three chief heroes of the Finnic Epos, and the three principal deities of the ancient Finns."²⁰

The Akkadians associated for special worship a supreme and a lower triad of deities.²¹ Three moon-goddesses, the light moon, Manat, the dark moon, and Al'Uzza, the union of the two, were specially adored by the Semites; and they reappear among the Babylonians and Assyrians with partially altered names.²² Among some of the ancient American peoples, the New Zealanders, the early Irish, the Phœnicians, and the Samothracians, as well as other nations and tribes, the same tendency existed. These are historical facts which need to be explained. To identify these dim and vague ideas with the Christian doctrine is a mistake; but they are most naturally accounted for if we suppose that in some way or other the human mind at an early period of its development, received an impression of the threefold nature of God; if, within the uncreated and unapproachable essence, humanity dimly distinguished adumbrations of the three Personal distinctions.²³ May it not be, too, that this impression of plurality in deity became, when men apostata-

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 167. ¹⁷ Tiele, "History of Ancient Religions," pp. 48, 51, 54.

¹⁸ Ibid. 184.

¹⁹ Ibid. 193.

²⁰ Ibid. 194.

²¹ Tiele, 67.

²² Ibid. 64.

²³ Compare Canon Liddon's admirable Bampton Lecture on "The Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," p. 50 f.

tised, one of the occasions of the polytheism into which they gradually fell? The question which here naturally arises, how then it happens that the inklings of the triune constitution of God should be so indistinct—apparently even least distinct—where God was best known, even in Israel, must be answered by pointing to the fact, that in order to guard against and deliver from the tendency to polytheism, so great prominence was given to the divine unity, as to cast the plurality completely into the shade. For educational purposes it was necessary that Israel should become thoroughly possessed with the truth:—

“Jehovah, he is God, there is none else beside him” (Deut. iv. 35).

IV. This brings us to the consideration of the hints of a plural constitution of the one God which are here and there to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures. Reference has already been made to illustrations of the sense of the sacredness of the number three found in the Old Testament: I shall now allude to more specific and personal hints. They may be very briefly summed up as follows: Whilst God generally speaks of himself in the first person singular, in a few cases the more solemn first person plural is used.²⁴ Further, the term Elohim, signifying literally Gods, is applied to God, for the most part in conjunction with singular verbs, adjectives, and pronouns,—a circumstance which at all events deserves notice, in view of the existence and extensive use of El, the singular of Elohim, and of at least one other singular term, Jehovah.²⁵ The same word is occasionally used, it is true in the same way, of heathen supreme Gods.²⁶ In both cases, perhaps, the plural form is meant to denote God, or the God, in whom all that is divine, all that deserves to be called God, is summed up and embodied;

²⁴ Gen. i. 26; iii. 22; Isa. vi. 8; cf. Ezra iv. 18; Isa. liii. 1.

²⁵ Passages everywhere.

²⁶ Compare Exod. xxxii. 1; 1 Sam. v. 7; 1 Kings xi. 5; 2 Kings i. 2, 3, 6, 16; Isa. xxxvii. 38.

but still the plural is to say the least suggestive. There is further the—

“series of remarkable apparitions which are commonly known as theophanies, and which form so prominent a feature in the early history of the Old Testament Scriptures.”

An Angel of Jehovah or Elohim is mentioned nearly sixty times, sometimes as a mere messenger or representative;¹⁷ sometimes identified¹⁸ in some sense with, at other times clearly distinguished from God,¹⁹ sometimes identified with a man.²⁰ Jehovah, too, is distinguished from Jehovah in at least two places.²¹ Again numerous references are made throughout the Old Testament to a Spirit of God, who is the source of strength, life, intelligence, skill, alike in nature and man; this Spirit is spoken of along with, yet as if distinct from God: is represented as doing the works and possessing attributes elsewhere ascribed to God, and as experiencing personal emotions;²² so that though for the most part the words employed do not in themselves require more than the recognition of an impersonal influence or instrument or energy or force wielded by God, yet they unquestionably lend themselves to the expression of the idea of the personality of the Spirit of God as found in the New Testament and believed in by the church, and to this extent may be said to point dimly to a plurality in the divine unity. Again, there are the allusions to Messiah, who whilst conceived on the one hand most distinctly as a man descended from men, is yet,

¹⁷ Judges xiii. 6; vi. 22; xiii. 3; 1 Sam. xxix. 9; 2 Sam. xiv. 17; xix. 27; Exod. xxiii. 20-23.

¹⁸ Genesis xvi. 7, 9, 10, 13; xviii. 1, 13, 14; xxii. 12, 16-18; xxxi. 11-13; xxxii. 24-30; xlviii. 16; Exod. iii. 2-6; xiv. 19-24; xxiii. 20-23; Num. xxii. 26-28; Judg. ii. 1-5.

¹⁹ Gen. xvi. 11; xix. 13, 24; xxii. 12, cf. 16; Judges vi. 12-23; xiii. 8-16; Zech. i. 13, 19, 20; iii. 6, 7; xii. 8.

²⁰ Joshua v. 13-15; cf. vi. 2; Zech. i. 8-13.

²¹ Gen. xix. 24; Zech. iii. 2.

²² Genesis i. 2; vi. 3; cf. Psalms lxxvii. 6; 2 Sam. xxiii. 2; 2 Chron. xv. 1; Job xxxiii. 4; Isa. xlvi. 16; Ezek. ii. 2. iii. 12; Micah. ii. 7; Isa. lxiii. 10; xlvi. 16; Job xxvi. 13; xxxiii. 4; Psalms li. 12; cxxxix. 7; Isa. xl. 13, 20; lxiii. 10.

on the other hand, spoken of in terms which, though not necessarily involving, are yet quite compatible with, a relation of nature and work" to God, such as it would seem alien from the Jewish mind to ascribe to any mere man. This becomes still more clear if we suppose that the allusions to a Son of God" are allusions to the same being who is elsewhere designated Messiah. Finally, there is the strange personification of Wisdom, begun in the book of *Proverbs*," further developed in the Apocryphal books of *Wisdom* and *Ecclesiasticus*," and carried in Philo of Alexandria to so high a pitch that efforts have been made to identify the Logos of the last-named writer, with the Logos or Word of the Gospel of John.

Those theologians go, I think, too far, who maintain that the adumbrations and hints to which reference has been made were expressly designed to prepare the way for the full revelation of the Trinity in Unity in the Incarnation of the Son of God. Such a view is opposed alike to the true conception of the Old Testament dispensation as one of redemption, in which revelation proper, i. e., the unveiling of the mysterious and unknown, holds only a very subordinate position; and to the fact that the Jews have from the first been the most violent antagonists of the church doctrine of the Trinity, with its implications. There is another point of view from which they may be regarded—one, too, more in harmony with what is true in the great currents of modern thought. It is this:—If it be true that the life of the Jewish nation was for redemptive purposes in a special sense an interweaving of

²² Jer. xxx. 21; Dan. vii. 13 ff.; viii. 15-17; x. 5; xii. 6 ff. Isaiah xi. 1 ff.; Jer. xxlii. 5-7; xxx. 9; xxxiii. 15; Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12; Isa. xix. 20; xxii. 21 ff.; Jer. xxx. 21; Zech. ix. 9; Micah. v. 2; Dan. vii. 13; Isa. iv. 2; vil. 14; ix. 6; xxviii. 29; Jer. xxv. 5, 6; cf. xxxiii. 15; Micah. v. 1-5.

²³ Psa. li. 7, 12; lxxxix. 26, 27; Prov. iii. 4; Hosea xi. 1; Dan. iii. 25; cf. Isa. vii. 14; lx. 6; and 1 Chron. xxviii. 6.

²⁴ Prov. viii. 22-31. Compare Prov. i. 7; ix. 10; viii. 1-21; Job xxviii. 20-28.

²⁵ Wisdom vi. 12 ff.; vii. 21-30; viii. 6; ix. 4, 9; Eccus. i. 1 ff.; xxiv. 1 ff.; Baruch iii. 29-37.

divine and human elements; if the Scriptures are the inspired record, reflection, and transcript of this life: and if the inner constitution of God be veritably triune, should we not naturally expect to find traces pointing to the Trinity, not designedly placed there, but undesignedly impressing themselves on life and literature, just as all great men leave the traces of their peculiar constitution and habits in the history of which their activity is a factor? That such traces should fail to be understood, or even discerned by contemporaries, does not at all militate against their existence and significance. Surely the general law of nature which is herein the symbol and anticipation of the spiritual, that the seed or germ cannot be understood, save in the light of the full grown life, may here find fit application.

V. As was previously hinted, the most important set of facts or phenomena are supplied by the New Testament. We are there brought face to face with the following problem: *on the one hand*, the unity and solity of God are asserted in ways which for strength leave nothing to be desired, which are quite as emphatic as those of the Old Testament: *on the other hand*, this same God is spoken of as "the Father," in a special sense, of "the Son;" whilst to this Son, Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Ghost, are ascribed characteristics and conduct which either involve their divinity or are exaggerations of a kind into which the writers would have been incapable of falling. The New Testament points in the direction either of the trinity or of tritheism; but how could writers who so emphatically assert the divine unity, use language which implies divine plurality, unless there hovered before their minds—whether clearly or dimly, need not be investigated—the idea of the three being one and the one three in some sense transcending human experience and full human intelligence?

As it has occurred to no one thus far to dispute the divinity of him who is called "Father" in the New Testa-

ment, all that we may have to do is to gather up the references to Christ and to the Holy Ghost. The problem referred to is escaped indeed by those who identify Christ with God, and who regard the Holy Ghost either as an impersonal divine force or influence or activity, or as another name for God himself; but if anything is clear from the Gospels, it is surely the distinction of the personality of the Son from that of the Father; and the evidence of the personality of the Holy Ghost is only less clear, because his share in the work of human redemption—with which, be it again remarked, the Scriptures are in the first instance concerned, and only subordinately with revelation proper,—was neither so prominent nor of a kind to produce a strong impression of the individuality, so to speak, of the worker.

(1.) Let us consider, first, the references to Christ. These may be distributed into four sections, as they are connected with his moral character; with his control of nature, man, and invisible intelligences; with the spiritual power and authority he wields over men, and with the position expressly assigned him relatively to the Father or God.

1. Indirectly and directly he claims to be morally perfect.

a. Not only does no word ever escape him, so far as the record goes, that indicates the faintest sense of self-dissatisfaction; but he also boldly throws down the gauntlet, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?"³⁷ Nay more, he declares concerning himself:—

"I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."³⁸ "I am the way and the truth and the life."³⁹ "Even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love;"⁴⁰ and these declarations are backed up by affirmations like those of the Epistle to the Hebrews:—

"In all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;"⁴¹ and "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;"⁴²

³⁷ John viii. 46.

³⁸ John xvii. 4.

³⁹ xiv. 6.

⁴⁰ John xv. 10.

⁴¹ Heb. iv. 15.

⁴² Heb. vii. 26.

and the exhortations to be holy for Christ's sake. In point of fact, the moral perfection of Christ is the assumption which underlies the whole New Testament, and the redemptive and kingly position ascribed to him would become unintelligible on any other supposition.

b. But it is almost more the tone and manner in which Christ speaks of his moral character than the perfection thereof which suggests his divinity. We suppose the higher heavenly spirits to be now morally perfect, and we ourselves hope one day to have laid aside all sin; but no creature in the form of man should refer to its moral state as Christ referred to his. The calmness and certainty with which he assumes that all is right within, without, in character, word, work, ought to shock us; yet in him it is natural and inoffensive. The holier an ordinary man becomes, the more does he shrink from such self-assertion, the more is he inclined to leave the judgment of himself with God and to rejoice with trembling. But in Christ there is no diffidence, no self-distrust, no recognition of the possibility of mistake as to his own state and conduct.

c. Another feature of his self-testimony is even more remarkable still. The moral development and state of men are co-determined by a double environment—that of humanity and that of God; and they recognize their indebtedness to parents, friends, and society in general, as well as to the grace of God. A man who forgot to acknowledge this would seem to us in a bad sense, self-sufficient; and in the same measure we should count him less than perfect. What about Christ? Efforts have been made to point out his *general* indebtedness to environment—an indebtedness including also his moral characteristics; but his own recorded utterances supply us with no gauge for determining that indebtedness. He never speaks of what he owes to parents, teachers, friends, men at all—never! Not even does he refer in grateful terms to the religious institutions, traditions and literature of his peo-

ple: they testify of him, but does he owe aught to them? "For their sakes I *sanctify myself.*" "

d. Nay more, he does not even speak as men do, of depending on the help and grace of God. We read indeed of his spending whole nights in prayer to God; yet he never himself ascribes to prayer the sustaining moral power that we ascribe to it. He says also: "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works;"⁴³ but adds elsewhere: "The Father hath not left Me alone, for I do always those things that please him."⁴⁴ It is as though he were true and pure in and of himself. Nor do the other books of the New Testament anywhere apply to him words which seem so natural and fitting in relation to apostles and martyrs: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."⁴⁵ The language of Christ is, *morally*: "*I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.*"⁴⁶

If these things be true we may fairly argue that the moral perfection of Christ is rooted, like that of God, in the fact that: "The Father hath given to the Son to have life in himself;"⁴⁷ that, in other words, Christ is of one nature or substance with the Father.

2. The power wielded by Christ over nature, man, and invisible intelligences, points in the same direction. He showed in the most varied ways that the forces of the visible material world were under his sway. At his volition chemical elements flow together in the proper quantities and proportions, and at once constitute themselves into bread without passing through the long and subtile processes which characterize natural growth and human manufacture. The disordered relations between the various factors of the human organism, or between the organism and its environment, which constitute what we call disease, are rectified, and health is restored at his

⁴³ John xvii. 19.

⁴⁴ Matt. xiv. 23; Mark i. 35; vi. 46; Luke vi. 12.

⁴⁵ John xiv. 10; cf. iii. 33.

⁴⁶ John viii. 29.

⁴⁷ 2 Cor. xii. 9.

⁴⁸ John xvii. 4.

⁴⁹ John v. 26.

inward command without the intervention of medicine, diet, imagination, or even time. Even the final dissolution of the human organism into its constituents, which we designate death, was arrested by him at his own good pleasure, and the body reintegrated to life and activity. Winds and waves rose and fell at his will; the fish in the sea gathered towards the nets of weary and despairing fishermen at his silent behest; and the flourishing tree became sapless and strengthless when his curse was pronounced. Nay more, the mysterious intelligences from the invisible world, called in the New Testament *δαίμονια* or *dæmons*, which, either for their amusement or for the love of mischief, at that time haunted, possessed, misused, and tormented human beings, tremble even at his approach, and at his simple word obey and depart. All these things seem to cost him no effort; forces and conditions, before which the mightiest and coarsest of men stand speechless, perplexed, helpless, are controlled by him as though he were to the manner born. In a word, he acted on earth as the Lord of the earth and all things therein. What other sign of his lordship could he have given? What then can he be but divine? Who can he be but the one, by whom and unto whom all things were created,⁵⁰ distinct from, yet equal with the Father? There has been, and is even now among earnest Christian believers, a strong disposition to make light of the miracles of Christ: to do so is as foolish as it is perilous. For the authority with which Christ treats men morally would lack its proper setting, if he had not wielded a right royal sway over the physical world.

3. Still more remarkable, if possible, is the position Jesus Christ assumed relatively to the spiritual nature and life of man. If the moral consciousness of man be examined profoundly enough, it will be found in the last instance sternly to refuse and prohibit the absolute subordination of the human will and personality to any will and

⁵⁰ Col. i. 16.

personality but that of God. To every one save God, coming with a claim to utter obedience, man has a right, nay more, man is bound, to say, "Show me thy warrant." The highest archangel must show so much respect towards the meanest child of man, as is involved in pleading the divine law to which both are subject, when he would control his conduct. Before God alone man bows his head, confessing that he is Lord alone—the ultimate authority! Now note the extraordinary claims set up by and for Christ:—

"It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city" which rejects his messengers.⁵¹ "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for *my sake*."⁵² "Whosoever will lose his life for *my sake* shall find it."⁵³ "He that loveth father or mother more than *me* is not worthy of me."⁵⁴

What can he be who thus claims to override all human feelings, relations, obligations?

"The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many."⁵⁵ "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."⁵⁶ "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."⁵⁷ "He is our peace."⁵⁸ "In him was life, and the life was the light of men."⁵⁹ "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."⁶⁰ What enormous assumptions!

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."⁶¹

Think of the eternal destiny of men being made dependent on their attitude, not towards the right and the true; not towards God; but towards a mere creature! Believe on *me*, and ye have eternal life: refuse *me*, and ye have eternal death! The bare idea is monstrous! And then, that he should say regarding himself:—

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;"⁶² "the Father . . . , hath committed all judgment to the Son;"⁶³

⁵¹ Matt. x. 15.⁵² Matt. v. 11.⁵³ Matt. xvi. 25.⁵⁴ Matt. x. 37.⁵⁵ Matt. xx. 28; cf. 1 Tim. ii. 6.⁵⁶ 1 John ii. 2.⁵⁷ Matt. xi. 28.⁵⁸ Eph. ii. 14.⁵⁹ John i. 4.⁶⁰ John vi. 51.⁶¹ John iii. 36.⁶² Matt. xxviii. 18.⁶³ John v. 22.

and that when the day, the great and terrible day shall have dawned:—

“shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,”⁶⁴

heralded in and surrounded by the holy angels! If he be not one with, though distinct from, God the Father, he can be nothing better than what he was taken to be—a madman: nay more, a madman whose ravings cannot at all be accounted for!

4. It is in the light of the considerations hitherto advanced that the declarations and conduct of Christ affecting his relation to God which may be termed *direct*, first acquire their true significance and full force. In fact, one may well feel a certain surprise that he who with such calm self-confidence treated men as their absolute ruler and proprietor, should not have spoken of his personal relation to God with more unmistakable clearness. Yet by claiming to be greater than the temple of Jehovah,⁶⁵ to be Lord of the Sabbath,⁶⁶ and to have control of other divine institutions; by using and accepting the designation Son of God;⁶⁷ by addressing God in a special way as Father;⁶⁸ and by declaring emphatically, “I and my Father are one;”⁶⁹ he surely himself supplied the key to a conduct towards the world and man which must otherwise remain a perplexing problem.

(11.) It was fitting that the Son, who is the source of all form, who represents and exercises, so to speak, the differentiating activity of the Godhead in creation, should assume such individuality that men could receive from him impressions through all the channels by which their spiritual nature can be affected. Equally fitting, however, was it that the Spirit who wields the energy that stirs and flows in all forms, and who therefore, as it were, rather fills and strengthens created individuality than expresses

⁶⁴ Matt. xxiv. 30.

⁶⁵ Matt. xii. 6.

⁶⁶ Mark ii. 28.

⁶⁷ Matt. xii. 27; xvi. 16.

⁶⁸ John iii. 35, and elsewhere.

⁶⁹ John x. 30.

and manifests his own, should in the domain of redeeming love, so conceal his personality behind that of Christ, his church and believers, as almost to wear the appearance of a merely impersonal force. Hence perhaps the neuter Greek term τὸ πνεῦμα used to designate the Holy Spirit. Yet, for all who have no reason for overlooking them, references to that personality are frequent enough, and qualities and activities enough are ascribed to him, which according to the spirit of the New Testament are consistent alone with his being one with God. I can only very briefly review the facts bearing on this branch of the subject. Most of the activities and experiences which are characteristic of persons are attributed to the Holy Ghost. He searcheth all things,¹⁰ he "speaks,"¹¹ "guides,"¹² "reveals," "manifests," "moves;"¹³ "signs and wonders" are wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit;¹⁴ one and the same Spirit operateth, distributing according as he willeth;¹⁵ he commands and forbids;¹⁶ he constrains, consoles, appoints to office, and convinces of the truth.¹⁷ He loves,¹⁸ and is grieved and offended.¹⁹

Other references, whilst equally involving personality, endow the spirit with qualities so exalted either in nature or degree that as we gaze and inquire he seems to be swallowed up in that light unto which no man can approach, and to be blended with him whom no man hath seen, or can see. "The *Holy Spirit*;" who is holy but God? "The *renewing* of the Holy Spirit;"²⁰ who can effect moral renovation but God? Or to whom else can such fruits be ascribed as "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, benignity, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance?"²¹ Or whose

¹⁰ 1 Cor. ii. 10.¹¹ John xvi. 13.¹² Ibid.¹³ Luke ii. 26; 1 Peter i. 11; 2 Peter i. 21.¹⁴ Rom. xv. 19.¹⁵ 1 Cor. xii. 11.¹⁶ Acts xiii. 2; xvi. 6.¹⁷ Acts xx. 22; ix. 31; xx. 28; 1 Cor. ii. 5.¹⁸ Rom. xv. 30.¹⁹ Eph. v. 30; Acts v. 3.²⁰ Titus iii. 5.²¹ Gal. v. 22.

else is it to sanctify, cleanse, purify? What but a divine power can strengthen "in the inward man"⁸² or help our weaknesses, making intercession for us with groans unutterable?⁸³ Who but a divine person could search "*all things, yea, the deep things of God?*"⁸⁴ Or shew "*things to come?*"⁸⁵ If he be not divine, why should blasphemy against him be distinguished, as the unpardonable sin, from all sin!⁸⁶ How came Peter to say to Ananias:—

"Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? . . . Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."⁸⁷

And finally, whence the association of the Holy Ghost with the Father and the Son in the baptismal formula;⁸⁸ and in the benediction:—

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost,"⁸⁹

if the Spirit do not constitute, with Father and Son, the eternally blessed Triune?

VI. The supposition of the Trinity helps us further to understand or realize how God could be a living, intelligent, loving, holy, blessed God in and of himself, during the far, far ages of eternity, when as yet there was no creature whatever. All theistic thinkers of every class and denomination use, with regard to God as he is in himself, the designations just enumerated; yet they can have no tangible, no definite, no representable meaning apart from either the inner plurality of God, or the eternal existence of beings—yea, of personal beings,—outside God. But let us endeavor to establish this position, first reminding our readers, that we take for granted the right of reasoning from the creature to the Creator, from man to God, that is, from the manifestation or expression to the Being manifested or expressed.

(1.) God is frequently and most emphatically spoken of as the "Living God;"—the references all culminate in the wonderful words of Christ, "The Father hath life in

⁸² Eph. iii. 16.

⁸³ Rom. viii. 26.

⁸⁴ 1 Cor. ii. 10.

⁸⁵ John xvi. 13.

⁸⁶ Matt. xii. 32.

⁸⁷ Acts v. 3. 4.

⁸⁸ Matt. xxviii. 19.

⁸⁹ 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

himself."⁹⁰ The negative side of the idea is set forth by Paul when he says, "Who alone hath immortality,"⁹¹ i. e., inherent and essential deathlessness. Who or what can destroy him whose life is self-generated, who is himself his own environment?

1. But if God is living, he must be conceived as an *organism* or organization. We speak of life, indeed, as of many other things, abstractly, as though it were an entity capable of independent existence. But we have no experimental acquaintance with life apart from organization of some kind. The one is the invariable correlate of the other.

2. If organized, God must be constituted by a *plurality of factors*. In other words, he is plurality in unity, unity in plurality. Christian theology has indeed for long centuries asserted God to be perfectly simple in essence, thinking that to be the necessary condition of the divine unity, unchangeableness, and indestructibility;⁹² but the only thing that is perfectly simple, or, as the first of the Thirty-nine Articles has it, "without parts," is a mathematical point; and surely the ideas just referred to find their fullest *positive* expression and guarantee in the words "hath life in himself."

3. Further, the constitutive factors of the divine unity must, whilst akin, be also *diverse*. No known organism is built up of identical elements. The unity and harmony which characterize the life of normal organisms are the resultant of the co-ordination and co-operation of diverse elements, the behaviour of each of which by itself, would differ from its behaviour in combination.

4. Finally, these several factors, though equal in essence and co-eternal, must be in some sense or other *subordinated* and *supraordinated* to each other. Every organism

⁹⁰ John v. 26.

⁹¹ 1 Tim. vi. 16.

⁹² See Dorner's Essay on "The Unchangeableness of God," etc., translated in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. xxxvi, p. 28, for an admirable review of this subject.

bears more or less distinct traces within itself of a hierarchy—a hierarchy within the limits of essential equality and contemporaneity. So in the Godhead.

5. Whether, from the very idea of an organism whose life is self-sustained and self-generated, it does not follow that the factors are personal, we cannot stay to inquire. In any case, so much at all events must even now be clear that the common objection to the Trinity, that three cannot be one, nor one three, is as superficial as it is plausible. Light will fall on the nature of the constituents of the God-organism from the following steps in the investigation.

(11.) God is intelligent, yea, intelligence; above all, self-intelligence. This is the fundamental assumption of all theism. In the emphatic language of the apostle John,—

“God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,”²⁸

words whose primary reference may be to moral purity, but which also embrace intelligence within their scope. He who is morally impure is also intellectually dark—incapable to that extent of being either light to himself or light to others, neither making transparent, nor self-transparent.

What now are the conditions of intelligence in general, of self-intelligence specially, and above all of that perfect self-intelligence which deserves to be designated “light”?

1. So far as men are concerned there is no perception, no thought, no knowledge, in a word, no intelligence, without an object as well as a subject, a thing known as well as a knower. Intelligence considered as an activity and not as a mere potency is impossible without an object. This object must also be distinct from the subject, and so far independent that it can act on and evoke the activity of the subject. What was the object of the divine intelligence? Not the universe as an ordered whole, including beings personal and impersonal, for its creation pre-

²⁸ 1 John i. 5.

supposed intelligence. Not ideas, i. e., the ideas of the divine mind; for they are the product of intelligence. Not a primal and eternally existent *ἵλη* or "cosmic mist;" for, apart from other difficulties, what could there be in that which could put forth no activity, to evoke activity?

2. This brings us to the second point, the conditions of self-intelligence in particular. In the case of man, the more elementary forms of knowledge are doubtless alone conditioned by non-personal objects; but can the non-personal give rise to self-knowledge? Certainly not. To the development of intelligence in relation to the self that knows, the intervention of another personal intelligence is necessary. Self, alone, can evoke self. Personality is the only proper environment of personality. Self-consciousness once awakened, the impersonal aids in its further development. Till then it must remain dormant. Nay more, the more they are withdrawn from the stimulating influence of the personal, the less intense, the less clear become human self-awareness and self-knowledge. Applying this to God—what was the "other," the personal "other," which conditioned the self-intelligence which we are compelled to predicate of him? Either some other eternally existent God or Gods, or a plurality of inner personal distinctions.

3. The self-knowledge of men remains imperfect—for, at its clearest, human self-consciousness is limited and dim—partly because the personal environment necessary for its evolution is so completely outside them. It must be distinct, it must have a certain independence; but it need not be outside, it need not be separate. Could the mutually complementary personalities be as it were in each other, each would realize a higher measure of knowledge, even of itself, than could otherwise be attained. Now this condition is fulfilled in the inner constitution of God, if the church doctrine of the Trinity be true.

(III.) God is "Love." Not merely does he love; but,

as John tells us, he *is* Love. The divine love has long been regarded as offering a very good starting-point for the establishment or understanding of the trinitarian constitution of God; and awkward as have sometimes been the lines along which thinkers have proceeded, there can be little doubt that it is more helpful than any other.

1. What is love? Essentially it is pure, spontaneous self-giving; as such, therefore, predicable alone of him whose life is self-begotten, who therefore himself produces all he bestows, instead of, like man, giving what he has first received. The self-giving may embody itself in gifts—gifts which are always felt to be the more fitting in proportion as they are our own creation;—but gifts owe their entire significance to the self they embody. Ideal love is utter self-communication.

2. But there is no proper communication where there is no reception. Even an external gift is no gift till it has been accepted. Till then, though meant to be a gift, it has not actually become one. Specially is this the case with the gift of all gifts, the personal self. A lover may in spirit, in purpose, in intention give himself to his beloved; but until the beloved has avowedly accepted the gift, the lover's action fails to satisfy him—it is as a beating of the air; the strokes simply exhaust the striker. Love refused, or not yet accepted, is rather a yearning to love, a kind of prevenient love, than actual, veritable love.

3. Self can only be communicated to or received by self. If a person spend love on a being that is impersonal, he must needs first personify it—that is, fictitiously invest it with so many personal qualities as are necessary to receiving the gift offered. Once disillusioned, the personification is withdrawn, and the apparent love becomes indifference and disregard. A lover demands a lover. The essential and inviolable law of love is reciprocation.

4. If these things are true, and if we are justified in

transferring them to God,—which surely follows from the bold words of the apostle John:—

“Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him;”⁸⁴

and if love were not merely an eternal potency, but an eternal actuality, in the life of the Godhead, who gave and who received? Between what selves did the eternal communication take place? Neither ideas, nor creation, could have been the object of divine love; for both, at the bottom, are the product of love, and the latter has not existed from eternity. Was there then an Olympus of eternally co-existent deities? This polytheistic conception has really more rationality in it, than that of the simple, indivisible, divine individuality of Deism and Unitarianism.⁸⁵ A God eternally loving, without another self or selves to love, is either unthinkable, or were deserving of infinite pity; for, as even Anacreon felt:—

“A mighty pain to love it is,
And 't is a pain that pain to miss;
But of all pains the greatest pain
It is to love—and love in vain.”⁸⁶

In this perplexity surely light dawns when we read of the Three in One, and the One in Three. Especially will this be our feeling when we understand that a certain *περιχώρησις* or *immediation* (*immediatio*),⁸⁷ that is, to put into English a German term, a certain *in-each-otherness* of life and being is the immanent and necessary yearning and goal of all loving personalities.

(IV.) God is designated “holy.” He is “glorious in holiness.”⁸⁸ “Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.”⁸⁹ God is just, righteous, true, faithful, com-

⁸⁴ 1 John iv. 7, 16.

⁸⁵ On the idea of sociality in the life of the Godhead as aided by the Trinity, see the admirable thoughts of Mr. Hutton in his “Literary and Theological Essays,” and Dr. Dyke’s Sermon on the Trinity in his recently published volume.

⁸⁶ Cowley’s “Translation of Anacreon’s Odes.”

⁸⁷ A term used by John of Damascus in his “De fide Orthod.”

⁸⁸ Ex. xv. 11.

⁸⁹ Lev. xix. 2.

passionate, long-suffering, kind, good to his creatures; he is holy, as God, independently of the creature. From eternity, before the universe began to be, he was holy.

Without discussing the true notion of holiness—which, as it seems to me, can only be apprehended in the light of a true notion of love—one thing is quite clear—it is of moral quality. God is essential moral excellence; and the scriptural, the truly religious, name for that excellence, so far as it affects solely the divine existence and life, is holiness. But how is moral excellence, nay, moral quality of any kind, to be conceived apart from relations between persons; moral quality, namely, as an actuality, and not merely as a potence? It is true we apply the term moral to character as well as to conduct; but character and conduct are necessary correlates; character being termed moral because it is the inner side of conduct, and conduct because it is the expression of character. So far as we can understand, there could be no word of either moral good or evil, if God were a simple personal being,—even if such a being were at all thinkable,—dwelling in absolute isolation and solitude. By way of furnishing a clue to the intellect at this high altitude, some have resorted to the notion of an eternal moral law, existing somehow independently of God, to which the divine life had to be conformed; but such a notion, besides being an unthinkable figment, only partially meets the difficulty.

When, however, we are told that the Godhead is constituted by three personal subsistences, foothold is provided for thought, and to some extent we become able to see how, even in the solitudes of eternity, God could be the supremely excellent One—the Holy One.

(v.) The blessedness of God, beside being everywhere taken for granted in Scripture, is a fundamental postulate of the human mind. An unblessed God were scarcely a God to man; certainly not the perfect, holy, loving God believed by the Christian church. God “blessed for evermore;”¹⁰⁰ The “gospel of the blessed God.”¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ 2 Cor. xi. 31.

¹⁰¹ 1 Tim. i. 11.

Blessedness is a state of spiritual feeling:—the deepest, broadest, most significant word the English language possesses to denote normal spiritual feeling. One might analyze it—if analysis it bear—into the intensest joy and the most perfect calm. To be blessed is to realize the full measure of satisfaction, contentment, gladness, rest, peace, of which mind or the spiritual nature at its highest is capable.

Now the fundamental law or condition of all normal feeling is that it come as a result, but be not sought as an end. In proportion as it is sought as an end it ceases to be attained. It must accompany or follow activity, that is, normal activity: nay more, activity for an end beyond itself. In a word, it implies relationship; it cannot be self-generated in the sense in which the divine activities are self-generated. Not even a God could will to be blessed, if he were absolutely simple and solitary, or if he stood in morally abnormal relations.

The highest, the properly spiritual blessedness depends on normal relations between persons—persons who are the complement to each other, who are therefore in a measure independent of each other, and who are, notwithstanding, so closely united with each other, that each has all its own and all of the rest,—the *meum* and the *tuum* not ceasing to be distinguished, but taken up into a higher unity. Perfect personal fellowship between perfect persons is the supreme source of the purest and loftiest blessedness.

How could God be blessed in and of himself? We must here again fall back either on the polytheistic idea of an Olympus of independent deities; or thankfully confess that the Christian Trinity gives a "light in which we see light," even though it be that "light which no man can approach unto."¹⁰⁹ The mystery is itself unsearchable; but it seems to do something towards clearing up other mysteries.

¹⁰⁹ 1 Tim. vi. 16.

VII. Supposing it to be conceded that the hypothesis of the Trinity unifies, correlates, explains, and throws light on the facts which have been under consideration, the question still remains to be answered, "Is not the Trinity a self-contradiction? Is it not an impossibility?" A self-contradictory hypothesis, an hypothesis which involves impossibilities, is plainly an unsatisfactory hypothesis. It may seem to account for other facts; but if it be itself inherently irrational, it must be rejected. Now, personality, we are reminded, is essentially of a nature not to allow of the union required if the Trinity is not to be another name for Tritheism, that is, if it is not to be veiled Polytheism. 'A person, with its own self-consciousness, thought, emotion, feeling, cannot be conjoined with other persons so as to constitute a higher real unity. Two or more persons may form an association, a society; the tie of fellowship and union may be very close indeed; but they cannot become an organic whole—a whole in which each retains its personality whilst surrendering its independent existence. A person is itself a whole—a complete whole—an indivisible, individual whole. How then can three such wholes form another whole, without ceasing to be the personal subsistences of the Trinitarian hypothesis? We know very well that impersonal elements are combined to form new organic wholes: the personal organism man is constituted of impersonal elements; what we deny is that personal principles or elements can form an organic whole.' Here is doubtless the key of the besieger's works; this is his chief battery, and unless something can be done to silence it, considerations like those we have advanced will leave the intellect of even believers unvanquished; and, if held at all, the Trinity will be held as a pure, that is, absolutely dark, mystery of faith. Even then, we, for our part, should unhesitatingly hold it; but the joy of thinking that some glimpse into its inner reasonableness was attainable would be turned into the sadness that always accompanies or follows the sense of utter intellectual perplexity.

But if so many facts and reasons point in the direction of the Trinity, might it not be well to ask whether the conception we have formed of the self-contained, exclusive nature of personality is a valid one or not? whether, as has been constantly the case in the history of human thought, we are not operating with an *a priori* idea of person, to which no actual personal being answers? And may it not be well to subject our notion of what personality can be and do to a thorough re-examination? My contention is, that the traditional view of the nature of personality is sufficiently incorrect to invalidate the objections to the Trinity which are commonly based on it.

Instead of persons being self-contained, mutually exclusive wholes, I venture to assert that no person is or can be truly itself, the realization of the proper idea of itself, save in union—in close and perfect union—with other persons. An atom or molecule of matter can as easily constitute a living organism by itself, as a personal individual can form a full and proper person by him or herself. An ordinary man as we know him, I would describe as a personal being on the way towards full and proper personality; which full and proper personality will be reached in proportion as he and all others like him realize the organic unity, unto which mankind is destined to grow, and of which an anticipatory glimpse is gained in the present consciousness of the solidarity of the human race. There is, perhaps, a hint at this truth in those remarkable words:—

“God having provided some better thing for us, *that they without us should not be made perfect.*”¹⁰⁸

But what evidence of this revolutionary assertion is supplied by human experience?

1. It is surely a fact that human beings owe their very humanity to the human beings by whom they are from the first moment of their existence surrounded. As we enter on existence we are but potentially men—capable of

¹⁰⁸ Heb. xi. 40.

becoming men, but dependent for the actualization of the potency on the nutritive and stimulating action of our fellow men or of society. *Nutritive*, be it remarked, as well as *stimulating*. What is true of our bodies is true of our very manhood—of that which constitutes us specifically men. The man-germ in each of us grows to maturity by assimilating from without and acting from within. What does it assimilate? Consciously we receive thoughts; unconsciously, we say, we receive impressions; we are also excited in various ways to activity; but is that a full account of the process? It seems to me not. True, so far as it goes, but fuller truth would it be to say that we grow by entering into closer and closer union with the other factors of humanity. As a whole this union is effected in the dark depths of our natures which here remain unilluminated by consciousness; but still there are upflashings which reveal the fact that a subtile *περιχώρησις* of personal individuals is going on, by means of which is being built up the great organism which will be the realization of the divine idea of human personality.

2. Such an outreaching we find in the intellectual life of man. Thought aims by its very nature at being universal as well as particular, general as well as individual, the one in and through the other. No man whose intellect has been properly awakened can be content with less. What does this mean but that we desire to be all minds in one? We would not extinguish individuality of thought either in ourselves or others; but we would think, at one and the same time, as we ourselves think and as all others think. To see with our own eyes and with every one else's eyes at one and the same time—that would be true seeing. Any other thinking and seeing are confessed to be imperfect modes of thinking and seeing. This is the concrete way of putting an abstract postulate. Such is the true goal of thought; such is its immanent idea. But this points to nothing short of the

immediation of mind in mind, to which reference was just made.

3. Even more distinctly still does the emotional nature of man look in this direction. The true goal of love—of love at its best and when it is most conscious of its own real nature—is, as was already hinted, the mutual indwelling of the persons who love. I in thee and thou in me; each found anew and enriched, not lost and impoverished in the other; each generalized, yet also, so to speak, individualized by the union,—this is love. That we are now outside and separate from each other; that in our present state each of us seems girt in by walls that cannot be climbed; that an invisible, impalpable, but adamant hedge surrounds the innermost man,—this has always been felt to be a hindrance to love. Hence mystics and love-poets have delighted to dream of the absorption of their individuality in and by the object of love, because it seemed better to them to become utterly one, even though at the cost of their separate existence, than to forego love. Far more in harmony, however, with the genuine yearnings of the human soul is the idea which George Herbert quaintly embodies:—

" Lord, thou art mine, and I am thine,
 If mine I am : and thine much more
 Than I or ought or can be mine.
 Yet to be thine doth me restore,
 So that again I now am mine,
 And with advantage mine the more.
 Since this being mine brings with it thine,
 And thou with me dost thee restore.
 If I without thee would be mine,
 I should be neither mine nor thine."¹⁰⁴

Or that of the Mohammedan mystic:—¹⁰⁴

"A palace vast is my beloved's home :—
 Yearning for converse, I drew nigh the gates,
 And knocked. A voice within said, 'Who is there?'
 Looking for ready welcome, I reply,
 'Friend of my soul, 't is I.' But lo!

¹⁰⁴ Ielal, the Great Muslim Saint and Doctor, referred to by Professor Cowell, "*Oxford Essays*," 1855.

The voice returns the dark and sad response,
 'This palace is too strait for thee and me !'
 Bewildered, paralyzed, awhile I stand,
 Then haste away to forest depths, where lone
 I fast and think and pray, if hap the key
 To my beloved's enigma may be found.
 At last 't is plain. I haste and knock again.
 Again the voice within asks, 'Who is there ?'
 With quivering lips, ' 'T is thou, 't is thou !' I cry.
 At once, wide open flung, the gates I see,
 And entering, he without by him within
 Straightway to close embrace is welcomed.
 Since then, O joy ! there is no I and he ;
 But in the palace vast we, whilom two,
 Make one beloved's home."

4. Now, if these things be true, may we not venture to maintain that it is just the union of person with person in the ever-blessed Trinity as taught by the Christian church that constitutes God the very archetype of personality? In him the two vital activities, the two manifestations of personal life, which bear on themselves the very stamp of eternity, which no change of time or space need enfeeble or extinguish, namely, thought and emotion, are at their very highest, *are* "light and love," just because God is the One in Three and the Three in One. The stronger and more productive thought is, and the intenser and broader love, the fuller is the personality, the more truly personal, the person ; but thought and love alike are deepened and heightened in exact proportion to the closeness of the union between kindred minds. This is the secret of the perfection of the Godhead. It is a mistake to think of the Trinity as the organic union of three persons, each of which was perfect by itself. The organic union is the eternal condition of the perfection and essential equality of the personal nature and life of each and of the absoluteness of the whole.