

WORD ON FIRE

---

CLASSICS

*An Essay on the  
Development of Christian  
Doctrine*

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

FOREWORD by BISHOP ROBERT BARRON

Published by Word on Fire Classics, an imprint of  
Word on Fire, Park Ridge, IL 60068  
© 2017 by Word on Fire Catholic Ministries  
Printed in the United States of America  
All rights reserved

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission, except in the case of brief quotations in critical articles or reviews. For more information, contact Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, PO Box 97330, Washington, DC 20090-7330 or email [contact@wordonfire.org](mailto:contact@wordonfire.org).

First published November 2017  
Reprinted April 2023, January 2025

ISBN: 978-1-68578-245-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017959023

# CONTENTS



FOREWORD v  
by Bishop Robert Barron

DEDICATION ix

PREFACE TO 1878 EDITION xi

ADVERTISEMENT TO FIRST EDITION xiii

## PART ONE

### DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENTS VIEWED IN THEMSELVES 1

INTRODUCTION 3

CHAPTER 1 The Development of Ideas 27

CHAPTER 2 The Antecedent Argument in Behalf  
of Developments in Christian Doctrine 45

CHAPTER 3 The Historical Argument in Behalf  
of the Existing Developments 81

CHAPTER 4 Instances in Illustration 101

## PART TWO

### DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENTS VIEWED RELATIVELY TO DOCTRINAL CORRUPTIONS 137

CHAPTER 5 Genuine Developments  
Contrasted with Corruptions 139

CHAPTER 6 Application of the First Note:  
Preservation of Type 171

Section 1 The Church of the First Centuries 172

Section 2 The Church of the Fourth Century 204

Section 3 The Church of the Fifth and Sixth Centuries 225

CHAPTER 7	Application of the Second Note: Continuity of Principles	267
CHAPTER 8	Application of the Third Note: Assimilative Power	295
CHAPTER 9	Application of the Fourth Note: Logical Sequence	319
CHAPTER 10	Application of the Fifth Note: Anticipation of its Future	333
CHAPTER 11	Application of the Sixth Note: Conservative Action on its Past	349
CHAPTER 12	Application of the Seventh Note: Chronic Vigour	363
CONCLUSION		370

## FOREWORD

by Bishop Robert Barron



When I was a philosophy student at Catholic University many years ago, I had the privilege of hearing a sermon by the great American Church historian John Tracy Ellis. In the course of that lengthy and absorbing homily, Ellis remarked, almost as an aside, that John Henry Newman was the greatest Catholic theologian since Thomas Aquinas. Though I had certainly heard of Newman at that point in my life, I had not yet read him. Ellis's testimony was the spark I needed. I commenced to plow through Newman's theological and apologetic masterpieces, as well as his complex, rich, Biblically dense sermons. I discovered readily enough the truth that James Joyce articulated. When someone commented to the great Irish novelist that he was the best ever writer of English, Joyce responded: "Nobody has ever written English prose that can be compared with that of a tiresome footling little Anglican parson who afterwards became a prince of the only true church."

But along with the shimmering prose was an extraordinary theological depth. The more of Newman I read, the more clearly I understood that he was one of the three or four most important theological influences on the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council. Neither *Lumen Gentium* nor *Gaudium et Spes* nor *Nostra Aetate* nor *Dignitatis Humanae* would be possible apart from the thought of Newman. I came to see how his work represents, in many ways, the first and most notable attempt to place Catholic thought in dialogue with the challenge and promise of the Enlightenment.

The text before you is Newman's mid-career masterwork, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, a book that Newman

commenced when he was still an Anglican and which he brought to completion as a Roman Catholic. It serves, accordingly, as a bridge between two moments of Newman's life and two dimensions of his thinking. The book's central argument is a challenge to Protestantism. During the Reformation, Martin Luther and his disciples had claimed that much of Catholicism represented a deviation from, or unwarranted addition to, the Biblical revelation. Hence, many Protestants believed, a pruning was legitimately called for.

But Newman argues that these distinctively Catholic elements represent not deviations from the Biblical revelations, but rather developments of it. Keep in mind that this text, written in the mid-nineteenth century, was part of a general movement in thought called *Lebensphilosophie*, "a philosophy of life," whose practitioners included G.W.F. Hegel and Charles Darwin. Evolutionary theory was in the air.

Newman's basic contention is that ideas develop precisely because they exist, not on the printed page, but in the play of lively minds. The mind is neither dumb nor static. Rather, it takes in ideas and then judges them, analyzes them, turns them around and upside down, looks at them from different angles—and then tosses them to other minds which do much the same thing. A real idea is equivalent, Newman insists, to "the sum total of its possible aspects." Through this activity, ideas show forth their fullness, and therefore, development is not obscuring but clarifying. Even to know something as simple as a physical object is the project of a lifetime. Therefore, imagine coming to know an idea as complex as the Incarnation or the Trinity. It would involve, quite literally, hundreds of lifetimes of reflection, meditation, debate, and discussion. Newman illustrates this point with a striking analogy:

It is indeed sometimes said that the stream is clearest near the spring. Whatever use may fairly be made of this image, it does not apply to the history of a philosophy or belief, which on the contrary is more equable, and purer, and stronger, when its bed has become deep, and broad, and full.

Only in light of this analogy can we properly grasp the meaning of one of Newman's most famous adages from the essay: "In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often." This is no celebration of change for its own sake or a call to permanent revolution; it is an affirmation that the development of doctrine that is on display in Catholicism is a sign of life and not of decadence.

One of the cleverest and most surprising moves Newman makes in this text is to show that the affirmation of development, of the lively unfolding of doctrine, makes necessary the affirmation of an infallible authority within the Church. Ideas develop through the lively conversation among theologians, writers, critics, professors, etc. But developments can be accompanied by corruptions, which is plainly evident from the number of heresies that have sprung up throughout Church history. Therefore, in order to discipline, limit, and sanction the body of theologians, there needs to be an authority, which stands above the fray and which can make a sort of umpiring judgment in regard to disputed questions. Newman's argument can be laid out in neat logical form: if revelation is part of the divine dispensation (and it surely is), and if the contents of revelation necessarily develop over time and space (as they undoubtedly do), God must have desired that his Church be gifted with a living voice of authority.

Now Protestants had held that the Bible itself played the role of infallible guide within the Church, but the sheer number of Protestant churches—each claiming the sure guidance of the Bible—gave the lie to that interpretation. Many Anglicans, including the young Newman himself, had held that the consensus of the Church Fathers provided the needful criterion, but Newman came to realize that the Fathers' texts, however deep and splendid, did not constitute a living voice that could actively determine truth and falsity in the here and now. The only Christian Church that claimed to have a living and infallible voice of authority, Newman conceded, was the Catholic Church, and this was one of the principal reasons that he made the costly decision to become

a Catholic. I do not offer this last observation lightly, for in becoming Roman Catholic, Newman essentially forfeited any position he might have held in official English society.

One of the features that makes this text so important for our time is the manner in which it brings together concerns of “progressives” and “conservatives.” Newman nods strongly in the direction of a progressivism that insists on the legitimacy of change and development in the life of the Church, but at the same time, he nods just as strongly toward a conservatism that would insist on infallible authority. His peculiar genius was to see how the two are mutually implicative and not mutually exclusive.

John Henry Newman was many things—controversialist, apologist, theologian, educator, poet—but through it all, he was a lover of the truth. In the speech he gave upon being named a Cardinal, he famously commented that his entire life had been a battle against liberalism in matters of religion. He immediately clarified what he meant by that notoriously slippery term: the view that there is no truth in matters of religion. With all his heart, he defends the truth of the Church in this essay, but he shows that it is not so much like a football, dumbly passed from generation to generation, but much more like a winding river or a luxuriant tree, ever sending off new shoots and branches.

DEDICATION

TO THE  
REV. SAMUEL WILLIAM WAYTE, B.D.  
PRESIDENT OF TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD



My Dear President,

Not from any special interest which I anticipate you will take in this Volume, or any sympathy you will feel in its argument, or intrinsic fitness of any kind in my associating you and your Fellows with it,—

But, because I have nothing besides it to offer you, in token of my sense of the gracious compliment which you and they have paid me in making me once more a Member of a College dear to me from Undergraduate memories;—

Also, because of the happy coincidence, that whereas its first publication was contemporaneous with my leaving Oxford, its second becomes, by virtue of your act, contemporaneous with a recovery of my position there:—

Therefore it is that, without your leave or your responsibility, I take the bold step of placing your name in the first pages of what, at my age, I must consider the last print or reprint on which I shall ever be engaged.

I am, my dear President,  
Most sincerely yours,  
JOHN H. NEWMAN.  
February 23, 1878



## PREFACE TO 1878 EDITION



The following pages were not in the first instance written to prove the divinity of the Catholic Religion, though ultimately they furnish a positive argument in its behalf, but to explain certain difficulties in its history, felt before now by the author himself, and commonly insisted on by Protestants in controversy, as serving to blunt the force of its *primâ facie* and general claims on our recognition.

However beautiful and promising that Religion is in theory, its history, we are told, is its best refutation; the inconsistencies, found age after age in its teaching, being as patent as the simultaneous contrarieties of religious opinion manifest in the High, Low, and Broad branches of the Church of England.

In reply to this specious objection, it is maintained in this Essay that, granting that some large variations of teaching in its long course of 1800 years exist, nevertheless, these, on examination, will be found to arise from the nature of the case, and to proceed on a law, and with a harmony and a definite drift, and with an analogy to Scripture revelations, which, instead of telling to their disadvantage, actually constitute an argument in their favour, as witnessing to a Superintending Providence and a great Design in the mode and in the circumstances of their occurrence.

Perhaps his confidence in the truth and availableness of this view has sometimes led the author to be careless and over-liberal in his concessions to Protestants of historical fact.

If this be so anywhere, he begs the reader in such cases to understand him as speaking hypothetically, and in the sense of an *argumentum ad hominem* and *à fortiari*. Nor is such hypothetical reasoning out of place in a publication which is addressed, not to theologians, but to those who as yet are not even Catholics, and who, as they read history,

would scoff at any defence of Catholic doctrine which did not go the length of covering admissions in matters of fact as broad as those which are here ventured on.

In this new Edition of the Essay various important alterations have been made in the arrangement of its separate parts, and some, not indeed in its matter, but in its text.

*February 2, 1878*

## ADVERTISEMENT TO FIRST EDITION



### OCULI MEI DEFECERUNT IN SALUTARE TUUM

It is now above eleven years since the writer of the following pages, in one of the early Numbers of the Tracts for the Times, expressed himself thus:—

Considering the high gifts, and the strong claims of the Church of Rome and her dependencies on our admiration, reverence, love, and gratitude, how could we withstand her, as we do; how could we refrain from being melted into tenderness, and rushing into communion with her, but for the words of Truth, which bid us prefer Itself to the whole world? “He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me.” How could we learn to be severe, and execute judgment, but for the warning of Moses against even a divinely-gifted teacher who should preach new gods, and the anathema of St. Paul even against Angels and Apostles who should bring in a new doctrine?<sup>1</sup>

He little thought, when he so wrote, that the time would ever come when he should feel the obstacle, which he spoke of as lying in the way of communion with the Church of Rome, to be destitute of solid foundation.

The following work is directed towards its removal.

Having, in former publications, called attention to the supposed difficulty, he considers himself bound to avow his present belief that it is imaginary.

He has neither the ability to put out of hand a finished composition, nor the wish to make a powerful and moving representation, on

1. [Records of the Church, xxiv. p. 7.]

the great subject of which he treats. His aim will be answered, if he succeeds in suggesting thoughts, which in God's good time may quietly bear fruit, in the minds of those to whom that subject is new; and which may carry forward inquirers, who have already put themselves on the course.

If at times his tone appears positive or peremptory, he hopes this will be imputed to the scientific character of the Work, which requires a distinct statement of principles, and of the arguments which recommend them.

He hopes too he shall be excused for his frequent quotations from himself; which are necessary in order to show how he stands at present in relation to various of his former Publications.

LITTLEMORE,  
October 6, 1845

## POSTSCRIPT

Since the above was written, the Author has joined the Catholic Church. It was his intention and wish to have carried his Volume through the Press before deciding finally on this step. But when he had got some way in the printing, he recognized in himself a conviction of the truth of the conclusion to which the discussion leads, so clear as to supersede further deliberation. Shortly afterwards circumstances gave him the opportunity of acting upon it, and he felt that he had no warrant for refusing to do so.

His first act on his conversion was to offer his Work for revision to the proper authorities; but the offer was declined on the ground that it was written and partly printed before he was a Catholic, and that it would come before the reader in a more persuasive form, if he read it as the author wrote it.

It is scarcely necessary to add that he now submits every part of the book to the judgment of the Church, with whose doctrine, on the subjects of which he treats, he wishes all his thoughts to be coincident.

---

PART ONE

---

DOCTRINAL  
DEVELOPMENTS  
VIEWED IN  
THEMSELVES



## INTRODUCTION

Christianity has been long enough in the world to justify us in dealing with it as a fact in the world's history. Its genius and character, its doctrines, precepts, and objects cannot be treated as matters of private opinion or deduction, unless we may reasonably so regard the Spartan institutions or the religion of Mahomet. It may indeed legitimately be made the subject-matter of theories; what is its moral and political excellence, what its due location in the range of ideas or of facts which we possess, whether it be divine or human, whether original or eclectic, or both at once, how far favourable to civilization or to literature, whether a religion for all ages or for a particular state of society, these are questions upon the fact, or professed solutions of the fact, and belong to the province of opinion; but to a fact do they relate, on an admitted fact do they turn, which must be ascertained as other facts, and surely has on the whole been so ascertained, unless the testimony of so many centuries is to go for nothing. Christianity is no theory of the study or the cloister. It has long since passed beyond the letter of documents and the reasonings of individual minds, and has become public property. Its "sound has gone out into all lands," and its "words unto the ends of the world." It has from the first had an objective existence, and has thrown itself upon the great concourse of men. Its home is in the world; and to know what it is, we must seek it in the world, and hear the world's witness of it.

The hypothesis, indeed, has met with wide reception in these latter times, that Christianity does not fall within the province of history,—that it is to each man what each man thinks it to be, and nothing else; and thus in fact is a mere name for a cluster or family of rival religions all together, religions at variance one with another, and claiming the same appellation, not because there can be assigned any one and the same doctrine as the common foundation of all, but because certain points of agreement may be found here and there of some sort or other, by which each in its turn is connected with one or other of the rest. Or again, it has been maintained, or implied, that all existing

denominations of Christianity are wrong, none representing it as taught by Christ and His Apostles; that the original religion has gradually decayed or become hopelessly corrupt; nay that it died out of the world at its birth, and was forthwith succeeded by a counterfeit or counterfeits which assumed its name, though they inherited at best but some fragments of its teaching; or rather that it cannot even be said either to have decayed or to have died, because historically it has no substance of its own, but from the first and onwards it has, on the stage of the world, been nothing more than a mere assemblage of doctrines and practices derived from without, from Oriental, Platonic, Polytheistic sources, from Buddhism, Essenism, Manicheism; or that, allowing true Christianity still to exist, it has but a hidden and isolated life, in the hearts of the elect, or again as a literature or philosophy, not certified in any way, much less guaranteed, to come from above, but one out of the various separate informations about the Supreme Being and human duty, with which an unknown Providence has furnished us, whether in nature or in the world.

All such views of Christianity imply that there is no sufficient body of historical proof to interfere with, or at least to prevail against, any number whatever of free and independent hypotheses concerning it. But this, surely, is not self-evident, and has itself to be proved. Till positive reasons grounded on facts are adduced to the contrary, the most natural hypotheses, the most agreeable to our mode of proceeding in parallel cases, and that which takes precedence of all others, is to consider that the society of Christians, which the Apostles left on earth, were of that religion to which the Apostles had converted them; that the external continuity of name, profession, and communion, argues a real continuity of doctrine; that, as Christianity began by manifesting itself as of a certain shape and bearing to all mankind, therefore it went on so to manifest itself; and that the more, considering that prophecy had already determined that it was to be a power visible in the world and sovereign over it, characters which are accurately fulfilled in that historical Christianity to which we commonly give the name. It is not a

violent assumption, then, but rather mere abstinence from the wanton admission of a principle which would necessarily lead to the most vexatious and preposterous scepticism, to take it for granted, before proof to the contrary, that the Christianity of the second, fourth, seventh, twelfth, sixteenth, and intermediate centuries is in its substance the very religion which Christ and His Apostles taught in the first, whatever may be the modifications for good or for evil which lapse of years, or the vicissitudes of human affairs, have impressed upon it.

Of course I do not deny the abstract possibility of extreme changes. The substitution is certainly, in idea, supposable of a counterfeit Christianity,—superseding the original, by means of the adroit innovations of seasons, places, and persons, till, according to the familiar illustration, the “blade” and the “handle” are alternately renewed, and identity is lost without the loss of continuity. It is possible; but it must not be assumed. The *onus probandi* is with those who assert what it is unnatural to expect; to be just able to doubt is no warrant for disbelieving.

Accordingly, some writers have gone on to give reasons from history for their refusing to appeal to history. They aver that, when they come to look into the documents and literature of Christianity in times past, they find its doctrines so variously represented, and so inconsistently maintained by its professors, that, however natural it be *à priori*, it is useless, in fact, to seek in history the matter of that Revelation which has been vouchsafed to mankind; that they cannot be historical Christians if they would. They say, in the words of Chillingworth, “There are popes against popes, councils against councils, some fathers against others, the same fathers against themselves, a consent of fathers of one age against a consent of fathers of another age, the Church of one age against the Church of another age:”—Hence they are forced, whether they will or not, to fall back upon the Bible as the sole source of Revelation, and upon their own personal private judgment as the sole expounder of its doctrine. This is a fair argument, if it can be maintained, and it brings me at once to the subject of this Essay. Not that it enters into my purpose to convict of misstatement, as might be done,

each separate clause of this sweeping accusation of a smart but superficial writer; but neither on the other hand do I mean to deny everything that he says to the disadvantage of historical Christianity. On the contrary, I shall admit that there are in fact certain apparent variations in its teaching, which have to be explained; thus I shall begin, but then I shall attempt to explain them to the exculpation of that teaching in point of unity, directness, and consistency.

Meanwhile, before setting about this work, I will address one remark to Chillingworth and his friends:—Let them consider, that if they can criticize history, the facts of history certainly can retort upon them. It might, I grant, be clearer on this great subject than it is. This is no great concession. History is not a creed or a catechism, it gives lessons rather than rules; still no one can mistake its general teaching in this matter, whether he accept it or stumble at it. Bold outlines and broad masses of colour rise out of the records of the past. They may be dim, they may be incomplete; but they are definite. And this one thing at least is certain; whatever history teaches, whatever it omits, whatever it exaggerates or extenuates, whatever it says and unsays, at least the Christianity of history is not Protestantism. If ever there were a safe truth, it is this.

And Protestantism has ever felt it so. I do not mean that every writer on the Protestant side has felt it; for it was the fashion at first, at least as a rhetorical argument against Rome, to appeal to past ages, or to some of them; but Protestantism, as a whole, feels it, and has felt it. This is shown in the determination already referred to of dispensing with historical Christianity altogether, and of forming a Christianity from the Bible alone: men never would have put it aside, unless they had despaired of it. It is shown by the long neglect of ecclesiastical history in England, which prevails even in the English Church. Our popular religion scarcely recognizes the fact of the twelve long ages which lie between the Councils of Nicæa and Trent, except as affording one or two passages to illustrate its wild interpretations of certain prophecies of St. Paul and St. John. It is melancholy to say it, but the chief, perhaps

the only English writer who has any claim to be considered an ecclesiastical historian, is the unbeliever Gibbon. To be deep in history is to cease to be a Protestant.

And this utter incongruity between Protestantism and historical Christianity is a plain fact, whether the latter be regarded in its earlier or in its later centuries. Protestants can as little bear its Ante-nicene as its Post-tridentine period. I have elsewhere observed on this circumstance: "So much must the Protestant grant that, if such a system of doctrine as he would now introduce ever existed in early times, it has been clean swept away as if by a deluge, suddenly, silently, and without memorial; by a deluge coming in a night, and utterly soaking, rotting, heaving up, and hurrying off every vestige of what it found in the Church, before cock-crowing: so that 'when they rose in the morning' her true seed 'were all dead corpses'—Nay dead and buried—and without grave-stone. 'The waters went over them; there was not one of them left; they sunk like lead in the mighty waters.' Strange antitype, indeed, to the early fortunes of Israel!—then the enemy was drowned, and 'Israel saw them dead upon the sea-shore.' But now, it would seem, water proceeded as a flood 'out of the serpent's mouth, and covered all the witnesses, so that not even their dead bodies lay in the streets of the great city.' Let him take which of his doctrines he will, his peculiar view of self-righteousness, of formality, of superstition; his notion of faith, or of spirituality in religious worship; his denial of the virtue of the sacraments, or of the ministerial commission, or of the visible Church; or his doctrine of the divine efficacy of the Scriptures as the one appointed instrument of religious teaching; and let him consider how far Antiquity, as it has come down to us, will countenance him in it. No; he must allow that the alleged deluge has done its work; yes, and has in turn disappeared itself; it has been swallowed up by the earth, mercilessly as itself was merciless."<sup>1</sup>

That Protestantism, then, is not the Christianity of history, it is easy to determine, but to retort is a poor reply in controversy to a

---

1. *Church of the Fathers* [Hist. Sketches, vol. i. p. 418.]

question of fact, and whatever be the violence or the exaggeration of writers like Chillingworth, if they have raised a real difficulty, it may claim a real answer, and we must determine whether on the one hand Christianity is still to represent to us a definite teaching from above, or whether on the other its utterances have been from time to time so strangely at variance, that we are necessarily thrown back on our own judgment individually to determine, what the revelation of God is, or rather if in fact there is, or has been, any revelation at all.

Here then I concede to the opponents of historical Christianity, that there are to be found, during the 1800 years through which it has lasted, certain apparent inconsistencies and alterations in its doctrine and its worship, such as irresistibly attract the attention of all who inquire into it. They are not sufficient to interfere with the general character and course of the religion, but they raise the question how they came about, and what they mean, and have in consequence supplied matter for several hypotheses.

Of these one is to the effect that Christianity has even changed from the first and ever accommodates itself to the circumstances of times and seasons; but it is difficult to understand how such a view is compatible with the special idea of revealed truth, and in fact its advocates more or less abandon, or tend to abandon the supernatural claims of Christianity; so it need not detain us here.

A second and more plausible hypothesis is that of the Anglican divines, who reconcile and bring into shape the exuberant phenomena under consideration, by cutting and casting away as corruptions all usages, ways, opinions, and tenets, which have not the sanction of primitive times. They maintain that history first presents to us a pure Christianity in East and West, and then a corrupt; and then of course their duty is to draw the line between what is corrupt and what is pure, and to determine the dates at which the various changes from good to bad were introduced. Such a principle of demarcation, available for the purpose, they consider they have found in the *dictum* of Vincent of Lerins, that revealed and Apostolic doctrine is “quod semper, quod

ubique, quod ab omnibus,” a principle infallibly separating, on the whole field of history, authoritative doctrine from opinion, rejecting what is faulty, and combining and forming a theology. That “Christianity is what has been held always, everywhere, and by all,” certainly promises a solution of the perplexities, an interpretation of the meaning, of history. What can be more natural than that divines and bodies of men should speak, sometimes from themselves, sometimes from tradition? what more natural than that individually they should say many things on impulse, or under excitement, or as conjectures, or in ignorance? what more certain than that they must all have been instructed and catechized in the Creed of the Apostles? what more evident than that what was their own would in its degree be peculiar, and differ from what was similarly private and personal in their brethren? what more conclusive than that the doctrine that was common to all at once was not really their own, but public property in which they had a joint interest, and was proved by the concurrence of so many witnesses to have come from an Apostolical source? Here, then, we have a short and easy method for bringing the various informations of ecclesiastical history under that antecedent probability in its favour, which nothing but its actual variations would lead us to neglect. Here we have a precise and satisfactory reason why we should make much of the earlier centuries, yet pay no regard to the later, why we should admit some doctrines and not others, why we refuse the Creed of Pius IV. and accept the Thirty-nine Articles.

Such is the rule of historical interpretation which has been professed in the English school of divines; and it contains a majestic truth, and offers an intelligible principle, and wears a reasonable air. It is congenial, or, as it may be said, native to the Anglican mind, which takes up a middle position, neither discarding the Fathers nor acknowledging the Pope. It lays down a simple rule by which to measure the value of every historical fact, as it comes, and thereby it provides a bulwark against Rome, while it opens an assault upon Protestantism. Such is its promise; but its difficulty lies in applying it in particular cases. The rule

is more serviceable in determining what is not, than what is Christianity; it is irresistible against Protestantism, and in one sense indeed it is irresistible against Rome also, but in the same sense it is irresistible against England. It strikes at Rome through England. It admits of being interpreted in one of two ways: if it be narrowed for the purpose of disproving the catholicity of the Creed of Pope Pius, it becomes also an objection to the Athanasian; and if it be relaxed to admit the doctrines retained by the English Church, it no longer excludes certain doctrines of Rome which that Church denies. It cannot at once condemn St. Thomas and St. Bernard, and defend St. Athanasius and St. Gregory Nazianzen.

This general defect in its serviceableness has been heretofore felt by those who appealed to it. It was said by one writer; “The Rule of Vincent is not of a mathematical or demonstrative character, but moral, and requires practical judgment and good sense to apply it. For instance, what is meant by being ‘taught *always*’? does it mean in every century, or every year, or every month? Does ‘everywhere’ mean in every country, or in every diocese? and does ‘the *Consent of Fathers*’ require us to produce the direct testimony of every one of them? How many Fathers, how many places, how many instances, constitute a fulfilment of the test proposed? It is, then, from the nature of the case, a condition which never can be satisfied as fully as it might have been. It admits of various and unequal application in various instances; and what degree of application is enough, must be decided by the same principles which guide us in the conduct of life, which determine us in politics, or trade, or war, which lead us to accept Revelation at all, (for which we have but probability to show at most,) nay, to believe in the existence of an intelligent Creator.”<sup>2</sup>

So much was allowed by this writer; but then he added:—

This character, indeed, of Vincent’s Canon, will but recommend it to the disciples of the school of Butler, from its agreement with the analogy of nature; but it affords a ready loophole for such as do not

---

2. Proph. Office [Via Media, vol. i. pp. 55, 56.]

wish to be persuaded, of which both Protestants and Romanists are not slow to avail themselves.

This surely is the language of disputants who are more intent on assailing others than on defending themselves; as if similar loopholes were not necessary for Anglican theology.

He elsewhere says: "What there is not the shadow of a reason for saying that the Fathers held, what has not the faintest pretensions of being a Catholic truth, is this, that St. Peter or his successors were and are universal Bishops, that they have the whole of Christendom for their one diocese in a way in which other Apostles and Bishops had and have not."<sup>3</sup> Most true, if, in order that a doctrine be considered Catholic, it must be formally stated by the Fathers generally from the very first; but, on the same understanding, the doctrine also of the apostolical succession in the episcopal order "has not the faintest pretensions of being a Catholic truth."

Nor was this writer without a feeling of the special difficulty of his school; and he attempted to meet it by denying it. He wished to maintain that the sacred doctrines admitted by the Church of England into her Articles were taught in primitive times with a distinctness which no one could fancy to attach to the characteristic tenets of Rome.

"We confidently affirm," he said in another publication, "that there is not an article in the Athanasian Creed concerning the Incarnation which is not anticipated in the controversy with the Gnostics. There is no question which the Apollinarian or the Nestorian heresy raised, which may not be decided in the words of Ignatius, Irenæus and Tertullian."<sup>4</sup>

This may be considered as true. It may be true also, or at least shall here be granted as true, that there is also a *consensus* in the Ante-nicene Church for the doctrines of our Lord's Consubstantiality and Coeternity with the Almighty Father. Let us allow that the whole circle of doctrines, of which our Lord is the subject, was consistently and uniformly

---

3. [Ibid. p. 181.]

4. [British Critic, July, 1836, p. 193. Vid. supr. vol i. p. 130.]

confessed by the Primitive Church, though not ratified formally in Council. But it surely is otherwise with the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity. I do not see in what sense it can be said that there is a *consensus* of primitive divines in its favour, which will not avail also for certain doctrines of the Roman Church which will presently come into mention. And this is a point which the writer of the above passages ought to have more distinctly brought before his mind and more carefully weighed; but he seems to have fancied that Bishop Bull proved the primitiveness of the Catholic doctrine concerning the Holy Trinity as well as that concerning our Lord.

Now it should be clearly understood what it is which must be shown by those who would prove it. Of course the doctrine of our Lord's divinity itself partly implies and partly recommends the doctrine of the Trinity; but implication and suggestion belong to another class of arguments which has not yet come into consideration. Moreover the statements of a particular father or doctor may certainly be of a most important character; but one divine is not equal to a *Catena*. We must have a whole doctrine stated by a whole Church. The Catholic Truth in question is made up of a number of separate propositions, each of which, if maintained to the exclusion of the rest, is a heresy. In order then to prove that all the Ante-nicene writers taught the dogma of the Holy Trinity, it is not enough to prove that each still has gone far enough to be only a heretic—not enough to prove that one has held that the Son is God, (for so did the Sabellian, so did the Macedonian), and another that the Father is not the Son, (for so did the Arian), and another that the Son is equal to the Father, (for so did the Tritheist), and another that there is but One God, (for so did the Unitarian),—not enough that many attached in some sense a Threefold Power to the idea of the Almighty, (for so did almost all the heresies that ever existed, and could not but do so, if they accepted the New Testament at all); but we must show that all these statements at once, and others too, are laid down by as many separate testimonies as may fairly be taken to constitute a “*consensus* of doctors.” It is true indeed that the subsequent profession of the

doctrine in the Universal Church creates a presumption that it was held even before it was professed; and it is fair to interpret the early Fathers by the later. This is true, and admits of application to certain other doctrines besides that of the Blessed Trinity in Unity; but there is as little room for such antecedent probabilities as for the argument from suggestions and intimations in the precise and imperative *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, as it is commonly understood by English divines, and is by them used against the later Church and the see of Rome. What we have a right to ask, if we are bound to act upon Vincent's rule in regard to the Trinitarian dogma, is a sufficient number of Antenicene statements, each distinctly anticipating the Athanasian Creed.

Now let us look at the leading facts of the case, in appealing to which I must not be supposed to be ascribing any heresy to the holy men whose words have not always been sufficiently full or exact to preclude the imputation. First, the Creeds of that early day make no mention in their letter of the Catholic doctrine at all. They make mention indeed of a Three; but that there is any mystery in the doctrine, that the Three are One, that They are coequal, coeternal, all increate, all omnipotent, all incomprehensible, is not stated, and never could be gathered from them. Of course we believe that they imply it, or rather intend it. God forbid we should do otherwise! But nothing in the mere letter of those documents leads to that belief. To give a deeper meaning to their letter, we must interpret them by the times which came after.

Again, there is one and one only great doctrinal Council in Antenicene times. It was held at Antioch, in the middle of the third century, on occasion of the incipient innovations of the Syrian heretical school. Now the Fathers there assembled, for whatever reason, condemned, or at least withdrew, when it came into the dispute, the word "Homoöision," which was afterwards received at Nicæa as the special symbol of Catholicism against Arius.<sup>5</sup>

---

5. This of course has been disputed, as is the case with almost all facts which bear upon the decision of controversies. I shall not think it necessary to notice the possibility or the fact of objections on questions upon which the world may now be said to be agreed; e.g. the arianizing tone of Eusebius.

Again, the six great Bishops and Saints of the Ante-nicene Church were St. Irenaeus, St. Hippolytus, St. Cyprian, St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, St. Dionysius of Alexandria, and St. Methodius. Of these, St. Dionysius is accused by St. Basil of having sown the first seeds of Arianism<sup>6</sup>; and St. Gregory is allowed by the same learned Father to have used language concerning our Lord, which he only defends on the plea of an economical object in the writer.<sup>7</sup> St. Hippolytus speaks as if he were ignorant of our Lord's Eternal Sonship<sup>8</sup>; St. Methodius speaks incorrectly at least upon the Incarnation<sup>9</sup>; and St. Cyprian does not treat of theology at all. Such is the incompleteness of the extant teaching of these true saints, and, in their day, faithful witnesses of the Eternal Son.

Again, Athenagoras, St. Clement, Tertullian, and the two SS. Dionysii would appear to be the only writers whose language is at any time exact and systematic enough to remind us of the Athanasian Creed. If we limit our view of the teaching of the Fathers by what they expressly state, St. Ignatius may be considered as a Patripassian, St. Justin arianizes, and St. Hippolytus is a Photinian.

Again, there are three great theological authors of the Ante-nicene centuries, Tertullian, Origen, and, we may add, Eusebius, though he lived some way into the fourth. Tertullian is heterodox on the doctrine of our Lord's divinity<sup>10</sup>, and, indeed, ultimately fell altogether into heresy or schism; Origen is, at the very least, suspected, and must be defended and explained rather than cited as a witness of orthodoxy; and Eusebius was a Semi-Arian.

---

6. [schedon tautesi tes nun perithulloumenes asebeias, tes kata to Anomoion lego, houtos estin, hosa ge hemeis ismen, ho protos anthropois ta spermata paraschon.] Ep. ix. 2.

7. Bull, Defens. F. N. § 6.

8. "The authors who make the generation temporary, and speak not expressly of any other, are these following: Justin, Athenagoras, Theophilus, Tatian, Tertullian, and Hippolytus."—*Waterland*, vol. i. part 2. p. 104.

9. "Levia sunt," says Maran in his defence, "quæ in Sanctissimam Trinitatem hic liber peccare dicitur, paulo graviora quæ in mysterium Incarnationis."—*Div. Jes. Christ.* p. 527. Shortly after, p. 530, "In tertiâ oratione nonnulla legimus Incarnationem Domini spectantia, quæ subabsurdè dicta fateor, nego impiè cogitata."

10. Bishop Bull, who is tender towards him, allows, "Ut quod res est dicam, cum Valentinianis hic et reliquo gnosticorum grege aliquatenus locutus est Tertullianus; in re ipsâ tamen cum Catholicis omninò sensit."—*Defens. F. N.* iii. 10, § 15.

Moreover, it may be questioned whether any Ante-nicene father distinctly affirms either the numerical Unity or the Coequality of the Three Persons; except perhaps the heterodox Tertullian, and that chiefly in a work written after he had become a Montanist<sup>11</sup>: yet to satisfy the Anti-roman use of *Quod semper, &c.*, surely we ought not to be left for these great articles of doctrine to the testimony of a later age.

Further, Bishop Bull allows that “nearly all the ancient Catholics who preceded Arius have the appearance of being ignorant of the invisible and incomprehensible (*immensam*) nature of the Son of God<sup>12</sup>; an article expressly taught in the Athanasian Creed under the sanction of its anathema.

It must be asked, moreover, how much direct and literal testimony the Ante-nicene Fathers give, one by one, to the divinity of the Holy Spirit? This alone shall be observed, that St. Basil, in the fourth century, finding that, if he distinctly called the Third Person in the Blessed Trinity by the Name of God, he should be put out of the Church by the Arians, pointedly refrained from doing so on an occasion on which his enemies were on the watch; and that, when some Catholics found fault with him, St. Athanasius took his part.<sup>13</sup> Could this possibly have been the conduct of any true Christian, not to say Saint, of a later age? that is, whatever be the true account of it, does it not suggest to us that the testimony of those early times lies very unfavourably for the application of the rule of Vincentius?

Let it not be for a moment supposed that I impugn the orthodoxy of the early divines, or the cogency of their testimony among *fair* inquirers; but I am trying them by that *unfair* interpretation of Vincentius, which is necessary in order to make him available against the Church of Rome. And now, as to the positive evidence which those Fathers offer in behalf of the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, it has been drawn out by Dr. Burton and seems to fall under two heads. One is the

---

11. Adv. Praxeam.

12. Defens. F. N. iv. 3, § 1.

13. Basil. ed. Ben. vol. 8. p. xcvi.

general ascription of glory to the Three Persons together, both by fathers and churches, and that on continuous tradition and from the earliest times. Under the second fall certain *distinct statements* of *particular* fathers; thus we find the word “Trinity” used by St. Theophilus, St. Clement, St. Hippolytus, Tertullian, St. Cyprian, Origen, St. Methodius; and the Divine *Circumincessio*, the most distinctive portion of the Catholic doctrine, and the unity of power, or again, of substance, are declared with more or less distinctness by Athenagoras, St. Irenæus, St. Clement, Tertullian, St. Hippolytus, Origen, and the two SS. Dionysii. This is pretty much the whole of the evidence.

Perhaps it will be said we ought to take the Ante-nicene Fathers as a whole, and interpret one of them by another. This is to assume that they are all of one school, which of course they are, but which in controversy is a point to be proved; but it is even doubtful whether, on the whole, such a procedure would strengthen the argument. For instance, as to the second head of the positive evidence noted by Dr. Burton, Tertullian is the most formal and elaborate of these Fathers in his statements of the Catholic doctrine. “It would hardly be possible,” says Dr. Burton, after quoting a passage, “for Athanasius himself, or the compiler of the Athanasian Creed, to have delivered the doctrine of the Trinity in stronger terms than these.”<sup>14</sup> Yet Tertullian must be considered heterodox on the doctrine of our Lord’s eternal generation.<sup>15</sup> If then we are to argue from his instance to that of the other Fathers, we shall be driven to the conclusion that even the most exact statements are worth nothing more than their letter, are a warrant for nothing beyond themselves, and are consistent with heterodoxy where they do not expressly protest against it.

And again, as to the argument derivable from the Doxologies, it must not be forgotten that one of the passages in St. Justin Martyr

---

14. Ante-nicene Test. to the Trinity, p. 69.

15. “Quia et Pater Deus est, et judex Deus est, non tamen ideo Pater et judex semper, quia Deus semper. Nam nec Pater potuit esse ante Filium, nec judex ante delictum. Fuit autem tempus, cum et delictum et Filius non fuit, quod judicem, et qui Patrem Dominum faceret.”—*Contr. Herm.* 3.

includes the worship of the Angels. "We worship and adore," he says, "Him, and the Son who came from Him and taught us these things, and the host of those other good Angels, who follow and are like Him, and the Prophetic Spirit."<sup>16</sup> A Unitarian might argue from this passage that the glory and worship which the early Church ascribed to our Lord was not more definite than that which St. Justin was ready to concede to creatures.

Thus much on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Let us proceed to another example. There are two doctrines which are generally associated with the name of a Father of the fourth and fifth centuries, and which can show little definite, or at least but partial, testimony in their behalf before his time,—Purgatory and Original Sin. The dictum of Vincent admits both or excludes both, according as it is or is not rigidly taken; but, if used by Aristotle's "Lesbian Rule," then, as Anglicans would wish, it can be made to admit Original Sin and exclude Purgatory.

On the one hand, some notion of suffering, or disadvantage, or punishment after this life, in the case of the faithful departed, or other vague forms of the doctrine of Purgatory, has in its favour almost a *consensus* of the four first ages of the Church, though some Fathers state it with far greater openness and decision than others. It is, as far as words go, the confession of St. Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, St. Perpetua, St. Cyprian, Origen, Lactantius, St. Hilary, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Ambrose, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and of Nyssa, St. Chrysostom, St. Jerome, St. Paulinus, and St. Augustine. And so, on the other hand, there is a certain agreement of Fathers from the first that mankind has derived some disadvantage from the sin of Adam.

Next, when we consider the two doctrines more distinctly,—the doctrine that between death and judgment there is a time or state of punishment; and the doctrine that all men, naturally propagated from fallen Adam, are in consequence born destitute of original righteousness, we find, on the one hand, several, such as Tertullian, St. Perpetua, St. Cyril, St. Hilary, St. Jerome, St. Gregory Nyssen, as far as their words

---

16. Vid. *infra*, towards the end of the Essay, ch. x., where more will be said on the passage.

go, definitely declaring a doctrine of Purgatory: whereas no one will say that there is a testimony of the Fathers, equally strong, for the doctrine of Original Sin, though it is difficult here to make any definite statement about their teaching without going into a discussion of the subject.

On the subject of Purgatory there were, to speak generally, two schools of opinion; the Greek, which contemplated a trial of fire at the last day through which all were to pass; and the African, resembling more nearly the present doctrine of the Roman Church. And so there were two principal views of Original Sin, the Greek and the African or Latin. Of the Greek, the judgment of Hooker is well known, though it must not be taken in the letter: "The heresy of freewill was a millstone about those Pelagians' neck; shall we therefore give sentence of death inevitable against all those Fathers in the Greek Church which, being mispersuaded, died in the error of freewill?"<sup>17</sup> Bishop Taylor, arguing for an opposite doctrine, bears a like testimony: "Original Sin," he says, "as it is at this day commonly explicated, was not the doctrine of the primitive Church; but when Pelagius had puddled the stream, St. Austin was so angry that he stamped and disturbed it more. And truly . . . I do not think that the gentlemen that urged against me St. Austin's opinion do well consider that I profess myself to follow those Fathers who were before him; and whom St. Austin did forsake, as I do him, in the question."<sup>18</sup> The same is asserted or allowed by Jansenius, Petavius, and Walch,<sup>19</sup> men of such different schools that we may surely take their agreement as a proof of the fact. A late writer, after going through the testimonies of the Fathers one by one, comes to the conclusion, first, that "the Greek Church in no point favoured Augustine, except in teaching that from Adam's sin came death, and, (after the time of

---

17. Of Justification, 26.

18. Works, vol. ix. p. 396.

19. "Quamvis igitur quam maximè fallantur Pelagiani, quum assersant, peccatum originale ex Augustini profluxisse ingenio, antiquam vero ecclesiam illud plane nescivisse; diffiteri tamen nemo potest, apud Græcos patres imprimis inveniri loca, quæ Pelagianismo favere videntur. Hinc et C. Jansenius, 'Græci,' inquit, 'nisi caute legantur et intelligantur, præbere possunt occasionem errori Pelagiano;' et D. Petavius dicit, 'Græci originalis fere criminis raram, nec disertam, mentionem scriptis suis attigerunt.'"—Walch, *Miscell. Sacr.* p. 607.

Methodius,) an extraordinary and unnatural sensuality also;” next, that “the Latin Church affirmed, in addition, that a corrupt and contaminated soul, and that, by generation, was carried on to his posterity;”<sup>20</sup> and, lastly, that neither Greeks nor Latins held the doctrine of imputation. It may be observed, in addition, that, in spite of the forcible teaching of St. Paul on the subject, the doctrine of Original Sin appears neither in the Apostles’ nor the Nicene Creed.

One additional specimen shall be given as a sample of many others:—I betake myself to one of our altars to receive the Blessed Eucharist; I have no doubt whatever on my mind about the Gift which that Sacrament contains; I confess to myself my belief, and I go through the steps on which it is assured to me. “The Presence of Christ is here, for It follows upon Consecration; and Consecration is the prerogative of Priests; and Priests are made by Ordination; and Ordination comes in direct line from the Apostles. Whatever be our other misfortunes, every link in our chain is safe; we have the Apostolic Succession, we have a right form of consecration: therefore we are blessed with the great Gift.” Here the question rises in me, “Who told you about that Gift?” I answer, “I have learned it from the Fathers: I believe the Real Presence because they bear witness to it. St. Ignatius calls it ‘the medicine of immortality’: St. Irenæus says that ‘our flesh becomes incorrupt, and partakes of life, and has the hope of the resurrection,’ as ‘being nourished from the Lord’s Body and Blood’; that the Eucharist ‘is made up of two things, an earthly and an heavenly:’<sup>21</sup> perhaps Origen, and perhaps Magnes, after him, say that It is not a type of our Lord’s Body, but His Body: and St. Cyprian uses language as fearful as can be spoken, of those who profane it. I cast my lot with them, I believe as they.” Thus I reply, and then the thought comes upon me a second time, “And do not the same ancient Fathers bear witness to another doctrine, which you disown? Are you not as a hypocrite, listening to them when you will, and deaf when you will not? How are you casting your lot with the Saints, when you go but

---

20. Horn, *Comment, de Pecc. Orig.* 1801, p. 98.

21. *Hær.* iv. 18. § 5.

half-way with them? For of whether of the two do they speak the more frequently, of the Real Presence in the Eucharist, or of the Pope's supremacy? You accept the lesser evidence, you reject the greater."

In truth, scanty as the Ante-nicene notices may be of the Papal Supremacy, they are both more numerous and more definite than the adducible testimonies in favour of the Real Presence. The testimonies to the latter are confined to a few passages such as those just quoted. On the other hand, of a passage in St. Justin, Bishop Kaye remarks, "Le Nourry infers that Justin maintained the doctrine of Transubstantiation; it might in my opinion be more plausibly urged in favour of Consubstantiation, since Justin calls the consecrated elements Bread and Wine, though not common bread and wine<sup>22</sup> . . . We may therefore conclude that, when he calls them the Body and Blood of Christ, he speaks figuratively." "Clement," observes the same author, "says that the Scripture calls wine a mystic *symbol* of the holy blood . . . Clement gives various interpretations of Christ's expressions in John vi. respecting His flesh and blood; but in no instance does he interpret them literally . . . His notion seems to have been that, by partaking of the bread and wine in the Eucharist, the soul of the believer is united to the Spirit, and that by this union the principle of immortality is imparted to the flesh."<sup>23</sup> "It has been suggested by some," says Waterland, "that Tertullian understood John vi. merely of faith, or doctrine, or spiritual actions; and it is strenuously denied by others." After quoting the passage, he adds, "All that one can justly gather from this confused passage is that Tertullian interpreted the bread of life in John vi. of the Word, which he sometimes makes to be vocal, and sometimes substantial, blending the ideas in a very perplexed manner; so that he is no clear authority for construing John vi. of doctrines, &c. All that is certain is that he supposes the Word made flesh, the Word incarnate to be the heavenly bread spoken of in that chapter."<sup>24</sup> "Origen's general observation relating to that chapter is, that

---

22. Justin Martyr, ch. 4.

23. Clem. Alex. ch. 11.

24. Works, vol. vii. p. 118-120.

it must not be literally, but figuratively understood.”<sup>25</sup> Again, “It is plain enough that Eusebius followed Origen in this matter, and that both of them favoured the same mystical or allegorical construction; whether constantly and uniformly I need not say.”<sup>26</sup> I will but add the incidental testimony afforded on a late occasion:—how far the Anglican doctrine of the Eucharist depends on the times before the Nicene Council, how far on the times after it, may be gathered from the circumstance that, when a memorable Sermon<sup>27</sup> was published on the subject, out of about one hundred and forty passages from the Fathers appended in the notes, not in formal proof, but in general illustration, only fifteen were taken from Ante-nicene writers.

With such evidence, the Ante-nicene testimonies which may be cited in behalf of the authority of the Holy See, need not fear a comparison. Faint they may be one by one, but at least we may count seventeen of them, and they are various, and are drawn from many times and countries, and thereby serve to illustrate each other, and form a body of proof. Whatever objections may be made to this or that particular fact, and I do not think any valid ones can be raised, still, on the whole, I consider that a cumulative argument rises from them in favour of the ecumenical and the doctrinal authority of Rome, stronger than any argument which can be drawn from the same period for the doctrine of the Real Presence. I shall have occasion to enumerate them in the fourth chapter of this Essay.

If it be said that the Real Presence appears, by the Liturgies of the fourth or fifth century, to have been the doctrine of the earlier, since those very forms probably existed from the first in Divine worship, this is doubtless an important truth; but then it is true also that the writers of the fourth and fifth centuries fearlessly assert, or frankly allow that the prerogatives of Rome were derived from apostolic times, and that because it was the See of St. Peter.

---

25. *Ibid.* p. 121.

26. *Ibid.* p. 127.

27. [Dr. Pusey's University Sermon of 1843.]

Moreover, if the resistance of St. Cyprian and Firmilian to the Church of Rome, in the question of baptism by heretics, be urged as an argument against her primitive authority, or the earlier resistance of Polycrates of Ephesus, let it be considered, first, whether all authority does not necessarily lead to resistance; next, whether St. Cyprian's own doctrine, which is in favour of Rome, is not more weighty than his act, which is against her; thirdly, whether he was not already in error in the main question under discussion, and Firmilian also; and lastly, which is the chief point here, whether, in like manner, we may not object on the other hand against the Real Presence the words of Tertullian, who explains, "This is my Body," by "a figure of my Body," and of Origen, who speaks of "our drinking Christ's Blood not only in the rite of the Sacraments, but also when we receive His discourses,"<sup>28</sup> and says that "that Bread which God the Word acknowledges as His Body is the Word which nourishes souls,"<sup>29</sup>—passages which admit of a Catholic interpretation when the Catholic doctrine is once proved, but which *primâ facie* run counter to that doctrine.

It does not seem possible, then, to avoid the conclusion that, whatever be the proper key for harmonizing the records and documents of the early and later Church, and true as the dictum of Vincentius must be considered in the abstract, and possible as its application might be in his own age, when he might almost ask the primitive centuries for their testimony, it is hardly available now, or effective of any satisfactory result. The solution it offers is as difficult as the original problem.

Another hypothesis for accounting for a want of accord between the early and the late aspects of Christianity is that of the *Disciplina Arcani*; put forward on the assumption that there has been no variation in the teaching of the Church from first to last. It is maintained that doctrines which are associated with the later ages of the Church were really in the Church from the first, but not publicly taught, and that for various reasons: as, for the sake of reverence, that sacred subjects might

---

28. Numer. Hom. xvi. 9.

29. Interp. Com. in Matt. 85.

not be profaned by the heathen; and for the sake of catechumens, that they might not be oppressed or carried away by a sudden communication of the whole circle of revealed truth. And indeed the fact of this concealment can hardly be denied, in whatever degree it took the shape of a definite rule, which might vary with persons and places. That it existed even as a rule, as regards the Sacraments, seems to be confessed on all hands. That it existed in other respects, as a practice, is plain from the nature of the case, and from the writings of the Apologists. Minucius Felix and Arnobius, in controversy with Pagans, imply a denial that then the Christians used altars; yet Tertullian speaks expressly of the *Ara Dei* in the Church. What can we say, but that the Apologists deny altars *in the sense* in which they ridicule them; or, that they deny that altars *such as* the Pagan altars were tolerated by Christians? And, in like manner, Minucius allows that there were no temples among Christians; yet they are distinctly recognized in the edicts of the Dioclesian era, and are known to have existed at a still earlier date. It is the tendency of every dominant system, such as the Paganism of the Ante-nicene centuries, to force its opponents into the most hostile and jealous attitude, from the apprehension which they naturally feel, lest if they acted otherwise, in those points in which they approximate towards it, they should be misinterpreted and overborne by its authority. The very fault now found with clergymen of the Anglican Church, who wish to conform their practices to her rubrics, and their doctrines to her divines of the seventeenth century, is, that, whether they mean it or no, whether legitimately or no, still, in matter of fact, they will be sanctioning and encouraging the religion of Rome, in which there are similar doctrines and practices, more definite and more influential; so that, at any rate, it is inexpedient at the moment to attempt what is sure to be mistaken. That is, they are required to exercise a *disciplina arcani*; and a similar reserve was inevitable on the part of the Catholic Church, at a time when priests and altars and rites all around it were devoted to malignant and incurable superstitions. It would be wrong indeed to deny, but it was a duty to withhold, the ceremonial of Christianity; and

Apologists might be sometimes tempted to deny absolutely what at furthest could only be denied under conditions. An idolatrous Paganism tended to repress the externals of Christianity, as, at this day, the presence of Protestantism is said to repress, though for another reason, the exhibition of the Roman Catholic religion.

On various grounds, then, it is certain that portions of the Church system were held back in primitive times, and of course this fact goes some way to account for that apparent variation and growth of doctrine, which embarrasses us when we would consult history for the true idea of Christianity; yet it is no key to the whole difficulty, as we find it, for obvious reasons:—because the variations continue beyond the time when it is conceivable that the discipline was in force, and because they manifest themselves on a law, not abruptly, but by a visible growth which has persevered up to this time without any sign of its coming to an end.<sup>30</sup>

The following Essay is directed towards a solution of the difficulty which has been stated,—the difficulty, as far as it exists, which lies in the way of our using in controversy the testimony of our most natural informant concerning the doctrine and worship of Christianity, viz. the history of eighteen hundred years. The view on which it is written has at all times, perhaps, been implicitly adopted by theologians, and, I believe, has recently been illustrated by several distinguished writers of the continent, such as De Maistre and Möhler: viz. that the increase and expansion of the Christian Creed and Ritual, and the variations which have attended the process in the case of individual writers and Churches, are the necessary attendants on any philosophy or polity which takes possession of the intellect and heart, and has had any wide or extended dominion; that, from the nature of the human mind, time is necessary for the full comprehension and perfection of great ideas; and that the highest and most wonderful truths, though communicated to the world once for all by inspired teachers, could not be comprehended all at once by the recipients, but, as being received and

---

30. [*Vid.*, Apolog., p. 198, and Difficulties of Angl. vol. i. xii. 7.]

transmitted by minds not inspired and through media which were human, have required only the longer time and deeper thought for their full elucidation. This may be called the *Theory of Development of Doctrine*; and, before proceeding to treat of it, one remark may be in place.

It is undoubtedly an hypothesis to account for a difficulty; but such too are the various explanations given by astronomers from Ptolemy to Newton of the apparent motions of the heavenly bodies, and it is as unphilosophical on that account to object to the one as to object to the other. Nor is it more reasonable to express surprise, that at this time of day a theory is necessary, granting for argument's sake that the theory is novel, than to have directed a similar wonder in disparagement of the theory of gravitation, or the Plutonian theory in geology. Doubtless, the theory of the Secret and the theory of doctrinal Developments are expedients, and so is the dictum of Vincentius; so is the art of grammar or the use of the quadrant; it is an expedient to enable us to solve what has now become a necessary and an anxious problem. For three hundred years the documents and the facts of Christianity have been exposed to a jealous scrutiny; works have been judged spurious which once were received without a question; facts have been discarded or modified which were once first principles in argument; new facts and new principles have been brought to light; philosophical views and polemical discussions of various tendencies have been maintained with more or less success. Not only has the relative situation of controversies and theologies altered, but infidelity itself is in a different,—I am obliged to say in a more hopeful position,—as regards Christianity. The facts of Revealed Religion, though in their substance unaltered, present a less compact and orderly front to the attacks of its enemies now than formerly, and allow of the introduction of new inquiries and theories concerning its sources and its rise. The state of things is not as it was, when an appeal lay to the supposed works of the Areopagite, or to the primitive Decretals, or to St. Dionysius's answers to Paul, or to the *Cœna Domini* of St. Cyprian. The assailants of dogmatic truth have got the start of its adherents of whatever Creed; philosophy is completing what

criticism has begun; and apprehensions are not unreasonably excited lest we should have a new world to conquer before we have weapons for the warfare. Already infidelity has its views and conjectures, on which it arranges the facts of ecclesiastical history; and it is sure to consider the absence of any antagonist theory as an evidence of the reality of its own. That the hypothesis, here to be adopted, accounts not only for the Athanasian Creed, but for the Creed of Pope Pius, is no fault of those who adopt it. No one has power over the issues of his principles; we cannot manage our argument, and have as much of it as we please and no more. An argument is needed, unless Christianity is to abandon the province of argument; and those who find fault with the explanation here offered of its historical phenomena will find it their duty to provide one for themselves.

And as no special aim at Roman Catholic doctrine need be supposed to have given a direction to the inquiry, so neither can a reception of that doctrine be immediately based on its results. It would be the work of a life to apply the Theory of Developments so carefully to the writings of the Fathers, and to the history of controversies and councils, as thereby to vindicate the reasonableness of every decision of Rome; much less can such an undertaking be imagined by one who, in the middle of his days, is beginning life again. Thus much, however, might be gained even from an Essay like the present, an explanation of so many of the reputed corruptions, doctrinal and practical, of Rome, as might serve as a fair ground for trusting her in parallel cases where the investigation had not been pursued.

## CHAPTER I

# On the Development of Ideas



### SECTION I. ON THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT IN IDEAS

IT IS THE CHARACTERISTIC OF OUR MINDS TO BE EVER ENGAGED in passing judgment on the things which come before us. No sooner do we apprehend than we judge: we allow nothing to stand by itself: we compare, contrast, abstract, generalize, connect, adjust, classify: and we view all our knowledge in the associations with which these processes have invested it.

Of the judgments thus made, which become aspects in our minds of the things which meet us, some are mere opinions which come and go, or which remain with us only till an accident displaces them, whatever be the influence which they exercise meanwhile. Others are firmly fixed in our minds, with or without good reason, and have a hold upon us, whether they relate to matters of fact, or to principles of conduct, or are views of life and the world, or are prejudices, imaginations, or convictions. Many of them attach to one and the same object, which is thus variously viewed, not only by various minds, but by the same. They sometimes lie in such near relation, that each implies the others; some are only not inconsistent with each other, in that they have a common origin: some, as being actually incompatible with each other, are, one or other, falsely associated in our minds with their object, and in any case they may be nothing more than ideas, which we mistake for things.

Thus Judaism is an idea which once was objective, and Gnosticism is an idea which was never so. Both of them have various aspects: those of Judaism were such as monotheism, a certain ethical discipline, a ministration of divine vengeance, a preparation for Christianity: those of the Gnostic idea are such as the doctrine of two principles, that of emanation, the intrinsic malignity of matter, the inculpability of sensual indulgence, or the guilt of every pleasure of sense, of which last two one or other must be in the Gnostic a false aspect and subjective only.

The idea which represents an object or supposed object is commensurate with the sum total of its possible aspects, however they may vary in the separate consciousness of individuals; and in proportion to the variety of aspects under which it presents itself to various minds is its force and depth, and the argument for its reality. Ordinarily an idea is not brought home to the intellect as objective except through this variety; like bodily substances, which are not apprehended except under the clothing of their properties and results, and which admit of being walked round, and surveyed on opposite sides, and in different perspectives, and in contrary lights, in evidence of their reality. And, as views of a material object may be taken from points so remote or so opposed, that they seem at first sight incompatible, and especially as their shadows will be disproportionate, or even monstrous, and yet all these anomalies will disappear and all these contrarieties be adjusted, on ascertaining the point of vision or the surface of projection in each case; so also all the aspects of an idea are capable of coalition, and of a resolution into the object to which it belongs; and the *primâ facie* dissimilitude of its aspects becomes, when explained, an argument for its substantiveness and integrity, and their multiplicity for its originality and power.

There is no one aspect deep enough to exhaust the contents of a real idea, no one term or proposition which will serve to define it; though of course one representation of it is more just and exact than another, and though when an idea is very complex, it is allowable, for the sake of convenience, to consider its distinct aspects as if separate

ideas. Thus, with all our intimate knowledge of animal life and of the structure of particular animals, we have not arrived at a true definition of any one of them, but are forced to enumerate properties and accidents by way of description. Nor can we inclose in a formula that intellectual fact, or system of thought, which we call the Platonic philosophy, or that historical phenomenon of doctrine and conduct, which we call the heresy of Montanus or of Manes. Again, if Protestantism were said to lie in its theory of private judgment, and Lutheranism in its doctrine of justification, this indeed would be an approximation to the truth; but it is plain that to argue or to act as if the one or the other aspect were a sufficient account of those forms of religion severally, would be a serious mistake. Sometimes an attempt is made to determine the "leading idea," as it has been called, of Christianity, an ambitious essay as employed on a supernatural work, when, even as regards the visible creation and the inventions of man, such a task is beyond us. Thus its one idea has been said by some to be the restoration of our fallen race, by others philanthropy, by others the tidings of immortality, or the spirituality of true religious service, or the salvation of the elect, or mental liberty, or the union of the soul with God. If, indeed, it is only thereby meant to use one or other of these as a central idea for convenience, in order to group others around it, no fault can be found with such a proceeding: and in this sense I should myself call the Incarnation the central aspect of Christianity, out of which the three main aspects of its teaching take their rise, the sacramental, the hierarchical, and the ascetic. But one aspect of Revelation must not be allowed to exclude or to obscure another; and Christianity is dogmatical, devotional, practical all at once; it is esoteric and exoteric; it is indulgent and strict; it is light and dark; it is love, and it is fear.

When an idea, whether real or not, is of a nature to arrest and possess the mind, it may be said to have life, that is, to live in the mind which is its recipient. Thus mathematical ideas, real as they are, can hardly properly be called living, at least ordinarily. But, when some great enunciation, whether true or false, about human nature, or present

good, or government, or duty, or religion, is carried forward into the public throng of men and draws attention, then it is not merely received passively in this or that form into many minds, but it becomes an active principle within them, leading them to an ever-new contemplation of itself, to an application of it in various directions, and a propagation of it on every side. Such is the doctrine of the divine right of kings, or of the rights of man, or of the anti-social bearings of a priesthood, or utilitarianism, or free trade, or the duty of benevolent enterprises, or the philosophy of Zeno or Epicurus, doctrines which are of a nature to attract and influence, and have so far a *primâ facie* reality, that they may be looked at on many sides and strike various minds very variously. Let one such idea get possession of the popular mind, or the mind of any portion of the community, and it is not difficult to understand what will be the result. At first men will not fully realise what it is that moves them, and will express and explain themselves inadequately. There will be a general agitation of thought, and an action of mind upon mind. There will be a time of confusion, when conceptions and misconceptions are in conflict, and it is uncertain whether anything is to come of the idea at all, or which view of it is to get the start of the others. New lights will be brought to bear upon the original statements of the doctrine put forward; judgments and aspects will accumulate. After a while some definite teaching emerges; and, as time proceeds, one view will be modified or expanded by another, and then combined with a third; till the idea to which these various aspects belong, will be to each mind separately what at first it was only to all together. It will be surveyed too in its relation to other doctrines or facts, to other natural laws or established customs, to the varying circumstances of times and places, to other religions, polities, philosophies, as the case may be. How it stands affected towards other systems, how it affects them, how far it may be made to combine with them, how far it tolerates them, when it interferes with them, will be gradually wrought out. It will be interrogated and criticized by enemies, and defended by well-wishers. The multitude of opinions formed concerning it in these respects and many others will

be collected, compared, sorted, sifted, selected, rejected, gradually attached to it, separated from it, in the minds of individuals and of the community. It will, in proportion to its native vigour and subtlety, introduce itself into the framework and details of social life, changing public opinion, and strengthening or undermining the foundations of established order. Thus in time it will have grown into an ethical code, or into a system of government, or into a theology, or into a ritual, according to its capabilities: and this body of thought, thus laboriously gained, will after all be little more than the proper representative of one idea, being in substance what that idea meant from the first, its complete image as seen in a combination of diversified aspects, with the suggestions and corrections of many minds, and the illustration of many experiences.

This process, whether it be longer or shorter in point of time, by which the aspects of an idea are brought into consistency and form, I call its development, being the germination and maturation of some truth or apparent truth on a large mental field. On the other hand this process will not be a development, unless the assemblage of aspects, which constitute its ultimate shape, really belongs to the idea from which they start. A republic, for instance, is not a development from a pure monarchy, though it may follow upon it; whereas the Greek "tyrant" may be considered as included in the idea of a democracy. Moreover a development will have this characteristic, that, its action being in the busy scene of human life, it cannot progress at all without cutting across, and thereby destroying or modifying and incorporating with itself existing modes of thinking and operating. The development then of an idea is not like an investigation worked out on paper, in which each successive advance is a pure evolution from a foregoing, but it is carried on through and by means of communities of men and their leaders and guides; and it employs their minds as its instruments, and depends upon them, while it uses them. And so, as regards existing opinions, principles, measures, and institutions of the community which it has invaded; it develops by establishing relations between itself and

them; it employs itself, in giving them a new meaning and direction, in creating what may be called a jurisdiction over them, in throwing off whatever in them it cannot assimilate. It grows when it incorporates, and its identity is found, not in isolation, but in continuity and sovereignty. This it is that imparts to the history both of states and of religions, its specially turbulent and polemical character. Such is the explanation of the wranglings, whether of schools or of parliaments. It is the warfare of ideas under their various aspects striving for the mastery, each of them enterprising, engrossing, imperious, more or less incompatible with the rest, and rallying followers or rousing foes, according as it acts upon the faith, the prejudices, or the interest of parties or classes.

Moreover, an idea not only modifies, but is modified, or at least influenced, by the state of things in which it is carried out, and is dependent in various ways on the circumstances which surround it. Its development proceeds quickly or slowly, as it may be; the order of succession in its separate stages is variable; it shows differently in a small sphere of action and in an extended; it may be interrupted, retarded, mutilated, distorted, by external violence; it maybe enfeebled by the effort of ridding itself of domestic foes; it may be impeded and swayed or even absorbed by counter energetic ideas; it may be coloured by the received tone of thought into which it comes, or depraved by the intrusion of foreign principles, or at length shattered by the development of some original fault within it.

But whatever be the risk of corruption from intercourse with the world around, such a risk must be encountered if a great idea is duly to be understood, and much more if it is to be fully exhibited. It is elicited and expanded by trial, and battles into perfection and supremacy. Nor does it escape the collision of opinion even in its earlier years, nor does it remain truer to itself, and with a better claim to be considered one and the same, though externally protected from vicissitude and change. It is indeed sometimes said that the stream is clearest near the spring. Whatever use may fairly be made of this image, it does not apply to the

history of a philosophy or belief, which on the contrary is more equable, and purer, and stronger, when its bed has become deep, and broad, and full. It necessarily rises out of an existing state of things, and for a time savours of the soil. Its vital element needs disengaging from what is foreign and temporary, and is employed in efforts after freedom which become more vigorous and hopeful as its years increase. Its beginnings are no measure of its capabilities, nor of its scope. At first no one knows what it is, or what it is worth. It remains perhaps for a time quiescent; it tries, as it were, its limbs, and proves the ground under it, and feels its way. From time to time it makes essays which fail, and are in consequence abandoned. It seems in suspense which way to go; it wavers, and at length strikes out in one definite direction. In time it enters upon strange territory; points of controversy alter their bearing; parties rise and around it; dangers and hopes appear in new relations; and old principles reappear under new forms. It changes with them in order to remain the same. In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.

## SECTION 2. ON THE KINDS OF DEVELOPMENT IN IDEAS

TO ATTEMPT AN ACCURATE ANALYSIS OR COMPLETE ENUMERATION of the processes of thought, whether speculative or practical, which come under the notion of development, exceeds the pretensions of an Essay like the present; but, without some general view of the various mental exercises which go by the name we shall have no security against confusion in our reasoning and necessary exposure to criticism.

1. First, then, it must be borne in mind that the word is commonly used, and is used here, in three senses indiscriminately, from defect of our language; on the one hand for the process of development, on the other for the result; and again either generally for a development, true or not true, (that is, faithful or unfaithful to the idea from which it started,)

or exclusively for a development deserving the name. A false or unfaithful development is more properly to be called a corruption.

2. Next, it is plain that *mathematical* developments, that is, the system of truths drawn out from mathematical definitions or equations, do not fall under our present subject, though altogether analogous to it. There can be no corruption in such developments, because they are conducted on strict demonstration; and the conclusions in which they terminate, being necessary, cannot be declensions from the original idea.

3. Nor, of course, do physical developments, as the growth of animal or vegetable nature, come into consideration here; excepting that, together with mathematical, they may be taken as illustrations of the general subject to which we have to direct our attention.

4. Nor have we to consider material developments, which, though effected by human contrivance, are still physical; as the development, as it is called, of the national resources. We speak, for instance, of Ireland, the United States, or the valley of the Indus, as admitting of a great development; by which we mean, that those countries have fertile tracts, or abundant products, or broad and deep rivers, or central positions for commerce, or capacious and commodious harbours, the materials and instruments of wealth, and these at present turned to insufficient account. Development in this case will proceed by establishing marts, cutting canals, laying down railroads, erecting factories, forming docks, and similar works, by which the natural riches of the country may be made to yield the largest return and to exert the greatest influence. In this sense, art is the development of nature, that is, its adaptation to the purposes of utility and beauty, the human intellect being the developing power.

5. When society and its various classes and interests are the subject-matter of the ideas which are in operation, the development may be called *political*; as we see it in the growth of States or the changes of a Constitution. Barbarians descend into southern regions from cupidity, and their warrant is the sword: this is no intellectual process, nor is it the mode of development exhibited in civilized communities. Where

civilization exists, reason, in some shape or other, is the incentive or the pretence of development. When an empire enlarges, it is on the call of its allies, or for the balance of power, or from the necessity of a demonstration of strength, or from a fear for its frontiers. It lies uneasily in its territory, it is ill-shaped, it has unreal boundary-lines, deficient communication between its principal points, or defenceless or turbulent neighbours. Thus, of old time, Eubœa was necessary for Athens, and Cythera for Sparta; and Augustus left his advice, as a legacy, to confine the Empire between the Atlantic, the Rhine and Danube, the Euphrates, and the Arabian and African deserts. In this day, we hear of the Rhine being the natural boundary of France, and the Indus of our Eastern empire; and we predict that, in the event of a war, Prussia will change her outlines in the map of Europe. The development is material; but an idea gives unity and force to its movement.

And so to take a case of national politics, a late writer remarks of the Parliament of 1628-29, in its contest with Charles, that, so far from encroaching on the just powers of a limited monarch, it never hinted at the securities which were necessary for its measures. However, "twelve years more of repeated aggressions," he adds, "taught the Long Parliament what a few sagacious men might perhaps have already suspected; that they must recover more of their ancient constitution, from oblivion; that they must sustain its partial weakness by new securities; that, in order to render the existence of monarchy compatible with that of freedom, they must not only strip it of all it had usurped, but of something that was its own."<sup>1</sup> Whatever be the worth of this author's theory, his facts or representations are an illustration of a political development.

Again, at the present day, that Ireland should have a population of one creed, and a Church of another, is felt to be a political arrangement so unsatisfactory, that all parties seem to agree that either the population will develop in power or the Establishment in influence.

Political developments, though really the growth of ideas, are often capricious and irregular from the nature of their subject-matter. They are influenced by the character of sovereigns, the rise and fall of

---

1. Hallam's *Constit. Hist.* ch. vii. p. 572.

statesmen, the fate of battles, and the numberless vicissitudes of the world. "Perhaps the Greeks would be still involved in the heresy of the Monophysites," says Gibbon, "if the Emperor's horse had not fortunately stumbled. Theodosius expired, his orthodox sister succeeded to the throne."<sup>2</sup>

Again, it often happens, or generally, that various distinct and incompatible elements are found in the origin or infancy of politics, or indeed of philosophies, some of which must be ejected before any satisfactory developments, if any, can take place. And they are commonly ejected by the gradual growth of the stronger. The reign of Charles the First, just referred to, supplies an instance in point.

Sometimes discordant ideas are for a time connected and concealed by a common profession or name. Such is the case of coalitions in politics and comprehensions in religion, of which commonly no good is to be expected. Such is an ordinary function of committees and boards, and the sole aim of conciliations and concessions, to make contraries look the same, and to secure an outward agreement where there is no other unity.

Again, developments, reactions, reforms, revolutions, and changes of various kinds are mixed together in the actual history of states, as of philosophical sects, so as to make it very difficult to exhibit them in any scientific analysis.

Often the intellectual process is detached from the practical, and posterior to it. Thus it was after Elizabeth had established the Reformation that Hooker laid down his theory of Church and State as one and the same, differing only in idea; and, after the Revolution and its political consequences, that Warburton wrote his "Alliance." And now again a new theory is needed for the constitutional lawyer, in order to reconcile the existing political state of things with the just claims of religion. And so, again, in Parliamentary conflicts, men first come to their conclusions by the external pressure of events or the force of principles, they do not know how; then they have to speak, and they look

---

2. ch. xlvii.

about for arguments: and a pamphlet is published on the subject in debate, or an article appears in a Review, to furnish common-places for the many.

Other developments, though political, are strictly subjected and consequent to the ideas of which they are the exhibitions. Thus Locke's philosophy was a real guide, not a mere defence of the Revolution era, operating forcibly upon Church and Government in and after his day. Such too were the theories which preceded the overthrow of the old regime in France and other countries at the end of the last century.

Again, perhaps there are polities founded on no ideas at all, but on mere custom, as among the Asiatics.

6. In other developments the intellectual character is so prominent that they may even be called *logical*, as in the Anglican doctrine of the Royal Supremacy, which has been created in the courts of law, not in the cabinet or on the field. Hence it is carried out with a consistency and minute application which the history of constitutions cannot exhibit. It does not only exist in statutes, or in articles, or in oaths, it is realized in details: as in the *cong   d'  lire* and letter-missive on appointment of a Bishop;—in the forms observed in Privy Council on the issuing of State Prayers;—in certain arrangements observed in the Prayer-book, where the universal or abstract Church precedes the King, but the national or really existing body follows him; in printing his name in large capitals, while the Holiest Names are in ordinary type, and in fixing his arms in churches instead of the Crucifix: moreover, perhaps, in placing “sedition, privy conspiracy and rebellion,” before “false doctrine, heresy, and schism” in the Litany.

Again, when some new philosophy or its instalments are introduced into the measures of the Legislature, or into the concessions made to a political party, or into commercial or agricultural policy, it is often said, “We have not seen the end of this;” “It is an earnest of future concessions;” “Our children will see.” We feel that it has unknown bearings and issues.

The admission of Jews to municipal offices has lately been defended<sup>3</sup> on the ground that it is the introduction of no new principle, but a development of one already received; that its great premisses have been decided long since; and that the present age has but to draw the conclusion; that it is not open to us to inquire what ought to be done in the abstract, since there is no ideal model for the infallible guidance of nations; that change is only a question of time, and that there is a time for all things; that the application of principles ought not to go beyond the actual case, neither preceding nor coming after an imperative demand; that in point of fact Jews have lately been chosen for offices, and that in point of principle the law cannot refuse to legitimate such elections.

7. Another class of developments may be called *historical*; being the gradual formation of opinion concerning persons, facts, and events. Judgments, which were at one time confined to a few, at length spread through a community, and attain general reception by the accumulation and concurrence of testimony. Thus some authoritative accounts die away; others gain a footing, and are ultimately received as truths. Courts of law, Parliamentary proceedings, newspapers, letters and other posthumous documents, the industry of historians and biographers, and the lapse of years which dissipates parties and prejudices, are in this day the instruments of such development. Accordingly the Poet makes Truth the daughter of Time.<sup>4</sup> Thus at length approximations are made to a right appreciation of transactions and characters. History cannot be written except in an after-age. Thus by development the Canon of the New Testament has been formed. Thus public men are content to leave their reputation to posterity; great reactions take place in opinion; nay, sometimes men outlive opposition and obloquy. Thus Saints are canonized in the Church, long after they have entered into their rest.

8. *Ethical* developments are not properly matter for argument and controversy, but are natural and personal, substituting what is congruous, desirable, pious, appropriate, generous, for strictly logical inference.

---

3. Times newspaper of March, 1845.

4. Crabbe's Tales.

Bishop Butler supplies us with a remarkable instance in the beginning of the Second Part of his "Analogy." As principles imply applications, and general propositions include particulars, so, he tells us, do certain relations imply correlative duties, and certain objects demand certain acts and feelings. He observes that, even though we were not enjoined to pay divine honours to the Second and Third Persons of the Holy Trinity, what is predicated of Them in Scripture would be an abundant warrant, an indirect command, nay, a ground in reason, for doing so. "Does not," he asks, "the duty of religious regards to both these Divine Persons as immediately arise, to the view of reason, out of the very nature of these offices and relations, as the inward good-will and kind intention which we owe to our fellow-creatures arises out of the common relations between us and them?" He proceeds to say that he is speaking of the inward religious regards of reverence, honour, love, trust, gratitude, fear, hope. "In what external manner this inward worship is to be expressed, is a matter of pure revealed command; . . . but the worship, the internal worship itself, to the Son and Holy Ghost, is no further matter of pure revealed command than as the relations they stand in to us are matter of pure revelation; for, the relations being known, the obligations to such internal worship are obligations of reason, arising out of those relations themselves." Here is a development of doctrine into worship, of which parallel instances are obviously to be found in the Church of Rome.

A development, converse to that which Butler speaks of, must next be mentioned. As certain objects excite certain emotions and sentiments, so do sentiments imply objects and duties. Thus conscience, the existence of which we cannot deny, is a proof of the doctrine of a Moral Governor, which alone gives it a meaning and a scope; that is, the doctrine of a Judge and Judgment to come is a development of the phenomenon of conscience. Again, it is plain that passions and affections are in action in our minds before the presence of their proper objects; and their activity would of course be an antecedent argument of extreme cogency in behalf of the real existence of those legitimate objects, supposing them unknown. And so again, the social principle, which is innate in us, gives a divine sanction to society and to civil

government. And the usage of prayers for the dead implies certain circumstances of their state upon which such devotions bear. And rites and ceremonies are natural means through which the mind relieves itself of devotional and penitential emotions. And sometimes the cultivation of awe and love towards what is great, high, and unseen, has led a man to the abandonment of his sect for some more Catholic form of doctrine.

Aristotle furnishes us with an instance of this kind of development in his account of the happy man. After showing that his definition of happiness includes in itself the pleasurable, which is the most obvious and popular idea of happiness, he goes on to say that still external goods are necessary to it, about which, however, the definition said nothing; that is, a certain prosperity is by moral fitness, not by logical necessity, attached to the happy man. "For it is impossible," he observes, "or not easy, to practise high virtue without abundant means. Many deeds are done by the instrumentality of friends, wealth and political power; and of some things the absence is a cloud upon happiness, as of noble birth, of hopeful children, and of personal appearance: for a person utterly deformed, or low-born, or bereaved and childless, cannot quite be happy: and still less if he have very worthless children or friends, or they were good and died."<sup>5</sup>

This process of development has been well delineated by a living French writer, in his Lectures on European civilization, who shall be quoted at some length.

If we reduce religion to a purely religious sentiment . . . it appears evident that it must and ought to remain a purely personal concern. But I am either strangely mistaken, or this religious sentiment is not the complete expression of the religious nature of man. Religion is, I believe, very different from this, and much more extended. There are problems in human nature, in human destinies, which cannot be solved in this life, which depend on an order of things unconnected with the visible world, but which unceasingly agitate

---

5. Eth. Nic. i. 8.

the human mind with a desire to comprehend them. The solution of these problems is the origin of all religion; her primary object is to discover the creeds and doctrines which contain, or are supposed to contain it.

Another cause also impels mankind to embrace religion . . . From whence do morals originate? whither do they lead? is this self-existing obligation to do good, an isolated fact, without an author, without an end? does it not conceal, or rather does it not reveal to man, an origin, a destiny, beyond this world? The science of morals, by these spontaneous and inevitable questions, conducts man to the threshold of religion, and displays to him a sphere from whence he has not derived it. Thus the certain and never-failing sources of religion are, on the one hand, the problems of our nature; on the other, the necessity of seeking for morals a sanction, an origin, and an aim. It therefore assumes many other forms beside that of a pure sentiment; it appears a union of doctrines, of precepts, of promises. This is what truly constitutes religion; this is its fundamental character; it is not merely a form of sensibility, an impulse of the imagination, a variety of poetry.

When thus brought back to its true elements, to its essential nature, religion appears no longer a purely personal concern, but a powerful and fruitful principle of association. Is it considered in the light of a system of belief, a system of dogmas? Truth is not the heritage of any individual, it is absolute and universal; mankind ought to seek and profess it in common. Is it considered with reference to the precepts that are associated with its doctrines? A law which is obligatory on a single individual, is so on all; it ought to be promulgated, and it is our duty to endeavour to bring all mankind under its dominion. It is the same with respect to the promises that religion makes, in the name of its creeds and precepts; they ought to be diffused; all men should be incited to partake of their benefits. A religious society, therefore, naturally results from the essential elements of religion, and is such a necessary consequence of it that the term which

expresses the most energetic social sentiment, the most intense desire to propagate ideas and extend society, is the word proselytism, a term which is especially applied to religious belief, and in fact consecrated to it.

When a religious society has ever been formed, when a certain number of men are united by a common religious creed, are governed by the same religious precepts, and enjoy the same religious hopes, some form of government is necessary. No society can endure a week, nay more, no society can endure a single hour, without a government. The moment, indeed, a society is formed, by the very fact of its formation, it calls forth a government,—a government which shall proclaim the common truth which is the bond of the society, and promulgate and maintain the precepts that this truth ought to produce. The necessity of a superior power, of a form of government, is involved in the fact of the existence of a religious, as it is in that of any other society.

And not only is a government necessary, but it naturally forms itself. . . . When events are suffered to follow their natural laws, when force does not interfere, power falls into the hands of the most able, the most worthy, those who are most capable of carrying out the principles on which the society was founded. Is a warlike expedition in agitation? The bravest take the command. Is the object of the association learned research, or a scientific undertaking? The best informed will be the leader . . . The inequality of faculties and influence, which is the foundation of power in civil life, has the same effect in a religious society . . . Religion has no sooner arisen in the human mind than a religious society appears; and immediately a religious society is formed, it produces its government.<sup>6</sup>

9. It remains to allude to what, unless the word were often so vaguely and variously used, I should be led to call *metaphysical*

---

6. Guizot, *Europ. Civil.*, Lect. v., Beckwith's Translation.

developments; I mean such as are a mere analysis of the idea contemplated, and terminate in its exact and complete delineation. Thus Aristotle draws the character of a magnanimous or of a munificent man; thus Shakspeare might conceive and bring out his Hamlet or Ariel; thus Walter Scott gradually enucleates his James, or Dalgetty, as the action of his story proceeds; and thus, in the sacred province of theology, the mind may be employed in developing the solemn ideas, which it has hitherto held implicitly and without subjecting them to its reflecting and reasoning powers.

I have already treated of this subject at length, with a reference to the highest theological subject, in a former work, from which it will be sufficient here to quote some sentences in explanation:—

“The mind which is habituated to the thought of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, naturally turns with a devout curiosity to the contemplation of the object of its adoration, and begins to form statements concerning it, before it knows whither, or how far, it will be carried. One proposition necessarily leads to another, and a second to a third; then some limitation is required; and the combination of these opposites occasions some fresh evolutions from the original idea, which indeed can never be said to be entirely exhausted. This process is its development, and results in a series, or rather body, of dogmatic statements, till what was an impression on the Imagination has become a system or creed in the Reason.

“Now such impressions are obviously individual and complete above other theological ideas, because they are the impressions of Objects. Ideas and their developments are commonly not identical, the development being but the carrying out of the idea into its consequences. Thus the doctrine of Penance may be called a development of the doctrine of Baptism, yet still is a distinct doctrine; whereas the developments in the doctrines of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation are mere portions of the original impression, and modes of representing it. As God is one, so the impression which He gives us of Himself is one; it is not a thing of parts; it is not a system; nor is it anything imperfect and needing a counterpart. It is the vision of an object. When we pray,

we pray, not to an assemblage of notions or to a creed, but to One Individual Being; and when we speak of Him, we speak of a Person, not of a Law or Manifestation . . . Religious men, according to their measure, have an idea or vision of the Blessed Trinity in Unity, of the Son Incarnate, and of His Presence, not as a number of qualities, attributes, and actions, not as the subject of a number of propositions, but as one and individual, and independent of words, like an impression conveyed through the senses . . . Creeds and dogmas live in the one idea which they are designed to express, and which alone is substantive; and are necessary, because the human mind cannot reflect upon that idea except piecemeal, cannot use it in its oneness and entireness, or without resolving it into a series of aspects and relations.”<sup>7</sup>

So much on the development of ideas in various subject matters: it may be necessary to add that, in many cases, *development* simply stands for *exhibition*, as in some of the instances adduced above. Thus both Calvinism and Unitarianism may be called developments, that is, exhibitions, of the principle of Private Judgment, though they have nothing in common, viewed as doctrines.

As to Christianity, supposing the truths of which it consists to admit of development, that development will be one or other of the last five kinds. Taking the Incarnation as its central doctrine, the Episcopate, as taught by St. Ignatius, will be an instance of political development, the *Theotokos* of logical, the determination of the date of our Lord’s birth of historical, the Holy Eucharist of moral, and the Athanasian Creed of metaphysical.

---

7. [Univ. Sermon. xv. 20-23, pp. 329-332, ed. 3.]

# On the Antecedent Argument in Behalf of Developments in Christian Doctrine

## SECTION I. DEVELOPMENTS OF DOCTRINE TO BE EXPECTED

1. If Christianity is a fact, and impresses an idea of itself on our minds and is a subject-matter of exercises of the reason, that idea will in course of time expand into a multitude of ideas, and aspects of ideas, connected and harmonious with one another, and in themselves determinate and immutable, as is the objective fact itself which is thus represented. It is a characteristic of our minds, that they cannot take an object in, which is submitted to them simply and integrally. We conceive by means of definition or description; whole objects do not create in the intellect whole ideas, but are, to use a mathematical phrase, thrown into series, into a number of statements, strengthening, interpreting, correcting each other, and with more or less exactness approximating, as they accumulate, to a perfect image. There is no other way of learning or of teaching. We cannot teach except by aspects or views, which are not identical with the thing itself which we are teaching. Two persons may each convey the same truth to a third, yet by methods and through representations altogether different. The same person will treat the same argument differently in an essay or speech, according to the accident of the day of writing, or of the audience, yet it will be substantially the same.

And the more claim an idea has to be considered living, the more various will be its aspects; and the more social and political is its nature,

the more complicated and subtle will be its issues, and the longer and more eventful will be its course. And in the number of these special ideas, which from their very depth and richness cannot be fully understood at once, but are more and more clearly expressed and taught the longer they last,—having aspects many and bearings many, mutually connected and growing one out of another, and all parts of a whole, with a sympathy and correspondence keeping pace with the ever-changing necessities of the world, multiform, prolific, and ever resourceful,— among these great doctrines surely we Christians shall not refuse a foremost place to Christianity. Such previously to the determination of the fact, must be our anticipation concerning it from a contemplation of its initial achievements.

It may be objected that its inspired documents at once determine the limits of its mission without further trouble; but ideas are in the writer and reader of the revelation, not the inspired text itself: and the question is whether those ideas which the letter conveys from writer to reader, reach the reader at once in their completeness and accuracy on his first perception of them, or whether they open out in his intellect and grow to perfection in the course of time. Nor could it surely be maintained without extravagance that the letter of the New Testament, or of any assignable number of books, comprises a delineation of all possible forms which a divine message will assume when submitted to a multitude of minds.

Nor is the case altered by supposing that inspiration provided in behalf of the first recipients of the Revelation, what the Divine fiat effected for herbs and plants in the beginning, which were created in maturity. Still, the time at length came, when its recipients ceased to be inspired; and on these recipients the revealed truths would fall, as in other cases, at first vaguely and generally, though in spirit and in truth, and would afterwards be completed by developments.

Nor can it fairly be made a difficulty that thus to treat of Christianity is to level it in some sort to sects and doctrines of the world, and to impute to it the imperfections which characterize the produc-

tions of man. Certainly it is a sort of degradation of a divine work to consider it under an earthly form; but it is no irreverence, since our Lord Himself, its Author and Guardian, bore one also. Christianity differs from other religions and philosophies, in what is superadded to earth from heaven; not in kind, but in origin; not in its nature, but in its personal characteristics; being informed and quickened by what is more than intellect, by a divine spirit. It is externally what the Apostle calls an "earthen vessel," being the religion of men. And, considered as such, it grows "in wisdom and stature;" but the powers which it wields, and the words which proceed out of its mouth, attest its miraculous nativity.

Unless then some special ground of exception can be assigned, it is as evident that Christianity, as a doctrine and worship, will develop in the minds of recipients, as that it conforms in other respects, in its external propagation or its political framework, to the general methods by which the course of things is carried forward.

2. Again, if Christianity be an universal religion, suited not simply to one locality or period, but to all times and places, it cannot but vary in its relations and dealings towards the world around it, that is, it will develop. Principles require a very various application according as persons and circumstances vary, and must be thrown into new shapes according to the form of society which they are to influence. Hence all bodies of Christians, orthodox or not, develop the doctrines of Scripture. Few but will grant that Luther's view of justification had never been stated in words before his time: that his phraseology and his positions were novel, whether called for by circumstances or not. It is equally certain that the doctrine of justification defined at Trent was, in some sense, new also. The refutation and remedy of errors cannot precede their rise; and thus the fact of false developments or corruptions involves the correspondent manifestation of true ones. Moreover, all parties appeal to Scripture, that is, argue from Scripture; but argument implies deduction, that is, development. Here there is no difference between early times and late, between a Pope *ex cathedrâ* and an individual Protestant, except that their authority is not on a par. On

either side the claim of authority is the same, and the process of development.

Accordingly, the common complaint of Protestants against the Church of Rome is, not simply that she has added to the primitive or the Scriptural doctrine, (for this they do themselves), but that she contradicts it, and moreover imposes her additions as fundamental truths under sanction of an anathema. For themselves they deduce by quite as subtle a method, and act upon doctrines as implicit and on reasons as little analyzed in time past, as Catholic schoolmen. What prominence has the Royal Supremacy in the New Testament, or the lawfulness of bearing arms, or the duty of public worship, or the substitution of the first day of the week for the seventh, or infant baptism, to say nothing of the fundamental principle that the Bible and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants? These doctrines and usages, true or not, which is not the question here, are surely not gained by the direct use and immediate application of Scripture, nor by a mere exercise of argument upon words and sentences placed before the eyes, but by the unconscious growth of ideas suggested by the letter and habitual to the mind.

3. And, indeed, when we turn to the consideration of particular doctrines on which Scripture lays the greatest stress, we shall see that it is absolutely impossible for them to remain in the mere letter of Scripture, if they are to be more than mere words, and to convey a definite idea to the recipient. When it is declared that "the Word became flesh," three wide questions open upon us on the very announcement. What is meant by "the Word," what by "flesh," what by "became"? The answers to these involve a process of investigation, and are developments. Moreover, when they have been made, they will suggest a series of secondary questions; and thus at length a multitude of propositions is the result, which gather round the inspired sentence of which they come, giving it externally the form of a doctrine, and creating or deepening the idea of it in the mind.

It is true that, so far as such statements of Scripture are mysteries, they are relatively to us but words, and cannot be developed. But as a

mystery implies in part what is incomprehensible or at least unknown, so does it in part imply what is not so; it implies a partial manifestation; or a representation by economy. Because then it is in a measure understood, it can so far be developed, though each result in the process will partake of the dimness and confusion of the original impression.

4. This moreover should be considered,—that great questions exist in the subject-matter of which Scripture treats, which Scripture does not solve; questions too so real, so practical, that they must be answered, and, unless we suppose a new revelation, answered by means of the revelation which we have, that is, by development. Such is the question of the Canon of Scripture and its inspiration: that is, whether Christianity depends upon a written document as Judaism;—if so, on what writings and how many;—whether that document is self-interpreting, or requires a comment, and whether any authoritative comment or commentator is provided;—whether the revelation and the document are commensurate, or the one outruns the other;—all these questions surely find no solution on the surface of Scripture, nor indeed under the surface in the case of most men, however long and diligent might be their study of it. Nor were these difficulties settled by authority, as far as we know, at the commencement of the religion; yet surely it is quite conceivable that an Apostle might have dissipated them all in a few words, had Divine Wisdom thought fit. But in matter of fact the decision has been left to time, to the slow process of thought, to the influence of mind upon mind, the issues of controversy, and the growth of opinion.

To take another instance just now referred to:—if there was a point on which a rule was desirable from the first, it was concerning the religious duties under which Christian parents lay as regards their children. It would be natural indeed in any Christian father, in the absence of a rule, to bring his children for baptism; such in this instance would be the practical development of his faith in Christ and love for his offspring; still a development it is,—necessarily required, yet, as far as we

know, not provided for his need by direct precept in the Revelation as originally given.

Another very large field of thought, full of practical considerations, yet, as far as our knowledge goes, but only partially occupied by any Apostolical judgment, is that which the question of the effects of Baptism opens upon us. That they who came in repentance and faith to that Holy Sacrament received remission of sins, is undoubtedly the doctrine of the Apostles; but is there any means of a second remission for sins committed after it? St. Paul's Epistles, where we might expect an answer to our inquiry, contain no explicit statement on the subject; what they do plainly say does not diminish the difficulty:—viz., first, that baptism is intended for the pardon of sins before it, not in prospect; next, that those who have received the gift of Baptism in fact live in a state of holiness, not of sin. How do statements such as these meet the actual state of the Church as we see it at this day?

Considering that it was expressly predicted that the Kingdom of Heaven, like the fisher's net, should gather of every kind, and that the tares should grow with the wheat until the harvest, a graver and more practical question cannot be imagined than that which it has pleased the Divine Author of the Revelation to leave undecided, unless indeed there be means given in that Revelation of its own growth or development. As far as the letter goes of the inspired message, every one who holds that Scripture is the rule of faith, as all Protestants do, must allow that "there is not one of us but has exceeded by transgression its revealed Ritual, and finds himself in consequence thrown upon those infinite resources of Divine Love which are stored in Christ, but have not been drawn out into form in the appointments of the Gospel."<sup>1</sup> Since then Scripture needs completion, the question is brought to this issue, whether defect or inchoateness in its doctrines be or be not an antecedent probability in favour of a development of them.

There is another subject, though not so immediately practical, on which Scripture does not, strictly speaking, keep silence, but says so

---

1. Doctrine of Justification, Lect. xiii.

little as to require, and so much as to suggest, information beyond its letter,—the intermediate state between death and the Resurrection. Considering the long interval which separates Christ's first and second coming, the millions of faithful souls who are waiting it out, and the intimate concern which every Christian has in the determination of its character, it might have been expected that Scripture would have spoken explicitly concerning it, whereas in fact its notices are but brief and obscure. We might indeed have argued that this silence of Scripture was intentional, with a view of discouraging speculations upon the subject, except for the circumstance that, as in the question of our post-baptismal state, its teaching seems to proceed upon an hypothesis inapplicable to the state of the Church after the time when it was delivered. As Scripture contemplates Christians, not as backsliders, but as saints, so does it apparently represent the Day of Judgment as immediate, and the interval of expectation as evanescent. It leaves on our minds the general impression that Christ was returning on earth at once, "the time short," worldly engagements superseded by "the present distress," persecutors urgent, Christians, as a body, sinless and expectant, without home, without plan for the future, looking up to heaven. But outward circumstances have changed, and with the change, a different application of the revealed word has of necessity been demanded, that is, a development. When the nations were converted and offences abounded, then the Church came out to view, on the one hand as a temporal establishment, on the other as a remedial system, and passages of Scripture aided and directed the development which before were of inferior account. Hence the doctrine of Penance as the complement of Baptism, and of Purgatory as the explanation of the Intermediate State. So reasonable is this expansion of the original creed, that, when some ten years since the true doctrine of Baptism was expounded among us without any mention of Penance, our teacher was accused by many of us of Novatianism; while, on the other hand, heterodox divines have before now advocated the doctrine of the sleep of the soul because they said it was the only successful preventive of belief in Purgatory.

Thus developments of Christianity are proved to have been in the contemplation of its Divine Author, by an argument parallel to that by which we infer intelligence in the system of the physical world. In whatever sense the need and its supply are a proof of design in the visible creation, in the same do the gaps, if the word may be used, which occur in the structure of the original creed of the Church, make it probable that those developments, which grow out of the truths which lie around it, were intended to fill them up.

Nor can it be fairly objected that in thus arguing we are contradicting the great philosopher, who tells us, that “upon supposition of God affording us light and instruction by revelation, additional to what He has afforded us by reason and experience, we are in no sort judges by what methods, and in what proportion, it were to be expected that this supernatural light and instruction would be afforded us,”<sup>2</sup> because he is speaking of our judging before a revelation is given. He observes that “we have no principles of reason upon which to judge *beforehand*, how it were to be expected Revelation should have been left, or what was most suitable to the divine plan of government,” in various respects; but the case is altogether altered when a Revelation is vouchsafed, for then a new precedent, or what he calls “principle of reason,” is introduced, and from what is actually put into our hands we can form a judgment whether more is to be expected. Butler, indeed, as a well-known passage of his work shows, is far from denying the principle of progressive development.

5. The method of revelation observed in Scripture abundantly confirms this anticipation. For instance, Prophecy, if it had so happened, need not have afforded a specimen of development; separate predictions might have been made to accumulate as time went on, prospects might have opened, definite knowledge might have been given, by communications independent of each other, as St. John's Gospel or the Epistles of St. Paul are unconnected with the first three Gospels, though the doctrine of each Apostle is a development of their matter. But the

---

2. Butler's Anal. ii. 3.

prophetic Revelation is, in matter of fact, not of this nature, but a process of development: the earlier prophecies are pregnant texts out of which the succeeding announcements grow; they are types. It is not that first one truth is told, then another; but the whole truth or large portions of it are told at once, yet only in their rudiments, or in miniature, and they are expanded and finished in their parts, as the course of revelation proceeds. The Seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head; the sceptre was not to depart from Judah till Shiloh came, to whom was to be the gathering of the people. He was to be Wonderful, Counsellor, the Prince of Peace. The question of the Ethiopian rises in the reader's mind, "Of whom speaketh the Prophet this?" Every word requires a comment. Accordingly, it is no uncommon theory with unbelievers, that the Messianic idea, as they call it, was gradually developed in the minds of the Jews by a continuous and traditional habit of contemplating it, and grew into its full proportions by a mere human process; and so far seems certain, without trenching on the doctrine of inspiration, that the books of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus are developments of the writings of the Prophets, expressed or elicited by means of current ideas in the Greek philosophy, and ultimately adopted and ratified by the Apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews.

But the whole Bible, not its prophetical portions only, is written on the principle of development. As the Revelation proceeds, it is ever new, yet ever old. St. John, who completes it, declares that he writes no "new commandment unto his brethren," but an old commandment which they "had from the beginning." And then he adds, "A new commandment I write unto you." The same test of development is suggested in our Lord's words on the Mount, as has already been noticed, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." He does not reverse, but perfect, what has gone before. Thus with respect to the evangelical view of the rite of sacrifice, first the rite is enjoined by Moses; next Samuel says, "to obey is better than sacrifice;" then Hosea, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice;" Isaiah, "Incense is an abomination unto me;" then Malachi, describing the

times of the Gospel, speaks of the “pure offering” of wheatflour; and our Lord completes the development, when He speaks of worshipping “in spirit and in truth.” If there is anything here left to explain, it will be found in the usage of the Christian Church immediately afterwards, which shows that sacrifice was not removed, but truth and spirit added.

Nay, the *effata* of our Lord and His Apostles are of a typical structure, parallel to the prophetic announcements above mentioned, and predictions as well as injunctions of doctrine. If then the prophetic sentences have had that development which has really been given them, first by succeeding revelations, and then by the event, it is probable antecedently that those doctrinal, political, ritual, and ethical sentences, which have the same structure, should admit the same expansion. Such are, “This is My Body,” or “Thou art Peter, and upon this flock I will build My Church,” or “The meek shall inherit the earth,” or “Suffer little children to come unto Me,” or “The pure in heart shall see God.”

On this character of our Lord’s teaching, the following passage may suitably be quoted from a writer already used. “His recorded words and works when on earth . . . come to us as the declarations of a Lawgiver. In the Old Covenant, Almighty God first of all spoke the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai, and afterwards wrote them. So our Lord first spoke His own Gospel, both of promise and of precept, on the Mount, and His Evangelists have recorded it. Further, when He delivered it, He spoke by way of parallel to the Ten Commandments. And His style, moreover, corresponds to the authority which He assumes. It is of that solemn, measured, and severe character, which bears on the face of it tokens of its belonging to One who spake as none other man could speak. The Beatitudes, with which His Sermon opens, are an instance of this incommunicable style, which befitted, as far as human words could befit, God Incarnate.

“Nor is this style peculiar to the Sermon on the Mount. All through the Gospels it is discernible, distinct from any other part of Scripture, showing itself in solemn declarations, canons, sentences, or sayings, such as legislators propound, and scribes and lawyers comment

on. Surely everything our Saviour did and said is characterized by mingled simplicity and mystery. His emblematical actions, His typical miracles, His parables, His replies, His censures, all are evidences of a legislature in germ, afterwards to be developed, a code of divine truth which was ever to be before men's eyes, to be the subject of investigation and interpretation, and the guide in controversy. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you,'—'But, I say unto you,'—are the tokens of a supreme Teacher and Prophet.

"And thus the Fathers speak of His teaching. 'His sayings,' observes St. Justin, 'were short and concise; for He was no rhetorician, but His word was the power of God.' And St. Basil, in like manner, 'Every deed and every word of our Saviour Jesus Christ is a canon of piety and virtue. When then thou hearest word or deed of His, do not hear it as by the way, or after a simple and carnal manner, but enter into the depth of His contemplations, become a communicant in truths mystically delivered to thee.'"<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, while it is certain that developments of Revelation proceeded all through the Old Dispensation down to the very end of our Lord's ministry, on the other hand, if we turn our attention to the beginnings of Apostolical teaching after His ascension, we shall find ourselves unable to fix an historical point at which the growth of doctrine ceased, and the rule of faith was once for all settled. Not on the day of Pentecost, for St. Peter had still to learn at Joppa that he was to baptize Cornelius; not at Joppa and Cæsarea, for St. Paul had to write his Epistles; not on the death of the last Apostle, for St. Ignatius had to establish the doctrine of Episcopacy; not then, nor for centuries after, for the Canon of the New Testament was still undetermined. Not in the Creed, which is no collection of definitions, but a summary of certain *credenda*, an incomplete summary, and, like the Lord's Prayer or the Decalogue, a mere sample of divine truths, especially of the more elementary. No one doctrine can be named which starts complete at first, and gains nothing afterwards from the investigations of faith and the

---

3. Proph. Office, Lect. xii. [Via Med. vol. i. pp. 292-3].

attacks of heresy. The Church went forth from the old world in haste, as the Israelites from Egypt “with their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.”

Further, the political developments contained in the historical parts of Scripture are as striking as the prophetic and the doctrinal. Can any history wear a more human appearance than that of the rise and growth of the chosen people to whom I have just referred? What had been determined in the counsels of the Lord of heaven and earth from the beginning, what was immutable, what was announced to Moses in the burning bush, is afterwards represented as the growth of an idea under successive emergencies. The Divine Voice in the bush had announced the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt and their entrance into Canaan; and added, as a token of the certainty of His purpose, “When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.” Now this sacrifice or festival, which was but incidental and secondary in the great deliverance, is for a while the ultimate scope of the demands which Moses makes upon Pharaoh. “Thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel unto the King of Egypt, and ye shall say unto him, The Lord God of the Hebrews hath met with us, and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days’ journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.” It had been added that Pharaoh would first refuse their request, but that after miracles he would let them go altogether, nay with “jewels of silver and gold, and raiment.”

Accordingly the first request of Moses was, “Let us go, we pray thee, three days’ journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God.” Before the plague of frogs the warning is repeated, “Let My people go that they may serve Me;” and after it Pharaoh says, “I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord.” It occurs again before the plague of flies; and after it Pharaoh offers to let the Israelites sacrifice in Egypt, which Moses refuses on the ground that they will have to “sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes.” “We will go three days’ journey into the wilderness,” he proceeds, “and

sacrifice to the Lord our God;" and Pharaoh then concedes their sacrificing in the wilderness, "only," he says, "you shall not go very far away." The demand is repeated separately before the plagues of murrain, hail, and locusts, no mention being yet made of anything beyond a service or sacrifice in the wilderness. On the last of these interviews, Pharaoh asks an explanation, and Moses extends his claim: "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go, for we must hold a feast unto the Lord." That it was an extension seems plain from Pharaoh's reply: "Go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord, for that ye did desire." Upon the plague of darkness Pharaoh concedes the extended demand, excepting the flocks and herds; but Moses reminds him that they were implied, though not expressed in the original wording: "Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God." Even to the last, there was no intimation of their leaving Egypt for good; the issue was left to be wrought out by the Egyptians. "All these thy servants," says Moses, "shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out and all the people that follow thee, and after that I will go out;" and, accordingly, after the judgment on the first-born, they were thrust out at midnight, with their flocks and herds, their kneading troughs and their dough, laden, too, with the spoils of Egypt, as had been fore-ordained, yet apparently by a combination of circumstances, or the complication of a crisis. Yet Moses knew that their departure from Egypt was final, for he took the bones of Joseph with him; and that conviction broke on Pharaoh soon, when he and his asked themselves, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?" But this progress of events, vague and uncertain as it seemed to be, notwithstanding the miracles which attended it, had been directed by Him who works out gradually what He has determined absolutely; and it ended in the parting of the Red Sea, and the destruction of Pharaoh's host, on his pursuing them.

Moreover, from what occurred forty years afterwards, when they were advancing upon the promised land, it would seem that the original

grant of territory did not include the country east of Jordan, held in the event by Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh; at least they undertook at first to leave Sihon in undisturbed possession of his country, if he would let them pass through it, and only on his refusing his permission did they invade and appropriate it.

6. It is in point to notice also the structure and style of Scripture, a structure so unsystematic and various, and a style so figurative and indirect, that no one would presume at first sight to say what is in it and what is not. It cannot, as it were, be mapped, or its contents catalogued; but after all our diligence, to the end of our lives and to the end of the Church, it must be an unexplored and unsubdued land, with heights and valleys, forests and streams, on the right and left of our path and close about us, full of concealed wonders and choice treasures. Of no doctrine whatever, which does not actually contradict what has been delivered, can it be peremptorily asserted that it is not in Scripture; of no reader, whatever be his study of it, can it be said that he has mastered every doctrine which it contains. Butler's remarks on this subject were just now referred to. "The more distinct and particular knowledge," he says, "of those things, the study of which the Apostle calls 'going on unto perfection,'" that is, of the more recondite doctrines of the Gospel, "and of the prophetic parts of revelation, like many parts of natural and even civil knowledge, may require very exact thought and careful consideration. The hindrances too of natural and of supernatural light and knowledge have been of the same kind. And as it is owned the whole scheme of Scripture is not yet understood, so, if it ever comes to be understood before the 'restitution of all things,' and without miraculous interpositions, it must be in the same way as natural knowledge is come at, by the continuance and progress of learning and of liberty, and by particular persons attending to, comparing, and pursuing intimations scattered up and down it, which are overlooked and disregarded by the generality of the world. For this is the way in which all improvements are made, by thoughtful men tracing on obscure hints, as it were, dropped us by nature accidentally, or which seem to come into our

minds by chance. Nor is it at all incredible that a book, which has been so long in the possession of mankind, should contain many truths as yet undiscovered. For all the same phenomena, and the same faculties of investigation, from which such great discoveries in natural knowledge have been made in the present and last age, were equally in the possession of mankind several thousand years before. And possibly it might be intended that events, as they come to pass, should open and ascertain the meaning of several parts of Scripture.”<sup>4</sup> Butler of course was not contemplating the case of new articles of faith, or developments imperative on our acceptance, but he surely bears witness to the probability of developments taking place in Christian doctrine considered in themselves, which is the point at present in question.

It may be added that, in matter of fact, all the definitions or received judgments of the early and medieval Church rest upon definite, even though sometimes obscure sentences of Scripture. Thus Purgatory may appeal to the “saving by fire,” and “entering through much tribulation into the kingdom of God;” the communication of the merits of the Saints to our “receiving a prophet’s reward” for “receiving a prophet in the name of a prophet,” and “a righteous man’s reward” for “receiving a righteous man in the name of a righteous man;” the Real Presence to “This is My Body;” Absolution to “Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted;” Extreme Unction to “Anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord;” Voluntary poverty to “Sell all that thou hast;” obedience to “He was in subjection to His parents;” the honour paid to creatures, animate or inanimate, to *Laudate Dominum in sanctis Ejus*, and *Adorate scabellum pedum Ejus*; and so of the rest.

7. Lastly, while Scripture nowhere recognizes itself or asserts the inspiration of those passages which are most essential, it distinctly anticipates the development of Christianity, both as a polity and as a doctrine. In one of our Lord’s parables “the Kingdom of Heaven” is even compared to “a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and hid in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds, but when it is grown it is the

---

4. ii. 3; vide also ii. 4, fin.

greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree,” and, as St. Mark words it, “shooteth out great branches, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.” And again, in the same chapter of St. Mark, “So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how; for the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself.” Here an internal element of life, whether principle or doctrine, is spoken of rather than any mere external manifestation; and it is observable that the spontaneous, as well as the gradual, character of the growth is intimated. This description of the process corresponds to what has been above observed respecting development, viz. that it is not an effect of wishing and resolving, or of forced enthusiasm, or of any mechanism of reasoning, or of any mere subtlety of intellect; but comes of its own innate power of expansion within the mind in its season, though with the use of reflection and argument and original thought, more or less as it may happen, with a dependence on the ethical growth of the mind itself, and with a reflex influence upon it. Again, the Parable of the Leaven describes the development of doctrine in another respect, in its active, engrossing, and interpenetrating power.

From the necessity, then, of the case, from the history of all sects and parties in religion, and from the analogy and example of Scripture, we may fairly conclude that Christian doctrine admits of formal, legitimate, and true developments, that is, of developments contemplated by its Divine Author.

The general analogy of the world, physical and moral, confirms this conclusion, as we are reminded by the great authority who has already been quoted in the course of this Section. “The whole natural world and government of it,” says Butler, “is a scheme or system; not a fixed, but a progressive one; a scheme in which the operation of various means takes up a great length of time before the ends they tend to can be attained. The change of seasons, the ripening of the fruits of the earth, the very history of a flower is an instance of this; and so is human life. Thus vegetable bodies, and those of animals, though possibly

formed at once, yet grow up by degrees to a mature state. And thus rational agents, who animate these latter bodies, are naturally directed to form each his own manners and character by the gradual gaining of knowledge and experience, and by a long course of action. Our existence is not only successive, as it must be of necessity, but one state of our life and being is appointed by God to be a preparation for another; and that to be the means of attaining to another succeeding one: infancy to childhood, childhood to youth, youth to mature age. Men are impatient, and for precipitating things; but the Author of Nature appears deliberate throughout His operations, accomplishing His natural ends by slow successive steps. And there is a plan of things beforehand laid out, which, from the nature of it, requires various systems of means, as well as length of time, in order to the carrying on its several parts into execution. Thus, in the daily course of natural providence, God operates in the very same manner as in the dispensation of Christianity, making one thing subservient to another; this, to somewhat farther; and so on, through a progressive series of means, which extend, both backward and forward, beyond our utmost view. Of this manner of operation, everything we see in the course of nature is as much an instance as any part of the Christian dispensation.”<sup>5</sup>

## SECTION 2. INFALLIBLE DEVELOPING AUTHORITY TO BE EXPECTED

It has now been made probable that developments of Christianity were but natural, as time went on, and were to be expected; and that these natural and true developments, as being natural and true, were of course contemplated and taken into account by its Author, who in designing the work designed its legitimate results. These, whatever they turn out to be, may be called absolutely “the developments” of Christianity. That, beyond reasonable doubt, there are such is surely a great step gained in the inquiry; it is a momentous fact. The next

---

5. Analogy, ii. 4, *ad fin.*

question is, *What* are they? and to a theologian, who could take a general view, and also possessed an intimate and minute knowledge, of its history, they would doubtless on the whole be easily distinguishable by their own characters, and require no foreign aid to point them out, no external authority to ratify them. But it is difficult to say who is exactly in this position. Considering that Christians, from the nature of the case, live under the bias of the doctrines, and in the very midst of the facts, and during the process of the controversies, which are to be the subject of criticism, since they are exposed to the prejudices of birth, education, place, personal attachment, engagements, and party, it can hardly be maintained that in matter of fact a true development carries with it always its own certainty even to the learned, or that history, past or present, is secure from the possibility of a variety of interpretations.

I have already spoken on this subject, and from a very different point of view from that which I am taking at present:—

“Prophets or Doctors are the interpreters of the revelation; they unfold and define its mysteries, they illuminate its documents, they harmonize its contents, they apply its promises. Their teaching is a vast system, not to be comprised in a few sentences, not to be embodied in one code or treatise, but consisting of a certain body of Truth, pervading the Church like an atmosphere, irregular in its shape from its very profusion and exuberance; at times separate only in idea from Episcopal Tradition, yet at times melting away into legend and fable; partly written, partly unwritten, partly the interpretation, partly the supplement of Scripture, partly preserved in intellectual expressions, partly latent in the spirit and temper of Christians; poured to and fro in closets and upon the housetops, in liturgies, in controversial works, in obscure fragments, in sermons, in popular prejudices, in local customs. This I call Prophetic Tradition, existing primarily in the bosom of the Church itself, and recorded in such measure as Providence has determined in the writings of eminent men. Keep that which is committed to thy charge, is St. Paul’s injunction to Timothy; and for this reason, because from its vastness and indefiniteness it is especially exposed to

corruption, if the Church fails in vigilance. This is that body of teaching which is offered to all Christians even at the present day, though in various forms and measures of truth, in different parts of Christendom, partly being a comment, partly an addition upon the articles of the Creed.”<sup>6</sup>

If this be true, certainly some rule is necessary for arranging and authenticating these various expressions and results of Christian doctrine. No one will maintain that all points of belief are of equal importance. “There are what may be called minor points, which we may hold to be true without imposing them as necessary;” “there are greater truths and lesser truths, points which it is necessary, and points which it is pious to believe.”<sup>7</sup> The simple question is, How are we to discriminate the greater from the less, the true from the false.

This need of an authoritative sanction is increased by considering, after M. Guizot’s suggestion, that Christianity, though represented in prophecy as a kingdom, came into the world as an idea rather than an institution, and has had to wrap itself in clothing and fit itself with armour of its own providing, and to form the instruments and methods of its prosperity and warfare. If the developments, which have above been called *moral*, are to take place to any great extent, and without them it is difficult to see how Christianity can exist at all, if only its relations towards civil government have to be ascertained, or the qualifications for the profession of it have to be defined, surely an authority is necessary to impart decision to what is vague, and confidence to what is empirical, to ratify the successive steps of so elaborate a process, and to secure the validity of inferences which are to be made the premisses of more remote investigations.

Tests, it is true, for ascertaining the correctness of developments in general may be drawn out, as I shall show in the sequel; but they are insufficient for the guidance of individuals in the case of so large and complicated a problem as Christianity, though they may aid our

---

6. Proph. Office, x. [Via Med. p. 250].

7. [Ibid. pp. 247, 254.]

inquiries and support our conclusions in particular points. They are of a scientific and controversial, not of a practical character, and are instruments rather than warrants of right decisions. Moreover, they rather serve as answers to objections brought against the actual decisions of authority, than are proofs of the correctness of those decisions. While, then, on the one hand, it is probable that some means will be granted for ascertaining the legitimate and true developments of Revelation, it appears, on the other, that these means must of necessity be external to the developments themselves.

Reasons shall be given in this Section for concluding that, in proportion to the probability of true developments of doctrine and practice in the Divine Scheme, so is the probability also of the appointment in that scheme of an external authority to decide upon them, thereby separating them from the mass of mere human speculation, extravagance, corruption, and error, in and out of which they grow. This is the doctrine of the infallibility of the Church; for by infallibility I suppose is meant the power of deciding whether this, that, and a third, and any number of theological or ethical statements are true.

1. Let the state of the case be carefully considered. If the Christian doctrine, as originally taught, admits of true and important developments, as was argued in the foregoing Section, this is a strong antecedent argument in favour of a provision in the Dispensation for putting a seal of authority upon those developments. The probability of their being known to be true varies with that of their truth. The two ideas indeed are quite distinct, I grant, of revealing and of guaranteeing a truth, and they are often distinct in fact. There are various revelations all over the earth which do not carry with them the evidence of their divinity. Such are the inward suggestions and secret illuminations granted to so many individuals; such are the traditionary doctrines which are found among the heathen, that "vague and unconnected family of religious truths, originally from God, but sojourning, without the sanction of miracle or a definite home, as pilgrims up and down the world, and discernible and separable from the corrupt legends with which they are mixed, by the

spiritual mind alone.”<sup>8</sup> There is nothing impossible in the notion of a revelation occurring without evidences that it is a revelation; just as human sciences are a divine gift, yet are reached by our ordinary powers and have no claim on our faith. But Christianity is not of this nature: it is a revelation which comes to us as a revelation, as a whole, objectively, and with a profession of infallibility; and the only question to be determined relates to the matter of the revelation. If then there are certain great truths, or duties, or observances, naturally and legitimately resulting from the doctrines originally professed, it is but reasonable to include these true results in the idea of the revelation itself, to consider them parts of it, and if the revelation be not only true, but guaranteed as true, to anticipate that they too will come under the privilege of that guarantee. Christianity, unlike other revelations of God’s will, except the Jewish, of which it is a continuation, is an objective religion, or a revelation with credentials; it is natural, I say, to view it wholly as such, and not partly *sui generis*, partly like others. Such as it begins, such let it be considered to continue; granting that certain large developments of it are true, they must surely be accredited as true.

2. An objection, however, is often made to the doctrine of infallibility *in limine*, which is too important not to be taken into consideration. It is urged that, as all religious knowledge rests on moral evidence, not on demonstration, our belief in the Church’s infallibility must be of this character; but what can be more absurd than a probable infallibility, or a certainty resting on doubt?—I believe, because I am sure; and I am sure, because I suppose. Granting then that the gift of infallibility be adapted, when believed, to unite all intellects in one common confession, the fact that it is given is as difficult of proof as the developments which it is to prove, and nugatory therefore, and in consequence improbable in a Divine Scheme. The advocates of Rome, it has been urged, “insist on the necessity of an infallible guide in religious matters, as an argument that such a guide has really been accorded. Now it is obvious to inquire how individuals are to know with certainty that Rome is

---

8. Arians, ch. i. sect. 3 [p. 82, ed. 3].

infallible . . . how any ground can be such as to bring home to the mind infallibly that she is infallible; what conceivable proof amounts to more than a probability of the fact; and what advantage is an infallible guide, if those who are to be guided have, after all, no more than an opinion, as the Romanists call it, that she is infallible?"<sup>9</sup>

This argument, however, except when used, as is intended in this passage, against such persons as would remove all imperfection in the proof of Religion, is certainly a fallacious one. For since, as all allow, the Apostles were infallible, it tells against their infallibility, or the infallibility of Scripture, as truly as against the infallibility of the Church; for no one will say that the Apostles were made infallible for nothing, yet we are only morally certain that they were infallible. Further, if we have but probable grounds for the Church's infallibility, we have but the like for the impossibility of certain things, the necessity of others, the truth, the certainty of others; and therefore the words *infallibility*, *necessity*, *truth*, and *certainty* ought all of them to be banished from the language. But why is it more inconsistent to speak of an uncertain infallibility than of a doubtful truth or a contingent necessity, phrases which present ideas clear and undeniable? In sooth we are playing with words when we use arguments of this sort. When we say that a person is infallible, we mean no more than that what he says is always true, always to be believed, always to be done. The term is resolvable into these phrases as its equivalents; either then the phrases are inadmissible, or the idea of infallibility must be allowed. A probable infallibility is a probable gift of never erring; a reception of the doctrine of a probable infallibility is faith and obedience towards a person founded on the probability of his never erring in his declarations or commands. What is inconsistent in this idea? Whatever then be the particular means of determining infallibility, the abstract objection may be put aside.<sup>10</sup>

---

9. Proph. Office [Via Med. vol. i. p. 122].

10. ["It is very common to confuse infallibility with certitude, but the two words stand for things quite distinct from each other. I remember for certain what I did yesterday, but still my memory is not infallible. I am quite clear that two and two makes four, but I often make mistakes in long addition sums. I have no doubt whatever that John or Richard is my true friend; but I have before now trusted those who failed me, and I may do so again before I die. I

3. Again, it is sometimes argued that such a dispensation would destroy our probation, as dissipating doubt, precluding the exercise of faith, and obliging us to obey whether we wish it or no; and it is urged that a Divine Voice spoke in the first age, and difficulty and darkness rest upon all subsequent ones; as if infallibility and personal judgment were incompatible; but this is to confuse the subject. We must distinguish between a revelation and a reception of it, not between its earlier and later stages. A revelation, in itself divine, and guaranteed as such, may from first to last be received, doubted, argued against, perverted, rejected, by individuals according to the state of mind of each. Ignorance, misapprehension, unbelief, and other causes, do not at once cease to operate because the revelation is in itself true and in its proofs irrefragable. We have then no warrant at all for saying that an accredited revelation will exclude the existence of doubts and difficulties on the part of those whom it addresses, or dispense with anxious diligence on their part, though it may in its own nature tend to do so. Infallibility does not interfere with moral probation; the two notions are absolutely distinct. It is no objection then to the idea of a peremptory authority, such as I am supposing, that it lessens the task of personal inquiry, unless it be an objection to the authority of Revelation altogether. A Church, or a Council, or a Pope, or a Consent of Doctors, or a Consent of Christendom, limits the inquiries of the individual in no other way than Scripture limits them: it does limit them; but, while it limits their range, it preserves intact their probationary character; we are tried as really, though not on so large a field. To suppose that the doctrine of a permanent authority in matters of faith interferes with our free-will and responsibility is, as before, to forget that there were infallible teachers in

---

am quite certain that Victoria is our sovereign, and not her father, the Duke of Kent, without any claim myself to the gift of infallibility, as I may do a virtuous action, without being impeccable. I may be certain that the Church is infallible, while I am myself a fallible mortal; otherwise I cannot be certain that the Supreme Being is infallible, unless I am infallible myself. Certitude is directed to one or other definite concrete proposition. I am certain of propositions one, two, three, four, or five, one by one, each by itself. I can be certain of one of them, without being certain of the rest: that I am certain of the first makes it neither likely nor unlikely that I am certain of the second: but, were I infallible, then I should be certain, not only of one of them, but of all."—*Essay on Assent*, ch. vii. sect. 2.]

the first age, and heretics and schismatics in the ages subsequent. There may have been at once a supreme authority from first to last, and a moral judgment from first to last. Moreover, those who maintain that Christian truth must be gained solely by personal efforts are bound to show that methods, ethical and intellectual, are granted to individuals sufficient for gaining it; else the mode of probation they advocate is less, not more, perfect than that which proceeds upon external authority. On the whole, then, no argument against continuing the principle of objectiveness into the developments of Revelation arises out of the conditions of our moral responsibility.

4. Perhaps it will be urged that the Analogy of Nature is against our anticipating the continuance of an external authority which has once been given; because in the words of the profound thinker who has already been cited, "We are wholly ignorant what degree of new knowledge it were to be expected God would give mankind by revelation, upon supposition of His affording one; or how far, and in what way, He would interpose miraculously to qualify them to whom He should originally make the revelation for communicating the knowledge given by it, and to secure their doing it to the age in which they should live, and to secure its being transmitted to posterity;" and because "we are not in any sort able to judge whether it were to be expected that the revelation should have been committed to writing, or left to be handed down, and consequently corrupted, by verbal tradition, and at length sunk under it."<sup>11</sup> But this reasoning does not apply here, as has already been observed; it contemplates only the abstract hypothesis of a revelation, not the fact of an existing revelation of a particular kind, which may of course in various ways modify our state of knowledge, by settling some of those very points which, before it was given, we had no means of deciding. Nor can it, as I think, be fairly denied that the argument from analogy in one point of view tells against anticipating a revelation at all, for an innovation upon the physical order of the world is by the very force of the terms inconsistent with its ordinary course. We cannot then regu-

---

11. Anal. ii. 3.

late our antecedent view of the character of a revelation by a test which, applied simply, overthrows the very notion of a revelation altogether. Any how, Analogy is in some sort violated by the fact of a revelation, and the question before us only relates to the extent of that violation.

I will hazard a distinction here between the facts of revelation and its principles:—the argument from Analogy is more concerned with its principles than with its facts. The revealed facts are special and singular, not analogous, from the nature of the case: but it is otherwise with the revealed principles; these are common to all the works of God: and if the Author of Nature be the Author of Grace, it may be expected that, while the two systems of facts are distinct and independent, the principles displayed in them will be the same, and form a connecting link between them. In this identity of principle lies the Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion, in Butler's sense of the word. The doctrine of the Incarnation is a fact, and cannot be paralleled by anything in nature; the doctrine of Mediation is a principle, and is abundantly exemplified in its provisions. Miracles are facts; inspiration is a fact; divine teaching once for all, and a continual teaching, are each a fact; probation by means of intellectual difficulties is a principle both in nature and in grace, and may be carried on in the system of grace either by a standing ordinance of teaching or by one definite act of teaching, and that with an analogy equally perfect in either case to the order of nature; nor can we succeed in arguing from the analogy of that order against a standing guardianship of revelation without arguing also against its original bestowal. Supposing the order of nature once broken by the introduction of a revelation, the continuance of that revelation is but a question of degree; and the circumstance that a work has begun makes it more probable than not that it will proceed. We have no reason to suppose that there is so great a distinction of dispensation between ourselves and the first generation of Christians, as that they had a living infallible guidance, and we have not.

The case then stands thus:—Revelation has introduced a new law of divine governance over and above those laws which appear in the

natural course of the world; and in consequence we are able to argue for the existence of a standing authority in matters of faith on the analogy of Nature, and from the fact of Christianity. Preservation is involved in the idea of creation. As the Creator rested on the seventh day from the work which He had made, yet He “worketh hitherto;” so He gave the Creed once for all in the beginning, yet blesses its growth still, and provides for its increase. His word “shall not return unto Him void, but accomplish” His pleasure. As creation argues continual governance, so are Apostles harbingers of Popes.

5. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that, as the essence of all religion is authority and obedience, so the distinction between natural religion and revealed lies in this, that the one has a subjective authority, and the other an objective. Revelation consists in the manifestation of the Invisible Divine Power, or in the substitution of the voice of a Lawgiver for the voice of conscience. The supremacy of conscience is the essence of natural religion; the supremacy of Apostle, or Pope, or Church, or Bishop, is the essence of revealed; and when such external authority is taken away, the mind falls back again of necessity upon that inward guide which it possessed even before Revelation was vouchsafed. Thus, what conscience is in the system of nature, such is the voice of Scripture, or of the Church, or of the Holy See, as we may determine it, in the system of Revelation. It may be objected, in deed, that conscience is not infallible; it is true, but still it is ever to be obeyed. And this is just the prerogative which controversialists assign to the See of St. Peter; it is not in all cases infallible, it may err beyond its special province, but it has in all cases a claim on our obedience. “All Catholics and heretics,” says Bellarmine, “agree in two things: first, that it is possible for the Pope, even as pope, and with his own assembly of councillors, or with General Council, to err in particular controversies of fact, which chiefly depend on human information and testimony; secondly, that it is possible for him to err as a private Doctor, even in universal questions of right, whether of faith or of morals, and that from ignorance, as sometimes happens to other doctors. Next, all Catholics agree in other two

points, not, however, with heretics, but solely with each other: first, that the Pope with General Council cannot err, either in framing decrees of faith or general precepts of morality; secondly, that the Pope when determining anything in a doubtful matter, whether by himself or with his own particular Council, *whether it is possible for him to err or not, is to be obeyed* by all the faithful."<sup>12</sup> And as obedience to conscience, even supposing conscience ill-informed, tends to the improvement of our moral nature, and ultimately of our knowledge, so obedience to our ecclesiastical superior may subserve our growth in illumination and sanctity, even though he should command what is extreme or inexpedient, or teach what is external to his legitimate province.

6. The common sense of mankind does but support a conclusion thus forced upon us by analogical considerations. It feels that the very idea of revelation implies a present informant and guide, and that an infallible one; not a mere abstract declaration of Truths unknown before to man, or a record of history, or the result of an antiquarian research, but a message and a lesson speaking to this man and that. This is shown by the popular notion which has prevailed among us since the Reformation, that the Bible itself is such a guide; and which succeeded in overthrowing the supremacy of Church and Pope, for the very reason that it was a rival authority, not resisting merely, but supplanting it. In proportion, then, as we find, in matter of fact, that the inspired volume is not adapted or intended to subserve that purpose, are we forced to revert to that living and present Guide, who, at the era of our rejection of her, had been so long recognized as the dispenser of Scripture, according to times and circumstances, and the arbiter of all true doctrine and holy practice to her children. We feel a need, and she alone of all things under heaven supplies it. We are told that God has spoken. Where? In a book? We have tried it and it disappoints; it disappoints us, that most holy and blessed gift, not from fault of its own, but because it is used for a purpose for which it was not given. The Ethiopian's reply, when St.

---

12. De Rom. Pont. iv. 2. [Seven years ago, it is scarcely necessary to say, the Vatican Council determined that the Pope, *ex cathedrâ*, has the same infallibility as the Church. This does not affect the argument in the text.]

Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading, is the voice of nature: "How can I, unless some man shall guide me?" The Church undertakes that office; she does what none else can do, and this is the secret of her power. "The human mind," it has been said, "wishes to be rid of doubt in religion; and a teacher who claims infallibility is readily believed on his simple word. We see this constantly exemplified in the case of individual pretenders among ourselves. In Romanism the Church pretends to it; she rids herself of competitors by forestalling them. And probably, in the eyes of her children, this is not the least persuasive argument for her infallibility, that she alone of all Churches dares claim it, as if a secret instinct and involuntary misgivings restrained those rival communions which go so far towards affecting it."<sup>13</sup> These sentences, whatever be the errors of their wording, surely express a great truth. The most obvious answer, then, to the question, why we yield to the authority of the Church in the questions and developments of faith, is, that some authority there must be if there is a revelation given, and other authority there is none but she. A revelation is not given, if there be no authority to decide what it is that is given. In the words of St. Peter to her Divine Master and Lord, "To whom shall we go?" Nor must it be forgotten in confirmation, that Scripture expressly calls the Church "the pillar and ground of the Truth," and promises her as by covenant that "the Spirit of the Lord that is upon her, and His words which He has put in her mouth shall not depart out of her mouth, nor out of the mouth of her seed, nor out of the mouth of her seed's seed, from henceforth and for ever."<sup>14</sup>

7. And if the very claim to infallible arbitration in religious disputes is of so weighty importance and interest in all ages of the world, much more is it welcome at a time like the present, when the human intellect is so busy, and thought so fertile, and opinion so manifold. The absolute need of a spiritual supremacy is at present the strongest of arguments in favour of the fact of its supply. Surely, either an objective

---

13. Proph. Office [Via Med. vol. i. p. 117].

14. 1 Tim. iii. 16; Isa. lix. 21.

revelation has not been given, or it has been provided with means for impressing its objectiveness on the world. If Christianity be a social religion, as it certainly is, and if it be based on certain ideas acknowledged as divine, or a creed, (which shall here be assumed,) and if these ideas have various aspects, and make distinct impressions on different minds, and issue in consequence in a multiplicity of developments, true, or false, or mixed, as has been shown, what power will suffice to meet and to do justice to these conflicting conditions, but a supreme authority ruling and reconciling individual judgments by a divine right and a recognized wisdom? In barbarous times the will is reached through the senses; but in an age in which reason, as it is called, is the standard of truth and right, it is abundantly evident to any one, who mixes ever so little with the world, that, if things are left to themselves, every individual will have his own view of them, and take his own course; that two or three will agree today to part company tomorrow; that Scripture will be read in contrary ways, and history, according to the apologue, will have to different comers its silver shield and its golden; that philosophy, taste, prejudice, passion, party, caprice, will find no common measure, unless there be some supreme power to control the mind and to compel agreement.

There can be no combination on the basis of truth without an organ of truth. As cultivation brings out the colours of flowers, and domestication changes the character of animals, so does education of necessity develop differences of opinion; and while it is impossible to lay down first principles in which all will unite, it is utterly unreasonable to expect that this man should yield to that, or all to one. I do not say there are no eternal truths, such as the poet proclaims<sup>15</sup>, which all acknowledge in private, but that there are none sufficiently commanding to be the basis of public union and action. The only general persuasive in matters of conduct is authority; that is, (when truth is in question,) a judgment which we feel to be superior to our own. If Christianity is both social and dogmatic, and intended for all ages, it

---

15. [*Ou gar ti nun ge kachthes, k.t.l.*]

must humanly speaking have an infallible expounder. Else you will secure unity of form at the loss of unity of doctrine, or unity of doctrine at the loss of unity of form; you will have to choose between a comprehension of opinions and a resolution into parties, between latitudinarian and sectarian error. You may be tolerant or intolerant of contrarieties of thought, but contrarieties you will have. By the Church of England a hollow uniformity is preferred to an infallible chair; and by the sects of England, an interminable division. Germany and Geneva began with persecution, and have ended in scepticism. The doctrine of infallibility is a less violent hypothesis than this sacrifice either of faith or of charity. It secures the object, while it gives definiteness and force to the matter, of the Revelation.

8. I have called the doctrine of Infallibility an hypothesis: let it be so considered for the sake of argument, that is, let it be considered to be a mere position, supported by no direct evidence, but required by the facts of the case, and reconciling them with each other. That hypothesis is indeed, in matter of fact, maintained and acted on in the largest portion of Christendom, and from time immemorial; but let this coincidence be accounted for by the need. Moreover, it is not a naked or isolated fact, but the animating principle of a large scheme of doctrine which the need itself could not simply create; but again, let this system be merely called its development. Yet even as an hypothesis, which has been held by one out of various communions, it may not be lightly put aside. Some hypothesis, this or that, all parties, all controversialists, all historians must adopt, if they would treat of Christianity at all. Gieseler's "Text Book" bears the profession of being a dry analysis of Christian history; yet on inspection it will be found to be written on a positive and definite theory, and to bend facts to meet it. An unbeliever, as Gibbon, assumes one hypothesis, and an Ultra-montane, as Baronias, adopts another. The School of Hurd and Newton hold, as the only true view of history, that Christianity slept for centuries upon centuries, except among those whom historians call heretics. Others speak as if the oath of supremacy or the *congé d'élire* could be made the measure of St.

Ambrose, and they fit the Thirty-nine Articles on the fervid Tertullian. The question is, which of all these theories is the simplest, the most natural, the most persuasive. Certainly the notion of development under infallible authority is not a less grave, a less winning hypothesis, than the chance and coincidence of events, or the Oriental Philosophy, or the working of Antichrist, to account for the rise of Christianity and the formation of its theology.

### SECTION 3.

#### THE EXISTING DEVELOPMENTS OF DOCTRINE— THE PROBABLE FULFILLMENT OF THAT EXPECTATION

I have been arguing, in respect to the revealed doctrine, given to us from above in Christianity, first, that, in consequence of its intellectual character, and as passing through the minds of so many generations of men, and as applied by them to so many purposes, and as investigated so curiously as to its capabilities, implications, and bearings, it could not but grow or develope, as time went on, into a large theological system;—next, that, if development must be, then, whereas Revelation is a heavenly gift, He who gave it virtually has not given it, unless He has also secured it from perversion and corruption, in all such development as comes upon it by the necessity of its nature, or, in other words, that that intellectual action through successive generations, which is the organ of development, must, so far forth as it can claim to have been put in charge of the Revelation, be in its determinations infallible.

Passing from these two points, I come next to the question whether in the history of Christianity there is any fulfilment of such anticipation as I have insisted on, whether in matter-of-fact doctrines, rites, and usages have grown up round the Apostolic Creed and have interpenetrated its Articles, claiming to be part of Christianity and looking like those additions which we are in search of. The answer is, that such additions there are, and that they are found just where they might be

expected, in the authoritative seats and homes of old tradition, the Latin and Greek Churches. Let me enlarge on this point.

I observe, then, that, if the idea of Christianity, as originally given to us from heaven, cannot but contain much which will be only partially recognized by us as included in it and only held by us unconsciously; and if again, Christianity being from heaven, all that is necessarily involved in it, and is evolved from it, is from heaven, and if, on the other hand, large accretions actually do exist, professing to be its true and legitimate results, our first impression naturally is, that these must be the very developments which they profess to be. Moreover, the very scale on which they have been made, their high antiquity yet present promise, their gradual formation yet precision, their harmonious order, dispose the imagination most forcibly towards the belief that a teaching so consistent with itself, so well balanced, so young and so old, not obsolete after so many centuries, but vigorous and progressive still, is the very development contemplated in the Divine Scheme. These doctrines are members of one family, and suggestive, or correlative, or confirmatory, or illustrative of each other. One furnishes evidence to another, and all to each of them; if this is proved, that becomes probable; if this and that are both probable, but for different reasons, each adds to the other its own probability. The Incarnation is the antecedent of the doctrine of Mediation, and the archetype both of the Sacramental principle and of the merits of Saints. From the doctrine of Mediation follow the Atonement, the Mass, the merits of Martyrs and Saints, their invocation and *cultus*. From the Sacramental principle come the Sacraments properly so called; the unity of the Church, and the Holy See as its type and centre; the authority of Councils; the sanctity of rites; the veneration of holy places, shrines, images, vessels, furniture, and vestments. Of the Sacraments, Baptism is developed into Confirmation on the one hand; into Penance, Purgatory, and Indulgences on the other; and the Eucharist into the Real Presence, adoration of the Host, Resurrection of the body, and the virtue of relics. Again, the doctrine of the Sacraments leads to the doctrine of Justification; Justification to that of Original

Sin; Original Sin to the merit of Celibacy. Nor do these separate developments stand independent of each other, but by cross relations they are connected, and grow together while they grow from one. The Mass and Real Presence are parts of one; the veneration of Saints and their relics are parts of one; their intercessory power and the Purgatorial State, and again the Mass and that State are correlative; Celibacy is the characteristic mark of Monachism and of the Priesthood. You must accept the whole or reject the whole; attenuation does but enfeeble, and amputation mutilate. It is trifling to receive all but something which is as integral as any other portion; and, on the other hand, it is a solemn thing to accept any part, for, before you know where you are, you may be carried on by a stern logical necessity to accept the whole.

Next, we have to consider that from first to last other developments there are none, except those which have possession of Christendom; none, that is, of prominence and permanence sufficient to deserve the name. In early times the heretical doctrines were confessedly barren and short-lived, and could not stand their ground against Catholicism. As to the medieval period I am not aware that the Greeks present more than a negative opposition to the Latins. And now in like manner the Tridentine Creed is met by no rival developments; there is no antagonist system. Criticisms, objections, protests, there are in plenty, but little of positive teaching anywhere; seldom an attempt on the part of any opposing school to master its own doctrines, to investigate their sense and bearing, to determine their relation to the decrees of Trent and their distance from them. And when at any time this attempt is by chance in any measure made, then an incurable contrariety does but come to view between portions of the theology thus developed, and a war of principles; an impossibility moreover of reconciling that theology with the general drift of the formularies in which its elements occur, and a consequent appearance of unfairness and sophistry in adventurous persons who aim at forcing them into consistency<sup>16</sup>; and, further, a prevalent understanding of the truth of this

---

16. [*Vid. Via Media*, vol. ii. pp. 251-341.]

representation, authorities keeping silence, eschewing a hopeless enterprise and discouraging it in others, and the people plainly intimating that they think both doctrine and usage, antiquity and development, of very little matter at all; and, lastly, the evident despair of even the better sort of men, who, in consequence, when they set great schemes on foot, as for the conversion of the heathen world, are afraid to agitate the question of the doctrines to which it is to be converted, lest through the opened door they should lose what they have, instead of gaining what they have not. To the weight of recommendation which this contrast throws upon the developments commonly called Catholic, must be added the argument which arises from the coincidence of their consistency and permanence, with their claim of an infallible sanction,—a claim, the existence of which, in some quarter or other of the Divine Dispensation, is, as we have already seen, antecedently probable. All these things being considered, I think few persons will deny the very strong presumption which exists, that, if there must be and are in fact developments in Christianity, the doctrines propounded by successive Popes and Councils through so many ages, are they.

A further presumption in behalf of these doctrines arises from the general opinion of the world about them. Christianity being one, all its doctrines are necessarily developments of one, and, if so, are of necessity consistent with each other, or form a whole. Now the world fully enters into this view of those well-known developments which claim the name of Catholic. It allows them that title, it considers them to belong to one family, and refers them to one theological system. It is scarcely necessary to set about proving what is urged by their opponents even more strenuously than by their champions. Their opponents avow that they protest, not against this doctrine or that, but against one and all; and they seem struck with wonder and perplexity, not to say with awe, at a consistency which they feel to be superhuman, though they would not allow it to be divine. The system is confessed on all hands to bear a character of integrity and indivisibility upon it, both at first view and on inspection. Hence such sayings as the “*Tota jacet Babylon*” of the

distich. Luther did but a part of the work, Calvin another portion, Socinus finished it. To take up with Luther, and to reject Calvin and Socinus, would be, according to that epigram, like living in a house without a roof to it. This, I say, is no private judgment of this man or that, but the common opinion and experience of all countries. The two great divisions of religion feel it, Roman Catholic and Protestant, between whom the controversy lies; sceptics and liberals, who are spectators of the conflict, feel it; philosophers feel it. A school of divines there is, I grant, dear to memory, who have not felt it; and their exception will have its weight,—till we reflect that the particular theology which they advocate has not the prescription of success, never has been realized in fact, or, if realized for a moment, had no stay; moreover, that, when it has been enacted by human authority, it has scarcely travelled beyond the paper on which it was printed, or out of the legal forms in which it was embodied. But, putting the weight of these revered names at the highest, they do not constitute more than an exception to the general rule, such as is found in every subject that comes into discussion.

And this general testimony to the oneness of Catholicism extends to its past teaching relatively to its present, as well as to the portions of its present teaching one with another. No one doubts, with such exception as has just been allowed, that the Roman Catholic communion of this day is the successor and representative of the Medieval Church, or that the Medieval Church is the legitimate heir of the Nicene; even allowing that it is a question whether a line cannot be drawn between the Nicene Church and the Church which preceded it. On the whole, all parties will agree that, of all existing systems, the present communion of Rome is the nearest approximation in fact to the Church of the Fathers, possible though some may think it, to be nearer still to that Church on paper. Did St. Athanasius or St. Ambrose come suddenly to life, it cannot be doubted what communion he would take to be his own. All surely will agree that these Fathers, with whatever opinions of their own, whatever protests, if we will, would find themselves more at

home with such men as St. Bernard or St. Ignatius Loyola, or with the lonely priest in his lodging, or the holy sisterhood of mercy, or the unlettered crowd before the altar, than with the teachers or with the members of any other creed. And may we not add, that were those same Saints, who once sojourned, one in exile, one on embassy, at Treves, to come more northward still, and to travel until they reached another fair city, seated among groves, green meadows, and calm streams, the holy brothers would turn from many a high aisle and solemn cloister which they found there, and ask the way to some small chapel where mass was said in the populous alley or forlorn suburb? And, on the other hand, can any one who has but heard his name, and cursorily read his history, doubt for one instant how, in turn, the people of England, “we, our princes, our priests, and our prophets,” Lords and Commons, Universities, Ecclesiastical Courts, marts of commerce, great towns, country parishes, would deal with Athanasius,—Athanasius, who spent his long years in fighting against sovereigns for a theological term?