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## ARTICLE VI.

THE ONENESS OF GOD IN REVELATION AND IN NATURE<sup>1</sup>

BY AUSTIN PHELPS, PROFESSOR AT ANDOVER.

Thus saith God the Lord, He that created the heavens, and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein; I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles. — ISAIAH 42: 5, 6.

It was one of the querulous objections of Voltaire to Christianity, that the "priesthood," as he loved to call even the protestant clergy of his day, persisted in selecting brief and isolated passages from an obsolete volume, as the texts of their discourses. It argued, he said, their own poverty of thought, and the puerility of the superstition by which they would enslave the minds of men. But the Bible, aside from its inspired dignity, is more affluent in thought than any other volume in any literature. Although, for the most part, it is a plain book, written by plain men, composed of plain histories and biographies, of familiar letters, and of stories for children, yet it is dense with principles, which the philosophy of the ages has struggled for in vain, until it has condescended to inquire of these plain scriptures. A single paragraph of the scriptures often contains a truth, which, had it been a discovery of human science, would have made the name of the discoverer immortal. Such is the character of the text.

The first of the two verses is a description of God; the second is a declaration of his purposes. "Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens and stretched them out" — that is, "thus saith that Being whose power and wisdom are displayed in the stellar universe." "He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it" — that is,

<sup>1</sup> A Discourse delivered before the Convention of Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts, in the Brattle Street Church, Boston, May 26, 1859.

“ thus saith that Being who formed the terrestrial continents and oceans, and has given life to the processes of vegetation.” “ He that giveth breath unto the people upon it ” — that is, “ thus saith that Being who has called into existence the sentient creation upon the earth.” “ He that giveth spirit to them that walk therein ” — that is, “ thus saith that Being, who is the God of mind, and the disposer of its laws of action.” Thus the prophet describes God as the God of nature. What then, is the declaration which is introduced so impressively? It is often an idiom of prophetic speech, and especially of the style of Isaiah, when a declaration is to be made respecting the work of redemption, to give it the form of a direct address to the Messiah; and to declare *to him* the thing which God was about to perform. Such is the idiom now before us. “ I ” that is, “ the God of nature ” who had just been described, — “ I, the Lord, have called thee in righteousness ” — that is, “ I who created the heavens, have summoned thee as the Redeemer of men, in execution of my righteous purpose.” “ I will hold thine hand and will keep thee ” — that is, “ I, the Former of the earth, will be faithful unto thee.” “ I will give thee for a covenant of the people, and for a light of the Gentiles ” — that is, “ I, the Author of the souls of men, will give thee as a pledge of my love, and the nations shall be redeemed.”

The sentiment then, which I understand to be embedded in this language is, that the God of nature is the God also of redemption. The God of nature and the God of grace are one. All that we see of God in the one department of his working, is an indication of the same perfections which he exercises in the other. We may look through all that science teaches us of nature, and all that revelation teaches us of grace, as through a single avenue, by which we approach a truthful conception of God. Taking our position at either end, we see through an unbroken perspective to the other, and discern one plan, one character, one will, one perfect Being in all.

In the present discourse, I wish to assume the truth of the identity of the Author of nature with the God of revela-

tion, and to consider certain lessons which follow as corollaries from it.

In the *first* place, from the fact that the Author of nature and the God of revelation are one, we may infer that religious investigation should be characterized by the spirit of docile inquiry.

If there be one thing which more than another vitiates the methods by which men form their religious opinions, it is the want of the humility of *inquirers* after truth; and yet, if there be one thing more firmly settled than another in the methods of science, it is that the docility of inquiry after truth, is the only spirit becoming to scientific discovery. How often are we compelled to note the distinction, that in religion men feel at liberty to create their opinions; while in natural science, and in all that domain of truth which lies outside of the realm of conscience, they feel bound to seek for their opinions. In the one case we assume that we know, in the other we consent to be taught. Especially is the faith which men think they derive from revelation, often formed arrogantly. We are apt to fashion our theology, by dictation to the words of God, as to what they ought to teach, not by inquiry into the facts they do teach. We are prone to come to the whole question of a revealed religion, with preconceived assumptions of what we will believe—not with the upturned eye of faith, asking simply what we may believe. We bring to the subject a burden of habits of mind, of purposes in life, of usages in society, of the demands of science, of the necessities of philosophy, and of authorities in theology, and then our strange vocation is to *make up* a religious faith out of such fragments of truth or error as can be wedged into the vacancy which has been left for its accommodation. Pursuing our researches in this mood, we do not discover our facts; we make them. We do not search for our proofs; we create them. We do not ask for a revelation from heaven; we impose one on our convictions, by declaring what it ought to teach, and that nothing else will we believe.

But what would the world say to a man who should ap-

proach in this spirit any other department of knowledge? What *is* the spirit, which the world commends in science and philosophy? The name of Bacon has become immortal, for the humility with which he announced the spirit of all knowledge to be the spirit of inquiry. The modesty of Newton, as expressed in his simile of the pebbles and the shells on the seashore, has become one of the commonplaces of the world's thought. That prince of modern scholars, whose incredible learning made him the counsellor of kings, illustrated as well the humility of science, by a spirit which made him the companion, to the last, of youthful inquirers who have just followed him by thousands to his burial. The spirit of docility in any search for truth, is so well established in civilized science, that now to raise a question concerning it, is to answer that question. What judgment is now pronounced upon the ancient belief which Lord Bacon did not venture to deny, that a birch-tree might grow from the root of an oak; or of the faith that a flintstone might be transmuted into gold; that a star ascendant at the hour of a man's birth controlled his destiny; and that somewhere, in some unknown clime, was a stream whose waters could confer upon old age the vigor of undecaying youth? What verdict would now be pronounced upon an astronomer, who should shut himself up at noon-day, to evolve from his own mind a theory of the heavens, and should form his diagrams, and locate his systems of stellar worlds, and describe their laws of motion, and predict their eclipses and mark the procession of their equinoxes, and then at nightfall should go out, not to study the heavens as they are, but to fit them to his diagrams, and to label the planets by the names which he has given them, and should announce *that work as the science of astronomy?* What *is* the reception which the civilized world now gives to the old astronomy of the Ptolemies, which mapped out the heavens like a Chinese atlas? Do not our children smile at the grotesque figures which mythological astronomy has transmitted to our geography of the heavens, and which metes out the jewelry of our skies, among bears, and lions, and

dogs, and dragons, and scorpions? Yet this is a fit emblem of the map of theology, as men define and paint it, when they come to the scriptures, not as inquirers, but as dictators. The truth which we infer as indisputable from the fact of the oneness of the God of nature, with the God of revelation, is that the disclosures of God in the one, should be received in the same spirit as the disclosures of God in the other. We should come to the recorded oracles of God in the scriptures, as we go to the pictured oracles of the same God, in the earth and the heavens. The same docility, the same sense of ignorance, the same freedom from preconceived theories, the same calm, trustful, fearless disposition to interpret God truthfully, should bring us to the doctrines of the gospel, as that with which we go out, on a clear evening, to look upon the skies and ask: "What are those orbs of light, and what are the laws of their movement?"

This teachable spirit in the search of inspired truth will not be fruitless. It is a spirit which will not in the result be thrown back upon itself, as finding in the humility of inquiry, its own reward; for, from the identity of the God of nature with the God of revelation, we may infer, *secondly*, the presumption that in a revealed theology will be found a definite and positive system of truth.

This remark suggests one of the most singular inconsistencies of opinion with which the christian scriptures have been received by a class of cultivated minds. That philosophy which approaches the word of God arrogantly, and dictates the interpretation of the record, is the same, with a difference of mood only, with that philosophy which falls back upon the assumption that the record contains little which is susceptible of definite interpretation, and little, therefore, which can be positively affirmed. Side by side with christian dogmatism there grows up a christianized scepticism, within the range of scriptural thought. On the one hand, it is claimed that a revelation *shall* teach *this*, and on the other hand, that this revelation, properly speaking, can *teach* nothing. We come to it indeed in the spirit of inquirers after truth, but in the result we have our inquiry

for our pains. We begin with inquiry, we end with inquiry. A point of interrogation marks every step of our progress, if that can be called progress, which is no advance into the realm of faith. This theory of the aims and achievements of inspiration, leaves it questionable whether Christianity has added any light to the gloom which hung over the Greek and the Roman mind, at their point of highest culture. An inquirer after the God of the Bible, can only grope his way among Sybilline leaves, darkened by the same incertitude which lay like a nightmare upon the ancient systems of philosophy, when they cleared themselves from mythology.

Our modern literature often gravitates towards this effeminacy in its relation to the scriptures, when it is yet too thoroughly imbued with christian culture to yield itself to a more truculent scepticism. An illustration of this tendency is seen in the advice of Robert Southey, to a young friend whose mind had been aroused to religious inquiry. "I think," says the poet-laureate, "that you might derive more good from Epictetus than from studying yourself. There is a proud independence in the Stoic philosophy which always pleased me. I could, indeed, send you to a better system than that of Epictetus, where you would find a better model on which to form your *conduct*. But the mind should have arrived at a certain stage, to profit properly by *that* book. It should be cool and confirmed." It is no marvel that one who could thus advise an inquirer after the way of life, should have been incompetent to compose other than a heartless biography of such a man as William Cowper.

What lesson, then, is taught to this spirit of dubious and distant politeness to the scriptures, by the doctrine of the oneness of God in revelation and in nature? It is refreshing to turn to the confidence which men feel, and with which they express their convictions, in the natural sciences. That very word "science;" how courageous is its etymology! What a lordly dignity it claims! It teaches as one having authority. It affirms its facts with the calm consciousness that they are indisputable. It starts with

axioms which it is proof of insanity to deny, and then it deduces its laws with a power of command which is obeyed, because what it speaks it knows. It is power because it is knowledge. It pursues inquiry in the spirit of knowing. It advances with the expectation of knowing that which it seeks for. Its conjectures germinate into truths. Its hypotheses ripen into principles. Thrown out as tentatives here and there into the darkness of the unknown, they spring up radiant with revelations, so that the very night unto night showeth *knowledge*. Even in those departments of nature which cover the world of mind, philosophy assumes to *know* something. It believes that it knows things which are not demonstrable. It refuses to be restricted in its knowledge to the theorems of Euclid. It claims the right to assume first principles, to read intuitions, to test even imaginings and longings as hints reaching up, like tendrils, to lay hold of hidden realities. The great embodiments of thought in the world to-day, in systems of belief, in governments, in arts, and in all forms of social life, and of unorganized usage, exist upon the assumption that *science* of the worlds both of matter and of mind is a verity. It is the expression of things and of beings, of operations and powers, which are realities. Some of these are believed to be so far beyond the reach of respectable scepticism, that if sciolism denies them in the name of philosophy, the world instantly detects the cheat, and greets it as an ass in the lion's skin, with the broad laugh of common sense. All honor, then, to the sciences of nature! We bow to them as authorities, because we respect them as knowledges.

But our God is one God. When, therefore, we turn from his handiwork in nature, to his word in revelation, we must presume that we shall find there also, a similar definiteness and positiveness of truth. We must expect to find there a theology which shall be at least *as* strongly marked in its outline, and *as* boldly affirmative in its claims upon the human mind, as astronomy, or mineralogy, or chemistry. We must look for a theology which is a system, not of inquiries, but of answers. We must anticipate the discovery of a



theology, which, in a word, is a science — is knowledge — is something which we can believe because we know it, and can preach because we thus believe it. Why should it not be so?

We must presume, especially, that when we open this revelation of God in language, we shall come upon certain verities which shall be patent on the face of the record, to unperverted inquiry. We do not so much find them here, as that they find us. They are verities which unbiassed readers in all ages will read here, and will believe; verities which infidelity will always read here; and verities which it is as unphilosophical for a believer in the inspiration of the Bible to deny, as it is for any sane mind to refuse credence to the elementary facts of geology, or of anatomy. What philosophic wisdom can prove *a priori* that this should not be so? We must expect to find in the scriptures, a theology distinguished by grand peculiarities which shall mark it as a novel revelation. For, no two disclosures of God elsewhere merge themselves confusedly into each other. No single blade of grass is a duplicate of another. We must anticipate a theology whose towering material shall *command* the eye of faith like Alps and Himalayas. We must look for a theology whose breadth of suggestion beyond all that it can express to finite thought, shall awe a believing spirit, like astronomic orbits and geologic ages. Yet we must find a theology which, in its immensity of range shall still lie open to philosophy and faith alike. It must come home to the heart of a child as a verity and a power, as readily as to that of a sage, just as the facts of nature do, on the face of the earth, and in the heavens. What authority of the schools can decree that this should not be so?

Moreover, we must presume that these scriptures contain a theology, not only of robust material, and of graphic outline, but of such firmness of construction that it can be positively preached. As a working instrument, we must expect to find it so welded that it will not come to pieces by handling. It must be free from self-contradictions, as other sci-

ences are, so that an athletic faith can use it. It must be a power which will not shatter itself by the rebound of its own blow, or fall asunder by the friction of its own machinery. We must no more anticipate that James has contradicted Paul, or that John has belied David, than we believe the telescope to give the lie to the microscope. We must look for a theology so compact in its self-consistency, so far free from anomaly in its structure, and so balanced in its combination of forces, that it can be preached with singleness of aim, and with no more misgivings of its working than we feel respecting gravitation or light. And we must look for a theology which, when it is thus preached, shall prove itself to be a power in the earth. We must presume that it will show its great strength in its methods of working. It will penetrate and agitate and instrumentally regenerate individual souls. It will change the beliefs of men. It will probe the wounds of diseased social life. It will upheave to the light organized systems of wrong. It will make venerable institutions obsolete. It will reform abuses of usage which no law can reach. It will breathe its great soul into the organs of the world's life, by revivals of religious vitality which shall seem to come as the wind that bloweth where it listeth, and to go, no man can tell whither, and yet shall come because the world needs them, and when the world needs them, and shall meet emergencies in history, which could be met in no other way. The normal development of this theology as a working power, we must expect to be a development of inquiry, of agitation, of change, of revolution, of creation, at least not *less* palpable (and how feebly does this language express the truth before us!), than the development of other sciences, in the changes they have wrought all over and all through the structure of modern civilization. We must find in the Bible a theology of this positive, formative, creative character; or we must concede, as infidelity affirms, that the Bible is incongruous with all other revelations which God has made of himself to men.

The view here presented, I must believe, suggests a caution which we shall do well to heed, respecting the conces-

sions often made by the friends of the Bible, in their expressions of sympathy with doubt as to its authority or its teachings. From the earnestness of those expressions, regarded as a fraternal gentleness towards weakness of faith, I would not abate one jot. On the contrary, the acidity of our theological polemics, it must be confessed, needs a much larger infusion than it has of such alkaline correctives. But sympathies with doubt often express more than this. The argument with unbelief, I cannot but think, is sometimes altogether too apologetic for the regal character of a revealed theology. We are apt to yield at the outset one and another and a third of our strongholds, to the diplomacy or the courtesy of an antagonist, as if for the pleasure of retaking them by dint of hard fighting. The difficulties of revelation are allowed to be thrust so confidently in advance of its evidences; its seeming inconsistencies are paraded so ostentatiously in the foreground of its congruities; such lugubrious confessions are made of mental struggle against unbelief; and such admiration is insinuated towards a downright infidelity, which needs no sympathy, and which scorns the credulity that offers it; that in the result, many a looker-on infers from the policy which Belief adopts, that Unbelief is the more probable and respectable of the two. By implication, doubt comes to be regarded as the normal state, at least of cultivated minds, respecting the teachings of the Bible. Scepticism and mental strength become synonyms. The prince of the apostles is not Peter, nor James, nor John, — the chosen friends of our Lord — but the sceptical Thomas, rather. They are deemed a “feeble folk,” whose faith in God’s word has grown up spontaneously, calmly, and has worked with the steadiness of gravitation. A scholarly faith must bear signs of convulsive agonies, buried in their mental history like the prints of geologic cataclysms.

I must think that it is time for us as *believers* in the word of God, to have done with a policy which so recoils upon the faith we cherish. We have no right to concede to infidelity, within the court of scriptural inquiry, what we never dare to concede to it, and it never dares to claim, in the

court of natural science. The world should understand that we find in the scriptures the materials of a *faith* — of an *undoubting* faith. We find a theology which is a science. In a truthful sense we know it, and we preach it because we know it. Our sympathies with unbelief are not with the strength of its logic, not with the intrinsic formidableness of its difficulties, but with the misfortune of its mental disease. We hold, that faith, in revelation, as in nature, is the normal state of a full grown mind. It is the only legitimate state of an educated mind. We think that the most symmetrical and vigorous intellects of the race have been the most profound and capacious believers. There is a wisdom whose soundings go infinitely below the bottom of scepticism, in those words, “Blessed are they that have *not seen*, and yet have believed.” We expect to commend to the world this word of God successfully, because it gives full assurance of hope. We cannot but speak the things which we *have seen*. I repeat, Fathers and Brethren, we must *find* in the scriptures a faith which can be thus preached, or we must *let them go*, as unworthy to rank even by the side of the revelations of God, which men read in the heavens, and in forests, and in oceans. We can never preach successfully any other than such a gospel. Men will not hear it. They will turn away, and say with the revolutionary orator of France: “it is not the gospel I invoke, it is Plato.” A doom fixed as eternity awaits anything that is doubtful in this world, if it must make its way side by side with anything that is certain. The sure thing will crowd out that which is not so. An affirmative is taller than a negative. Assurance will beat down suspense. Faith will sap unbelief. And it is *knowledge* which will run to and fro in the earth. Men will turn from the preacher of an apologetic faith as from a bewildered guide, whose own distrust creates disbelief. He seems to them as one “that lieth on the top of a mast.” Men will turn to the material sciences and to the arts that grow out of them, and will say: “these be our gods — we know these — as for this Moses, we wot not what has become of him.” Such preaching must die out of the world.

Prelections upon it may yet be read in Music Halls, of a Sunday, as on one of the "lost arts."

From the unity of God in nature and in revelation, we may infer, *thirdly*, the certainty that the facts of these two departments of God's working will never contradict each other.

The well-known trial which Christianity has undergone, from its imagined conflict with the discoveries of science, is one of the most instructive phases of its history. It is much for our faith in Christianity, that now this trial itself *has* a history. It may perplex us to explain why assaults upon the Bible have been characteristic of every period of scientific awakening in the learned world. There is something formidable, indeed, at the first, in the apparent conspiracy of the sciences against any recognition of a revealed theology. Now by astronomy, and then by geology; on the one side by archæology, and on the other by ethnography; here by philology, and there by comparative anatomy—the scriptures have been summoned to surrender this chapter and that of their histories, this narrative and that of their biographies, and this one and that of their doctrines, till scarcely a page remains across which the wisdom of the ages has not drawn its mark of erasure.

The contrast is remarkable between the pertinacity with which the Oriental nations cling to their sacred books, and the ease with which the wise men of the West are induced to abandon our Christian oracles. An unnatural value is often attached to a discovery that seems to clash with the word of God, though that discovery may have been wormed out of the archives of a fabulous history, or mumbled by a science that is scarcely out of its embryo. "I believe," says a living writer, "had the books of Moses not been preserved by Christianity, but discovered for the first time, among the Jews of China, or by Dr. Buchanan among those of Malabar, they would have been received as a treasure of historical knowledge, by the very men who have slighted and blasphemed them."

But what answer may we give to these wise blasphemies? The history of science in its relations to the scrip-

tures, confirms the faith which we should presume to cherish from the oneness of God in revelation and in nature. If anything may be regarded as fixed in the laws which govern the progress of beliefs in the world, we may rest assured of this, — that science will never destroy the faith of the world in the Christian scriptures. The world is too old for that. The time when this might have seemed possible, has gone by. Science itself has established it as an axiom, that there are no insulated departments of inquiry. Every science plays into the hands of every other. There may be occasion for suspense of opinion, but for belief in a contradiction to the scriptures, never. Sciences are all tributaries to a consentient system. It is, therefore, as unphilosophical for natural science to discard the claims of sacred philology, as for philology to attempt to dislodge geology, or astronomy from the beliefs of the world. The history of the conflicts of secular science with the Bible, demonstrates the unreal character of those conflicts. So sturdy is its significance, that we are not arrogant in challenging the future in this controversy. When men think they discover in nature something antagonistic to revelation, we may safely reply, as did the three men at the mouth of the furnace, "We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, and he *will* deliver us." Our God is one God. His word does not contradict his works, and his works will never be found to contradict his word. The most unlearned faith may rest in this assurance; and the most accomplished faith comes back to this position, after travelling the circuit of the sciences, and brings with it those very sciences as tributaries, to take their place by the side of this lowly trust in God's word. "We are never alarmed," says a christian scholar, "when we see an infidel philosopher of real talents, commence an investigation into the works of nature. We hail his labors as destined to be auxiliary to the cause of truth. We have learned that here Christianity has nothing to fear; and men of science, we believe, are beginning to understand that here infidelity has nothing to hope for."

It is no arrogance to take this ground of the impregnability of the Scriptures, [as *proved* by the history of scientific discovery. It is a fact, which no candid friend of science will deny, that "no man has yet investigated the works of nature for the purpose of assailing revelation, who did not rather in the end evolve facts in its confirmation." Does geology affirm that he who made this globe and revealed the order of its creation to Moses, did not know its age? Be it so. We are not anxious to deny the facts of geology. Let geology alone, till it has run through the circuit of the eighty anti-Mosaic theories, which the French Institute once reckoned among its trophies of progress, and the result is, that this noble science spurns from itself, like cobwebs, on this side and on that, one after another of its eighty theories, till not one of them clings to it, and it comes around in the freshness of its strength to sit at the feet of Moses, and pay its tribute to the cosmogony of the first chapter of Genesis. Does astronomy affirm that he who made the heavens with his fingers, taught David a falsehood, by inspiring him to praise God "from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same," — or indeed that God never made the sidereal universe; for by the gravitation of stardust it has created itself? Be it so. We need not refuse to look through the telescope of Galileo, nor take thought for the morrow, by reconstructing our architecture of the heavens. Let astronomy alone, and it shall disclose to interpreters of the Bible, a most beautiful evidence of God's condescension in inspiring the prophets to speak in the language of unlearned men — saying "sunrise" and "sunset" as we all do — thus revealing unto babes things which are hidden from the wise. And the wise men themselves shall construct for us new instruments of science, like Lord Rosse's telescope, which shall refute many of their reasonings, and they shall come back to the believer, and shall say, "we knew not that whereof we affirmed." Do ethnography, and physiology, and comparative philology, come to us arm in arm, and staggering under the burden of their parchments and their anatomic specimens, to tell us that he who made man, did not create him of one stock, so

that in Adam *all* die. Be it so. We are not careful to answer the wise men. We cannot read the parchments, and, in our ignorance we must confess it, the dry bones are very dry to us. As theologians we do not care whether they prove five races or ten. Let the wise men see to that. Let them decipher the hieroglyphics and the analogies. They are fellow laborers with us, though they think not so. We will counsel our princes to give them gold for their libraries and their cabinets, and by-and-by, when the world is a little older, and the wise men are a little wiser, and come to agreement among themselves, the libraries and the cabinets will read to them an advanced lesson, and they, too, will go and sit down with certain other wise men of Athens, and hear Paul discourse of that unknown God who hath made of one blood *all* nations on *all* the face of the earth.

So, too, if possibly — for more marvellous things than this have happened in our times, and that is a cowardly goodness which shrinks from contemplating the possibilities of science — if possibly, the vagaries of spiritualism should assume the dignity and the honesty of a science, and should come to us, affirming that miracles are no proof of a divine message, for, behold! the Egyptians do so with their enchantments; or that if miracles *are* evidences of a message from God, behold! here is given to us another gospel by angels from heaven, — be it so. We will not believe the angel from heaven, nor are we careful to answer the angel in this matter. *Let spiritualism alone*, till science shall explore this region of strange sights and voices, and reduce to order its conflicting phenomena, and by-and-by science will return from this foray also, bending under the weight of the spoils it has taken, in tribute to something in the word of God. Perhaps it will illustrate the ancient witchcraft, a fact in the world's history which neither science nor theology has explained. Perhaps it will illustrate the personality of Satan, a fact which the world always forgets when it can. Perhaps it will confirm the record of demoniacal possessions, a fact which the Scriptures nowhere assert to have been either of miraculous occurrence, or of temporary dura-



tion. Perhaps it will fulfil the prediction of false Christs and false prophets, who should show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect. Our God is one God. The Bible and the sciences of nature are not enemies to each other. That is a needless and unsafe concession to atheism which has been made by a brilliant writer of New England, that "the two great modes of thought—that of Christianity in the supernatural department of God's plan, and that of science in the natural,—are so different that a collision is inevitable, and a struggle necessary to the final liquidation of the account between them." We do not so read either nature or the supernatural. We do not lodge our faith in a supernatural Bible as in a citadel that is beleaguered by the sciences. It never stands on the defensive against them. Its gates are all open, and always open. The portcullis is always up. It invites the sciences to enter with their treasures. "Come," is the message it sends forth, "if ye will inquire, inquire ye."

From the identity of the God of nature with the God of revelation, we may infer, *fourthly*, that we should expect to find the revealed government of God to be a system characterized by sacredness and uniformity of law.

In the natural world we find no such thing as caprice. Everything there goes on by the guidance of laws, known or unknown. The mechanism and movement of the most accurate chronometer, are but a feeble emblem of the ramifications of law in the material universe. Natural science is but the record of natural laws. The growth of the forests, the flowing of the rivers, the currents of the ocean, the falling of the dews, the gathering of twilight, all proceed by the operation of laws, not one of which is more flexible than the laws which governed the primal work of creation. Physicians tell us that disease has laws which are as beautiful in their operation as the laws of health. Where can you find in the material world evidence of the working of a capricious mind? In a whirlwind? In autumnal leaves? In snowflakes? In a summer shower? In the shifting clouds at sunset? Yet not one of these could be other than

they are. The whirlwind could not reverse its rotation; the autumnal leaf flitting hither could not flit thither instead; the snowflake, falling southward, could not fall south-eastward, rather; the summer shower could not descend by one moment sooner, or by one moment later, or by one moment more rapidly; the sun could not gather its drapery of clouds otherwise, by so much as the tracing of one golden fringe more or less, — without giving a shock to the universe, such as it has never felt since it came from the Creator's hand. So mighty are the forces of this machinery of law in God's works, that astronomers tell us they can calculate the day, the hour, the minute, the second, when it will roll back planets to the precise conjunction in the heavens where they are now; and that they can point out the spot where an unknown planet ought to be, must be, will be discovered; and the clockwork of sidereal movement will not deceive them. Yet so feminine is the touch of this finger of law in God's works, that the smallest groove of a muscle in the limb of an antelope will disclose to a naturalist the disposition of the antelope; and there is a certain fragile bone in the frame of a humming-bird which will tell him the species and the habits of the humming-bird.

Why then should we not expect to find in a revelation respecting the moral world, a similar omnipresence and omnipotence of law. So close is the relationship between the two, and analogy so interweaves each with the other, that it has been the faith of many wise men, that a shock given to either, on a large scale, awakens the sympathy of the other. The ancient Persians, the Egyptians, Thucydides, Niebuhr, Dr. Arnold, believed that there was often a concurrence of moral with physical convulsions in this world — revolutions of nations and earthquakes breaking out together, as if at the breath of the same destroying angel. Be this as it may, our God is one God; and that system of laws which interpenetrates the material universe, is an emblem of that by which he governs the world of mind, and which, with life and immortality, are brought to light by a revelation. If there be one feature of religion in practice, which

a believer in the works of God ought to welcome more cordially than another, it is that of the decalogue and the sermon on the mount. And if there be one doctrine of religion in theory, which a natural philosopher should embrace more generously than another, it is the doctrine of Decrees. Law in nature,—Decree in religion. The two revolve around each other like twin stars. Both are developments of one truth—that God acts by plan, and not by caprice.

Science has here paid a tribute to religion, the sublimity of which is unsurpassed in our literature. We may not inaptly regard it as the dying testimony of Hugh Miller, to a theology, which to him was the product of two revelations. "In looking abroad on that great history of life," he writes, "of which the latter portions are recorded in the pages of revelation, and the earlier in the rocks, I feel the grasp of a doctrine first taught me by our Calvinistic catechism at my mother's knee, tightening, instead of relaxing. 'The decrees of God,' I was told, 'are his eternal purposes, according to the counsels of his own will, whereby for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.' And what I was told early I still believe."

Why should he not believe it? What would this universe be, if it were the expression of the mind of a Creator who knew no law? Can you reverently venture for a moment upon the conception of an infinite mind, putting forth its infinite energy in the construction of a universe with infinite caprice? Infinite forces, acting with infinite diversity of invention, grooving out for themselves infinite channels of movement, yet with no order, no harmony with each other, no unity in diversity, nothing but infinite chances to rule them,—can you conceive of him who should sit upon the circle of such a universe and take pleasure in such an expression of himself? What then must be the God of a universe of lawless mind? Our minds sink back from the effort to form that conception. It cannot enter into the heart of man. But do we not drink in with new refreshment those words that come over to us from Galilee: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of *them* shall not fall on the ground with-

out your father. The very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore."

It would be instructive, if we had time, to pursue this analogy between law in the natural world and law in God's moral government, to certain other results. We might see, first, how accordant with *nature* it is, that the laws of religion cannot be violated with impunity. We might observe, secondly, how *natural* it is, that fatal consequences in respect of religion should follow from apparently trifling disobedience of God's commands. We might remark, thirdly, the foundation which is laid in the *nature* of things, for that law of God's government by which sin often reaches over from the time when it is committed, and strikes its penalty in a remote experience of the sinner. Hence we might infer, fourthly, from the course of *nature* here, the credibility and the probability, that the sins of one brief life on earth, should pass on, beyond the grave, to reap their reward in eternity. And we could not but discern, fifthly, the *naturalness* of the faith, that, if God has devised any remedial scheme to meet the emergency of sin, it must be one that shall honor delicately and rigidly the sacredness of law. These doctrines of revealed religion are the doctrines of *nature* also. They are taught by the elements. They spring up at our feet. They look out from our skies. They burden our atmosphere. If we obtain any relief from them, it must be from another revelation of God than that which these articulate.

But let us pass to observe in the *fifth* place, that from the unity of God in nature and in revelation, we have reason to expect the occurrence of mysteries in a revealed theology.

The mysteries of theology always meet us before we have travelled far on any track of religious inquiry. A finite mind, in any coherent religious thought, is like a dweller on an island, who cannot walk far towards any point of the compass, without finding his steps arrested by the ocean. But this is no anomaly peculiar to religious thought. The analogy between the mysteries of religion, and the mysteries of nature, has become a trite theme. Yet it is illustrated

so affluently, just in the proportion to which modern science extends the boundaries of our knowledge, that, to any well informed mind, the chief anomaly conceivable in the case, should be that of a religion without a mystery, or even of a religion not made up of mysteries. Science in the world of matter, is thwarted in all its investigations, sooner or later, by insolvable mysteries. It comes, on all sides, upon powers whose methods it cannot discover, and whose products it cannot imitate. If it seems to pass beyond the boundary, and to discern that which it is not given to man to know, it is only for a little time that it sits like the Danish monarch on the shore at low tide, and amuses itself with its childish mandates to the sea. The tide rolls in, as it did aforetime, and the monarch retreats. Certain problems in mathematics, and in the physical sciences, have thus baffled the wisdom of the ages; and just so, and no otherwise, is it with certain problems in religion. Nor is it any more marvellous that revealed theology does not solve such problems in the one realm of thought, than that natural science does not solve them in the other. Is the permission of sin in the universe of a holy God a mystery which revelation leaves untouched? Not less so is that structure of things in nature, which permits brute suffering in the universe of a benevolent God. "The whole subject of brute suffering," says Dr. Arnold, "is to me one of such painful mystery, that I dare not approach it." Is regeneration a mystery, an inconceivable work of divine power lying back of the laws of mind? But do we know any more of that work of omnipotence which is going on back of the laws of matter, in the rosebud or the orange blossom at our window? Is the entire subject of prayer left by revelation in such darkness, that we take no pleasure in the impenetrable privilege? But what more do we know of electricity or of photography? In certain moods of mind, do the decrees of God as taught in the epistle to the Romans, appear like brazen heavens over our heads when we *would* look up? But do we find any more comforting repose in that operation of physical laws, by which a purpose of God is revealed, that a young

man, the only son of his mother, and she a widow, shall be dashed from the summit of a building to the ground; or in that combination of physical laws, by which purposes of God come to light, that the son of a dying clergyman shall fall from a precipice, and the father, bending under disease, shall have so little strength to embark for his home, where he hopes to die among his kindred, that he brings his own coffin by the side of his son's remains? Is the connection of the race with Adam, one of the hard sayings of a revealed theology? But is the problem more facile of solution, that the vices of a father, by a law latent as fire in flint, in every man's frame, become a poison in the veins of his children and his children's children, by which often the degenerate stock is burned hollow and crushed in? Is the triunity of the Godhead such an absurdity that we cannot away with it? But are we any wiser in our faith respecting the structure of a man; man, at the same time a body and a soul; man, on the one hand a *thing*, ponderable, measurable, visible, palpable, mortal, corruptible, incapable of thought; a *thing*, such that an atheistic physiologist, recently deceased, said that he "could reduce all that he knew about man to a gas," and on the other hand, man a *being* who is *all* thought, who sustains no relation, that we know of, to weight, to form, to sight, to feeling, to death, to decay; and yet a being who can use the earthen organism that encloses him, looking out at *its* eyes, hearing with *its* ears, speaking with *its* lips, moving with *its* limbs, and feeling with *its* nerves; and yet again a being who is reacted upon by this dull organism in which he is imprisoned, and is so sensitive to the state of it, that Pascal says truly: "Do not wonder that he reasons ill now; a fly is buzzing by his ear,"—I repeat, do our physiological and psychological probes make us any wiser respecting the humanity of this *man*, than revelation has made us respecting the ontology of the mind of *God*? One of the most eminent statesmen of our own country could not credit the triunity of the Godhead; yet he could say of Milton: "His genius is beyond my conception. I can only gaze at him in astonishment, without com-

prehending the compass of his capacity." Why should not this coincidence of mysteries in religion, with mysteries in nature, lead us to a similar self-distrust in the study of a revealed theology? Why may we not gaze with astonishment at the trinity of God, while we do not comprehend the compass of *its* capacity? "Knowledge," says an old writer, "has two extremities which touch each other. The one is that pure ignorance in which we are born; the other is that point to which great minds attain, who, having gone the whole round of possible human knowledge, find that they know nothing." Can we fail to perceive how close is the sympathy between this modesty of greatness amidst the mystery of science, and the childlikeness of faith in the mysteries of religion? Our God is one God; and therefore it is, that the teachings of nature obeyed by a great mind, lead to a state so analogous to that to which the teachings of the Bible lead, when obeyed by a pious mind.

The subject before us is prolific of other suggestions, which the time will not allow me more than to name. Thus, certain developments of God's working in nature, lead us reasonably to infer the probability, that a revealed theology will contain some remedial scheme to meet the emergency of sin. Certain other disclosures of God's methods in nature, lead us to presume, that the theology of revelation will have a history of progressive development; a history worked out in its own construction, and a history also of its development as a science comprehensible by men. Still further peculiarities of God's wisdom in nature, prepare us to find in the structure of a written revelation, the expedient of prophetic types and symbols.

I pass by these and other similar topics, within the limits of this theme, to observe in the *last* place, that, from the oneness of God in nature and in revelation, we may infer a confirmation of our faith in the certainty of this world's conversion to Christianity.

We are too often unmindful that the creation of this world, and the redemption of this world are, in a truthful sense, parallel acts of omnipotence. It is as certain

that the one will occur as that the other has occurred; for the revelation of that which God will do in the one case, is as worthy of trust as the history of that which he has done in the other. The energies of the mind of God have been pledged to both events. History and prophecy are to his mind as one. The government of the natural world by the forces of natural law, is no more fixed in the purposes of God, no more invariable in its operation, no more certain in its results, than that government of the moral world, by the forces of moral law, which is working out the plan of salvation. Our God is one God. The necessity of law in nature,—the certainty of law in redemption. You may reason from the rising of the sun to-day, from the Spring which has decked our fields, from the tides in your harbor, from the flowing of rivers to the valleys, from the respiration of your own lungs, or the beating of your heart, or the rise and fall of your eyelids,—with the scriptures in your hand, you may reason,—to the *assurance* that this world will be converted to Christianity. The heart is in the hand of the Lord, *as* the rivers of water; he turneth it whithersoever he will.

Who has not observed the profusion with which the natural world is made emblematic in the prophetic scriptures, of the final triumphs of the gospel? Listen for a moment, to the manner in which the exuberance of omnipotence in the elements of nature, is made tributary to an expression of the certainty of omnipotence in redemption. “As the *rain* cometh down and the *snow* from heaven, \* \* so shall my word be; \* \* it shall accomplish that which I please.” They shall be a “*branch of my planting.*” “The fruit thereof shall shake like *Lebanon.*” “The glory of *Lebanon* shall come unto thee.” “The *mountain* of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains.” “I will extend peace to her like a *river.*” “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the *sea.*” “His name shall endure as long as the *sun*; there shall be abundance of peace so long as the *moon* endureth.” The *animal* creation come at the bidding of the prophetic mind, as they came at the bidding of Noah to the ark, to minister to the



visions of the world's conversion. "The multitudes of camels, \* \* the dromedaries of Midian, \* \* the flocks of Kedar, \* \* the rams of Nebaioth, shall minister unto thee." Even the wild beasts leave their savage nature in their dens, to come forth and symbolize the change which this world shall undergo. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together; the cow and the bear shall feed, the child shall play on the hole of the asp, and put his hand on the cockatrice's den." This luxuriance of metaphor which the kingdom of nature yields up to the portraiture of the kingdom of grace, springs from no fortuitous resemblances. Our God is one God; and therefore it is, that a mind inspired to foresee the success of omnipotence in redemption, carries over into the moral kingdom its conceptions of the working of omnipotence in nature. The two kingdoms are separated by an imaginary line; the mind crosses and recrosses at its pleasure. The mountains, rivers, seas, flocks of Kedar, sun, moon, in which God *has* wrought, become, not only the emblems, but the pledges of the mighty works which he *will* do for man's recovery.

The analogy between these two departments of God's working discloses some striking resemblances of *method* in the details of his work. These, I had purposed to illustrate more fully, but they must now be named with brief remark.

A resemblance between the divine methods of working in nature and in grace, is seen in the law common to both kingdoms, that great results ensue from feeble beginnings. The certainty of this world's conversion seems chimerical, when we regard only the weakness of the instruments employed, and the insignificance of their first efforts. When William Carey entered upon the modern missionary movements of Great Britain, it was no marvel that almost all the literary, and political, and commercial mind of the kingdom was arrayed against the poor cobbler as a monomaniac. It is not singular that the sarcasm of Sidney Smith upon a band of English missionaries to India, as a little detachment of lunatics going to make conquest of one hundred mil-

lions of men, should have gone the round of the press, as a more flippant wit is now performing similar gyrations on this side of the Atlantic. But what reply does nature give to such aspersions upon the work of missions to the heathen? Is it a lunatic who paints the first flush of light in the east at daybreak? Who is the lunatic that commenced the Amazon and the Mississippi with a trickling rivulet which you can dam up with your hand? What lunacy planned the infantile beginning of the life of Sir Isaac Newton, and Napoleon? Our God is one God.

It is also a law of the two kingdoms of God's working, that results are often for a long time suppressed from human view. The work of this world's conversion *is* a discouraging work; so long a period intervenes between the labor and its reward; so many ages must elapse often, in which preachers seem like miners underground, who scarcely see broad daylight. But Kepler said, when he published his system of astronomy, that the world had waited six thousand years for some one to read the heavens aright. The coal mines of Pennsylvania, and the quarries of Quincy, were forming before the garden of Eden existed. Who can tell us why this western continent lay for fifty-four centuries unknown to the dominant races of men? Our God is one God.

It is furthermore a law in the two kingdoms of God's working, that results often come to human view suddenly and by seeming accident. This work of the world's conversion does not always disclose its epochs of success in accordance with the forecast of men. The radiant points in the line of its progress, are not always luminous with the importance of the human instrument in effecting that progress. Revivals of religion often surprise an unprepared church. The chosen instruments of them are not always those of our choice. The mighty wind,— we cannot tell whence it cometh. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. But have we not told our children of the falling apple, which was so instructive to the mind of Newton; and of the invention of the mariner's compass by an unknown

genius; and of the gold mines of California, which a laborer accidentally discovered in building a sawmill? Our God is one God.

It is, finally, a law of the two kingdoms of God's working, that his work proceeds with great apparent waste. This work of the world's conversion is a costly labor; though, who can speak of other cost, after that price with which we have been bought! But it is a labor, sometimes, of apparently wasteful cost. It costs much to support one preacher of the gospel. It costs a large sum to support the ministry of the two denominations of Christians in Massachusetts, which are represented here to-day. Three hundred and eighty thousand dollars annually, more or less, must be expended upon our six hundred and thirty-three pulpits. Yes, for six hundred and thirty-three years of ministerial labor must be paid — am I wrong? — from one-third to one half as much as would be expended upon the erection and the machinery of a single cotton mill!

It costs much to support our organizations for the religious instruction of the young; our societies for the rescue of the tempted; our refuges for homeless children; our homes for sailors; our asylums for the fallen, and our retreats for the inebriate; — that golden cluster of benevolences which are shedding such radiance upon the history of our time. It costs a large gift of gold to sustain them. I dare not estimate the amount with confidence, but probably a half million of dollars thus expended, is required to secure efforts equal to the continuous labors of five hundred men. Yes, for five hundred years of Christ-like toil, we pay — will you believe it? — one half as much as is about to be expended in one of our Atlantic cities, on a single metropolitan hotel!

It costs much to send one preacher to the heathen. It costs a vast amount of money to support, for a single year, the operations of the two Foreign Missionary Boards, represented in this Convention. Four hundred thousand dollars, more or less! With a great sum do we obtain this freedom for three hundred and ninety-three missionaries to preach Christ to the nations. Yes, for three hundred and ninety-

three years of missionary labor, you pay — is it possible? — almost one-third as much as has been expended upon the building and equipment of a single ship of war! To what purpose is this waste? Might not this alabaster box of very precious ointment have been given to the poor? But, still, this *is* a costly work. It costs hard-earned dollars. It costs labor; it costs weariness, and watching, and cold, and hunger, and sometimes stripes and imprisonments. It costs lives, the lives of men and women of whom the world is not worthy. That should be a great cause for which strong men, and women of refined culture, give their lives. Who of us did not feel, when we heard of the fall of that, — I had almost said youthful missionary; for when I last saw him, he was so light of heart, so full of a sense of the privilege of his work, and so hopeful of the future, that the memory of his words, and of the gladness of his eye, has since been like a song in the night — yes, I will say, that youthful missionary,<sup>1</sup> who, a little more than two years ago, fell asleep, and was borne by devout men to his burial on Mount Seir, — who of us did not feel that this work of preaching Christ to the heathen *is* a costly work? Who of us has not felt, in listening to the appeals which are annually made in this house, in behalf of that — shall I call it charity?<sup>2</sup> — which has no plea to urge upon your beneficence, but the remembrance of ministerial services which have often been brought, as *we* have said in our thoughtlessness, to an *untimely* end, — who of us has not felt that there is constantly going on within our own fraternity, a sacrifice, a loss, a prodigality in expenditure of power and life, the worth of which only God appreciates? Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints!

But this is the method of God's working. His plans have this evidence of their greatness, that they go on with that which to us appears like waste. The earth every year produces food sufficient for three times its burden of inhabi-

<sup>1</sup> Rev. David Tappan Stoddard died at Oroomiah, Jan. 22. 1857

<sup>2</sup> The Convention of Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts are the almoners of a fund for the aid of the families of deceased clergymen.

tants. The sun wastes two-thirds of its beams on trackless waters and deserts. The stars are not put out like your street lamps, when the traveller has no further need of them. Poets have sung of flowers that waste their sweetness. God works on a generous scale. Even of suffering he is not sparing in the laws of his providence. How much of apparently useless suffering is endured under the laws of disease! What a waste of life do we see everywhere in the death of the young! In this seeming prodigality of the divine procedure, we see evidence that God has plans too deep for us to fathom. And these plans run under the two systems of nature and of grace alike. Our God is one God; and therefore it is, that we believe he *will* do his pleasure in the conversion of this world, as he *has* done his pleasure in its creation and its government. It is fixed — in the purposes of him who said, “Let there be light and there was light” — it is fixed, that this world is to be converted to Jesus Christ.

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## ARTICLE VII.

### NOTICES OF NEW PUBLICATIONS.

#### 1.—HENRY BULLINGER’S LIFE AND SELECT WRITINGS.<sup>1</sup>

NEXT to the principal reformers of the sixteenth century in Germany, few, if any, present a more useful and instructive life than Bullinger of Zurich. If he had not the daring and heroism of Luther, the graceful erudition and softness of Melanchthon, the acuteness and pungency of Zuingli, or the merciless logic of Calvin, he had fewer defects of temperament than any one of these. He was always sober and self-possessed, judicious and wise, firm and conciliating. Though his character was almost faultless, it

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Bullinger’s Life and Select Writings, from Unpublished and Contemporary Authorities, by Carl Pestalozzi: Elberfeld, 1858, pp. 646. (Heinrich Bullinger, Leben und Ausgewählte Schriften.)