

THE PHILOSOPHY OF REVELATION:

AN ADDRESS,

Delivered by J. W. FARQUHAR, at the Sunday Services for Spiritualists, Cavendish Rooms, London, on the Evening of Sunday, 28th January, 1872.

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork.

"Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.

"There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.

"Their direction is gone through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."—PSALM xix. 1-4.

THIS quotation from a good old book speaks of a divine revelation which, I may venture to say, no one here disputes to be a plenary inspired word of God. No objection can be made, in this instance, to want of universality, for there is no speech nor language in which the voice of sun, moon, and stars, is not heard. It cannot be said that there are any errors of transcription, because every word and every letter is just as it was originally written by the hand of the Author. No mistranslation, for every people, tribe, and family on the face of the earth read the book in its original language. It is all but universal, for there are some now living, and some who have lived, on the earth, in every age and country, who have never seen it. Those who have been born blind as to the natural sense, and have remained in that condition, have yet had sufficient faith in human testimony to believe that their more fortunate friends speak the truth when they endeavour to describe the glories of the firmament. But suppose the case reversed. Suppose the blind to be the great multitude and the seers as few

as the blind now are, what then? We can all imagine the result. The blind apprehend sensible objects by the sense of touch, which is a sense so much confined to space that they can have personal knowledge merely of such part of the surface of an object as is actually in contact with the fingers, or whatever part of the body touches the substance. The reasoning of such an overwhelming majority would be unanswerable. 1st, They would say, to become sensible of an object some part of the body must be in immediate contact with the object; but here are some insane or lying people who profess to be able to touch a house, a tree, or a mountain, many miles distant from the body, and not merely such small part of the distant object as that portion of the face which touches can cover, but the whole of the object, even when many hundred times larger than the human body. 2nd, They profess to touch with the same part of the face (why not with the fingers, the proper organs of perception) what gives warmth to the air, which burning substance, they say, is so far above our heads that if we could build up for hundreds of years we could not reach it, when we all know that there is nothing above us but the air that surrounds us, unless it be the place from whence the rain, snow, hail, and thunder comes. Such reasoning would be unanswerable, but the facts would remain the same, viz., that those who are blind cannot see, and that those who see, perceive what is seen according to their position in relation to the object of vision. In further confirmation of this fact, I narrate a history as true as any to be found in the pages of that most veritable Greek historian, *Æsop*, who is far more reliable than the "father of history," *Herodotus*, some of whose statements may be and have been questioned; but who ever doubted the history of that wolf, who acted as prosecutor, judge, jury, and executioner, against the lamb, who, in its own person, or in the person of its father, mother, or grandfather, it did not matter which, troubled the waters of the brook?

In that well known historic period—"Once upon a time"—one of the islands of the Pacific was inhabited by a tribe of simple people who had never seen any larger vessel than their own canoes. One day a chief, when walking by the sea, saw what appeared to be a large piece of wood, but on reaching the spot where it lay, he found that, from its shape and smoothness, it could not have been broken off a tree. On further handling, one part separated from the other, for it was a box, and the lock and hinges had got loose through dashing against the coral reefs. Within lay something, the like of which he had never before seen. It was round and long like the handle of a war-club, but much smoother and more finely polished. On taking it to his people, their priest at once pronounced it to be a very powerful fetish which had come to them from the sky. In order that images of it might be made, it was more carefully examined. This led to several important discoveries. By holding one end firmly and pulling the other, it grew to more than twice its length, and it seemed to be quite open at both

ends. This fact led to the most wonderful of all discoveries, for one, on looking through to see if there might not be something inside, found that a distant hill to which it happened to be pointed was now so close to the eye that the seer thought it had come up to fall on him, and he, dropping the instrument, fled. When he recovered his presence of mind he told the cause of his terror. This was so incredible, for no one else had seen the mountain move, that he was ridiculed, although all began to be a little afraid of their new god. At length, one courageous native took up the glass and looked through at the hill, describing what he saw, and as the mountain really did not come up to crush them, each became eager to see through the wonderful fetish. Then it was directed to all sorts of earthly objects by day and of celestial objects by night. Various but vain attempts were made to make another like it. It must, therefore, have come from the sky. The former idols were now too common-place for any but the lowest and most stupid of the tribe. All went well for some time, until one enterprising genius tried the effect of applying his eye to the large end of the tube. What he saw, which was verified by others using the same means, broke up the tribe into three parties. One sect, called by its opponents the "Small Ends," contended that what brought the hills and the stars nearest must be the work of a good spirit, while what removed them to a greater distance was as clearly from an evil one. Therefore the fetish must have had two makers. The other side agreed as to the two sources, but reversed their relative work, for, they contended, was it not more reasonable to suppose that a good spirit had made the large end and an evil one the smaller; besides the small end evidently told a lie, since the stars were not so near nor so large as it represented. The third, or rational division, maintained that the whole thing being of double tongue, must be the work of an evil being. For if its origin had been good, every man would have been born with such a thing fitted to his eye, or they would have grown as fruit upon the trees. Besides, as even the "Small Ends" admitted, while it professed to bring a distant hill or tree so near as to make us think we could touch it with our fingers, we have always to walk as far as ever before we can reach the object. The work of a good spirit could never be of double tongue; saying at one time "the stars are very near—nearer than you had thought of," and at another, "they are far more distant than you had supposed. No, we shall believe our eyes, which the good spirit did make. *They* never tell us one thing one hour and the very opposite the next. The fetish is evil and ought to be destroyed, or it will bring evil upon us. Let us return to the old gods who, if they do not tell wonders, have no double tongue. This thing is false at both ends."

In such a primitive state of society men are eminently practical, and these destructionists, as they were called by the other sects, would have broken the instrument to pieces had it not been carefully guarded by its worshippers. Their contests led to frequent

and fierce fights, and there seemed to be no prospect of peace amongst them. At last, some natives of a distant island arrived in a canoe, bringing with them a stranger who, some time before the great discovery, had, with others, reached the island from whence he had just sailed in an open boat. He had been long enough with the natives to learn so much of their language as to enable him to understand them and to be understood by them. As the new arrival was cordially welcomed and kindly treated by the chiefs of this island on his arrival, he resolved to remain with them rather than return to the place at which he had first landed. When the new fetish was produced, he started, and suddenly exclaimed, "My telescope!" The people saw at once that he recognised their deity, and supposed that the speech they had just heard was a prayer or invocation to his god. When he had explained that by the magic words, he claimed special property in the instrument, their faces changed towards him. "Belonged to him! certainly not; it had come from the skies. Give it up! No, even the destructionists would not consent to such a proceeding. Rather destroy it, for, he being acquainted with its powers, might use it against them. Give it up to him! No; they would—not die, but kill him rather." However, he speedily pacified them, and regained their good will by at once relinquishing all claim to the instrument, and promised to tell them everything he could about its origin and properties. It was one of the fetishes of his country, made by the direction of a good spirit, named Science, and, in a very true sense, came from above. "But, then," urged the destructionists, "it tells lies; our eyes surely speak the truth, and it contradicts our eyesight. Not only so, but one end says the other is a liar. They cannot both speak truly." "Yes," the traveller answered, "they are all true. Your eyes certainly tell you the truth, and, as you say, if the great spirit had intended that you should see always differently from what you now do, he would have made your eyes in a different manner. They tell you that a hill is so far distant from where you stand, and that the moon and stars are just the size you see. All is as they tell you from the place on which you inquire of them. This telescope is a prophet, and answers your questions not according to what is, but to what might be. It tells no lies. When you place the small end to the eye it understands you as saying, 'O telescope, tell us how yonder hill would appear if I were six hours journey nearer it?' And it answers your question truthfully. Put the large end to your eye, and you ask, in its language, how the distant hill would appear if you were still further from it than you now are, and you see exactly how it would appear. Look at that cocoa-nut tree in the distance; your eye tells you it is a tree, but it does not tell you how many nuts are on it. Take the instrument, and it not only shows the tree more plainly, but you can see every nut upon the tree. Walk up to it and you will find it has told you the truth."

There is no need for the present purpose to carry the apologue

further. The important truth to be enforced by it is, that every view, whether of natural or of spiritual truth is relatively correct, due regard being had to the position of the seer. Sun, moon, and stars, as seen by the natural eye from the earth, have just that magnitude which we see; there is no deception in that. We must believe our eyesight. But if, from the appearance of those objects as seen from the surface of the earth, we should infer that just so they would appear to us if they were a million miles nearer, we would be manifestly in error. The physical sight is accurate, the reasoning is fallacious. It is right to reason from the known to the unknown, but to reach firm ground we must go carefully over all intermediate steps. The physical senses are trustworthy if kept strictly to their own province, which, relatively to the mental, and still more to the spiritual faculties, is very limited. They are the handmaids of reason, and ought ever to be subservient to their mistress. When an anatomist says I have searched every part of the human body, even with a microscope, and have not been able to discover any trace of the soul, he speaks the truth. There let him stop, or if he must draw an inference from his researches, let it be that the soul must be something beyond the province of the scalpel and the microscope. If he says there is no soul or I must have found it, we have in the assertion or such evidence of his folly as to make us doubt whether he can possibly be a good anatomist. Certainly he is not likely to make any new discovery, even in his own limited range of science.

There is also a species of reasoning no less unwise, though of an opposite kind. One has attained to the perception of a new truth, or a new light has dawned on some old truth, transfiguring it, and he thinks his less favoured neighbours should at once see the truth exactly as he sets it before them. So they should, and so undoubtedly they would, if their mental organisation, their training, and associations, were precisely the same. If in every respect they stood precisely as he stands, they would perceive as he perceives. This fallacy is the foundation-stone of sectarianism. Whatever church or society builds on it is a sect, should its numbers form a majority of the inhabitants of the world, and should every article of its creed, except the written or unwritten sectarian clause, be true. It is needful and right that religionists should form themselves into societies according to their respective faiths or their various views of spiritual truth. In so doing, they are no more sectarian than are families who live in different streets. But when, even in thought, any man contemns another because of difference in creed, he becomes, in that very act, a sectary, for he cuts himself off from humanity in one or other of its stages of progress heavenward. As Hood has said:—

“Intolerant to none,
Whatever shape the pious rite may bear,
Even the poor Pagan's homage to the sun
I would not lightly scorn, lest even there
I spurned some elements of Christian prayer—

An aim, though erring, at a world ayont—
 Acknowledgment of good—of man's futility,
 A sense of need, and weakness, and indeed
 That very thing which *many Christians* want—
 Humility."

There is just one word in those lines to which exception may be taken.

"An aim, though *erring*, at a world ayont."

The aim is not erring, for the instinct is true—is heaven-born, that directs it. Relatively imperfect worship it is undoubtedly, but it is the best he can give, and is a step upward on the same ladder which Jacob saw in vision, and down which the angels descend to lead their brethren homeward. The child-woman's affection for and care of a waxen or wooden image of humanity is not an erring but a true aim at the higher love and duties of maternity. It is the germ of the motherly instinct, which it would be more than cruel to crush, and even the attempt to change its form until the right time has come might be perilous. We all acknowledge that the lichen on the stone is a form of divine life as well as the oak or the palm tree; that the same hand which formed the elephant also made the animalcule. Each plant and animal, from the lowest to the highest, has its appointed place and use on some round of the ladder of physical life. So every form of faith, from those which it would require a spiritual microscope of very high power to discern, up to that of the heavenly hosts around the throne, is an organised spiritual life, and has its place somewhere, though it may be on the very lowest round, on that ladder, the top of which reaches to heaven.

It is not from without but from within—from above—that even the lowest germ of faith in the unseen is born in any heart. The heavens declare the *glory* of God, but they do not declare God, they do not reveal his existence. When that has been revealed, they tell something of His wisdom, His power, and His immensity. The firmament shows his handiwork, *not* Himself. Whatever may have been the case in past ages, we have now no sun, moon, or star worshippers. The heavens are the same as they ever were, but we have no record either in the past or the present that Deity was ever discovered by the eyesight. The rudest idol that the uninstructed savage can make is a more attractive representation of Deity to him and to his tribe than the sun in his strength, or the brightest planet in the firmament. It is a divine instinct which teaches him to look with reverence to something out of himself, even should it be the work of his own hands. And the instinct is no less divine that prompts him to seek that power in something near and akin to him, rather than in something afar off which he cannot apprehend. For the most uncouth representation of Deity carved out of wood or stone by him who kneels to it, is, in a sense, though in a very low and imperfect sense, a union of the divine and the human. The material is a representation of the divine wisdom and power in the

vegetable or mineral world, and the workmanship is the co-operation of the human worshipper. But what shall we say of sacrifice and of cruel and obscene acts of worship so prevalent in rudimentary forms of religion? Only this, that they are all evidences of the divine through imperfect media in the spiritual realm, just as the poison of plants and reptiles, and the destructive instincts of birds and beasts of prey, are manifestations of the same life in the physical realm. Sacrifice, in its essential nature, is the highest expression of love, but the germ has to grow in strength, and to be perfected by purification from the lowest and most material type to the most advanced—from the slaying of sheep and oxen up to the entire surrender, through the impulse of ardent affection, of the whole being to the service of divine humanity. "O Socrates," said a new disciple, "I have nothing to give worthy of thee—I give thee myself." Revelation, or the divine voice, comes to humanity in its various stages through many channels, "at sundry times and in divers manners," but it never does violence to the lower form for the sake of a higher and better expression of life. It takes the framework of the lower to build upon. It never ignores or despises the first step of the ladder, but tells the learner to put his foot firmly on that, and then try another step. The man Abraham had been accustomed to an imperfect and cruel form of sacrificial worship, and the divine word reached him on that level and raised him a step upwards.

The idea of sacrifice, in some form or other, is common to all religions, and the idea of propitiation in connection with the offerings is nearly, if not almost, as universal. But if the highest meaning of sacrifice is loving self-surrender, there can be no thought of propitiation when that sense has been attained. The lower is destroyed or absorbed by the higher. The idea of propitiation is born of fear—it is a son of the bondwoman which perfect love casts out. No thought of propitiation in the pupil of Socrates. No thought of propitiation in the self-sacrificing love of Christ. But the propitiatory idea of sacrifice is common to all rudimentary religions, and to all rudimentary forms of even the highest and best religion. The gods are feared; they are angry, and their wrath has to be appeased. A most remarkable example illustrative of this principle may be found in a small pamphlet published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. It is No. 23 of the series entitled, "Missions to the Heathen," and consists of an account, by one of the Society's missionaries, of a tribe of Hindoos, in the southern division of the presidency of Madras, called Shanars, or, from the name of the district, Tinnevely Shanars. This tribe, numbering about 800,000, is the lowest in religion and civilisation to be found throughout the whole of India. Their religion is described by the missionaries as "devil worship." But according to ancient mythological expression, it might more properly be termed demon worship, or the worship of departed spirits. Demon is rather a harsh word to our ears, but to the Greeks it merely implied the

spirit of one deceased, who might be either good or bad. As in the case of the Shanars, the spirits are of a very low character, the word demon is more appropriate and not so harsh as the stronger word used by the missionaries. In every case the object of their worship is the spirit of some one or other deceased native or inhabitant of the country, and as the number of devotees and the value of the sacrifices offered to any spirit is in inverse ratio to his goodness, the worship and sacrifices are altogether propitiatory. The demons may, while in the world, have been either male or female, of low or high caste, of native or foreign lineage, but for the most part they are the spirits of those who have met with violent or sudden deaths, or who had made themselves pre-eminently feared during their lifetime. The Christian teachers, at first vainly tried to persuade the natives that their religion was founded on delusion, for the worshipper had the evidence of sight, sound, and in many instances of what the missionaries had reluctantly to admit were demoniac possessions. The objects of worship are only too real, for they are seen, heard, and felt. The worship is altogether propitiatory, for they fear, but do not love. It consists of dances and of animal sacrifices. Explain it how we may, among barbarous tribes the shedding of blood seems to have a psychological influence on their attendant spirits. It is also to be noted that the objects of religious sacrifice are not venomous reptiles nor beasts or birds of prey, but clean, gentle, and useful animals, as if there was a deficiency in the worshippers and the worshipped of the kind of life embodied in such animals, and that, somehow or other, the imperfect human life was supplemented by the relatively perfect brute life. The sacrifices of the Shanars consist of sheep, goats, domestic fowls. There was, however, one remarkable exception. One of their gods had been an English officer, named Pole, who had been killed in some skirmish and buried in the district. As their sanguinary sacrifices seemed to have no effect on him, they tried brandy and cigars with complete success. All this, as the missionary naturally thinks, is very sad, but he admits that even such poor sacrificial worship forms a better basis for the reception of a higher faith than the more philosophical Brahminism; for if these Shanars can only get to believe in a spirit who is more powerful than all Pandemonium they will worship him with, at least, the beginning of love mingled with their fears. The Patagonians, also, as described by Captain Musters (who spent a year amongst them), in a book just published, are in a similar stage of religious development. He says:—

“The belief which prompts all their religious acts is that in the existence of many active and malicious evil spirits or demons, of whom the principal one is always on the watch to cause mischief. To propitiate or drive away this spirit is the function of the wizard, or doctor, or medicine man, who combines the medical and magical arts, though not possessed of an exclusive faculty for either. All sacrifices of mares and horses, not at stated times, but as occasion requires, such as a birth, death, &c., are intended to propitiate the Gualichu. When a child hurts itself, the slaughter of mares seems

to partake at once of the nature of a thank-offering that the hurt was no worse, and a propitiation to avert further harm.

"In camp the Gualichu takes up his position outside the back of the toldo, watching for an opportunity to molest the inmates, and is supposed to be kept quiet by the spells of the doctor, who is not only gifted with the power of laying the devil, but can even detect him by sight. I inquired of one of the doctors what he was like, but received an evasive answer; on which I informed him that my devil took all sorts of shapes—sometimes appearing as a guanaco, ostrich, puma, skunk, or vulture, at which the medical man was intensely amused. This household devil is, as far as I could ascertain, supposed to enter into the different parts of the bodies of people, and cause sickness which the doctor is appealed to to cure. The treatment in the case of headache, for instance, is very simple: the doctor takes the patient's head between his knees, and performing a short ceremony of incantation, shouts in his ear, exhorting the devil to come out. Mr. Clarke, when travelling with the Indians south of Santa Cruz, was treated in this fashion when suffering from feverish headache, and said at the time it relieved him.

Besides this Gualichu there are many others which are supposed to inhabit subterranean dwellings, underneath certain woods and rivers, and peculiarly-shaped rocks. I was very much surprised at seeing the Indians salute these objects by placing the hand to the head and muttering an incantation; and for a long time held to the belief that they were only expressing admiration for the Creator's handiwork; but subsequently I learned that they sought thus to conciliate the spirits of these places, reputed to be the spirits of deceased members of the faculty. These devils' powers, however, are confined to the districts contiguous to their habitations.

"On one occasion, a horse about to run a match was taken up to a neighbouring hill before daylight by the owner, and some secret ceremony was performed by the wizard. Previous to the race the owner (Wáki) came to me and advised me to put my stakes on his horse, as he had been made safe to win by mysterious incantations which had secured the favour of the local Gualichu; and, strange to say, the horse, which by his appearance was much inferior to the other, did win, thereby establishing a reputation for the wizard and the Gualichu.

"I remember on one occasion when riding with Hinchel we came in sight of a peculiarly-pointed rock, which he saluted. I did the same, at which he appeared much pleased; and on our subsequently arriving at a selina, where we found good salt, much needed at the time, he explained to me that the spirit of the place had led us in that direction. In the meeting of Indians the devils are supposed to be driven away by the horsemen chasing at full speed round and round, and firing off their guns."

A higher form of revelation than the unwritten or instinctive is that which has been preserved and handed down from age to age in writing. This, in every degree, is necessarily more advanced, not merely as implying a higher degree of civilisation, but as an ever present source of intellectual and moral culture. It is *this* in proportion to the freedom of inquiry that obtains concerning its dictates. Where no inquiry prevails, or where it is successfully repressed by the teachers of the people, it is almost inoperative as a progressive power.

There are certain principles common to every written revelation accepted by any portion of humanity proving that all have one origin and object—the education of the human son by the Divine

Father through slow and gradual steps from the lower to the higher. If there be anything in a revelation that I have outgrown, it is as much a sign of imbecility in me to condemn it on that account as it would be to speak contemptuously of the alphabet or the primer through which I have entered into the vestibule of literature. "The divine origin of a book could no more be proved by the perfection of the doctrines contained in it than refuted by their imperfection. For this very imperfection may be desired by God, because it corresponds to the condition of human culture, and belongs to God's plan of education. It is the product of the Divine Spirit through humanity, and must partake of the imperfections of the channel of communication. But the channel, though it pollutes, does not render undivine the stream that makes glad the city of God." What, then, proves its divinity? Its existence and continued acceptance as of divine origin through many ages and by various nationalities. In short, the life that is in it; for the life of a book may be as divine, surely, as the life of a tree or of a man. It has innate vitality; it stands firm amid the ruins of republics, kingdoms, and empires, because it has more of the divine life, or more of what is adapted to the wants of humanity in various ages than could be found in the constitution of those governments.

The ultimate object of all revelation is to lead humanity from earth to heaven by successive stages, as by the rounds of a ladder. In this realm of space and time some nations and some men in every nation advance a few steps before others, not for their own sake merely, or chiefly, but that they may assist their brethren upwards. The most advanced revelation is that which reveals not only the greatest number of steps on the ladder of progress, but which sheds such a light on the whole from the earthly base to the step nearest the gate of heaven, as to quicken the aspirations and increase the vigour of the ascender. The relative perfection of revelation is in its degree of light, which may be so great that at first it cannot be seen as light—"dark with excess of light." Under such circumstances, clouds, even of error, may be essential to the condition of the seer. Hence, not only different religions but different stages represented by sects in every religion, and especially in the most advanced revelation. For the lower faiths are instinctive; as we ascend there is a blending of the instinctive with the authoritative, and of both with the rational. The purely instinctive is faith in its animal form, the authoritative is the childish form, and the rational is a higher or manly form. There is yet another which is the most perfect, and which, completing the circle, combines all forms, and that is Love, or Religion in its Divine form. We can speak from experience of the others, but this, as yet, we see through a glass darkly. In Christianity the contest now is between the authoritative and the rational. The one says you must believe this or that doctrine because it is so affirmed in the Scriptures or by the Church. The other—"I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say." "Why

do you not of your own selves judge what is right?" "Those," says Paul, "in Berea, were more noble than others, because they received with all readiness and searched daily to see whether those things were as they heard." This represents the perfection of receptivity—first the attentive mind, and then the searching intellect. No statement of truth can be fully received until it has been accepted by the intellect as true. A rejected doctrine, however, may be true and most rational when seen in a fuller light or by a more matured understanding. So a man may put away in the name of reason what he may afterwards find to be most true and good. Generally speaking, all sects have more truth in their affirmative than in their negative doctrines. Truth is so many-sided and of such various application, that if we put almost any affirmation of a religious creed into proper relation with other truths it will vindicate its claims.

For example, take the two great doctrinal divisions of Protestant Christianity—Trinitarianism and Unitarianism; and here, I may observe, I am about to treat on debateable ground, but I have every confidence that I speak to wise, and therefore to tolerant and patient, minds.

Trinitarians believe that Christ is God, partly on instinctive, but chiefly on authoritative grounds. The instinctive they have in common with the yearnings and half unconscious desires of humanity in every stage of religious growth. From the rudest outbirths of idolatrous worship up to the perfect sculpture of the Greeks, there has been a search after a divinely human ideal of God. The Greeks, as a people, could not attain to anything higher than the embodiment of physical perfection; but so fully did they reach this, that the statues of their gods remain the models of the artistic world. They attained to the idea of physical perfection, but not one of their deities, nor all of them together, were equal, either mentally or morally, to Socrates or Plato; not one of them in any of the qualities that truly make a man, was any better than his worshippers. The Unknown God formed the fittest text from which to declare the knowledge of the only living and true God.

The authoritative side of Trinitarianism is the belief by its adherents that Jesus Christ is plainly declared in the Scriptures to be very God. For the most part, they cannot justify, and they never pretend to justify, their faith on rational grounds, that is, apart from the authority of Scripture. It is enough for them that the Book, which they believe to be a revelation from God, declares that truth. The Unitarians, on the other hand, protest against the reception of doctrine on mere authority. They deny that the Trinitarian doctrine is plainly revealed in either the Jewish or Christian Scripture, and assert it to be so irrational in itself, that no amount of Scriptural declaration can make it true. In this they are right, for if a doctrine is not true in itself, no authority can make it true. Yet the doctrine may be substantially true and most rational, if viewed in a proper light.

The question between the two parties is most important, both in itself and as belonging to the present inquiry. For a lecture on the philosophy of revelation would be very incomplete if it did not set forth, in some way, the ultimate end of revelation, which is religion. Whatever conventional meaning may be attached to that word "religion," I prefer its literal signification—a re-binding or re-uniting. Re-uniting what? Man to man, and humanity to divinity. Re-union, then, implies previous separation? Yes; I believe there has been a separation. The very terms Father and Son imply a conscious separation in the first instance. For before conception the son is in the father. Into the nature of the previous union of Humanity and Divinity it is not needful to enter. In the nature of things there must have been such a union. What belongs to our present inquiry are the means of uniting man to man and all to God in a far more perfect degree, so far as man is concerned, than before. Now, it seems to me a man's knowledge of the extent, degree, or perfectness of this union of humanity to divinity depends on his intelligible answer to the question—What is the nature of the Perfect Man? Both of the great sects of Protestant Christendom agreed that the Perfect Man has appeared in this world, and consequently that He exists objectively and subjectively. Both parties are agreed so far as to the nature of the Perfect Man, that he is the Son of God. From this point they separate, one side maintaining that He is God, and the other that such a doctrine is irrational, and therefore cannot be true. The Unitarians are a standing protest against receiving and maintaining a doctrine on mere authority. They demand a reason, apart from revelation, for the holding of such a doctrine; and they will remain as a body until the question has been answered, because more than the mere dogma depends on the answer. Personally, I hold with the Trinitarian, for I think if he would only fearlessly carry his belief to its legitimate conclusion, he could vindicate it on rational as much as on Scriptural grounds. As I have said, both parties meet on common and most firm ground—no less than the rock which is the foundation-stone of Christianity—viz., that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God. Then comes the point of divergence on the Unitarian side set forth as the subject of tracts and lectures—"Jesus Christ the Son of God, not God the Son," a plain issue, though, I think, a most irrational one. A Mohammedan who denies that Allah ever had or could have a son, is a consistent Unitarian in the inferior sense, but a Christian cannot be so. The Unitarian affirms that God has a Son, who, in his Sonship, has attained perfection, yet that His Son is separated from the Father by the infinite distance of difference of nature. Christ is the Son of Man, therefore He is man. He is the Son of God, therefore He is not God. I do not understand it. My faculties are not so constituted as to comprehend it; if it had been clearly revealed I might have verbally assented to it as a mystery beyond my present comprehension. What the Unitarian can understand by Divine Son-

ship I know not, it must certainly be something less than what is implied by human sonship. It must require so much qualifying that its very existence becomes annihilated under the process. I know of no sonship worthy of the name to which the essential name of the father and the utmost fulness of the fatherly nature cannot be attributed. Has God brought forth, can God bring forth from his inmost being one worthy of the name of Son who can never attain to the perfection of the paternal nature? If so, I demand a rational justification of the belief. There are difficulties, no doubt, in the Trinitarian creed, but I know of none so great as this. For it declares sonship to be real and perfect in lower natures, and comparatively most unreal and most imperfect in the highest of all natures.

Still further, if the Perfect Son is not God, then who or what is God? Man asks after a deity who can understand him, love him, and sympathise with him. To do all these, his god must be of essentially the same nature, not of a different nature, from his offspring. One nature can have no contact with another essentially different. Your answer to the question—What is God? must be such as to meet the wants of the inquirer. No abstract definition, such as infinite extension or universal essence, can satisfy the needs of human nature. The philosophical idea of Deity may comprehend all that, but it must be more to enable me so to understand God as to love Him with all my heart, and soul, and strength, and mind. The earthly body of man, philosophically speaking, is not the man, yet we are practically justified when we see that in saying we see the man. The psyche or body of the spirit, as seen in the spiritual world, is not the man; for all that I can tell, the inmost man of all in every individual may be an invisible, unextended, infinite, spiritual essence. No man hath seen God at any time, and no man, whether in the natural or in the spiritual world, has seen his fellow-man at any time. He sees merely the outward manifestations of him—the physical body in the natural, and the psychical body in the spiritual world. Yet every man can see, in a very true and natural sense, the whole of humanity in a perfect man. So, in seeing a perfect manifestation of God, we see God, for God is in absolute fulness in every perfect manifestation of him. But the Son is not the Father, nor the Father the Son? No; nor is the pneuma or spirit the psyche, nor the psyche the body. But these three are one. If we must have a philosophical, in contradistinction to a rational definition of Deity, say, God is the inmost spirit of universal humanity, which is his body. I know of no definition more complete, because all nature, animate and so-called inanimate, is human in some mode or other, and in every mode is ascending to the divine, in whom it is, and from whom it appears to us to be separated—"For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things." Partial manifestations of Deity, such as worlds, plants, animals, and imperfect men, cannot manifest the fulness of the Divine nature, but the Perfect Man can. He alone

is worthy of the name of Man; He alone is the true Son of Man, in whom all the fulness of humanity dwells. He is the only begotten of the Father in the truest, because in the fullest sense. It is quite open for any one, not recognising the Messiah of others, to say such a man has not yet appeared. In that case, he looks for another. But to the Christians, Christ is either the perfect man in whom dwells all the fulness of humanity and all the fulness of divinity, or there is no further hope of a perfect manifestation of God, and God unmanifested is the "unknown and unknowable God."

But the Unitarian may ask, What then becomes of the doctrine of the Divine Unity? To this it may be answered, Your objections to Trinitarianism on that ground shows that your conception of unity is unworthy of the subject. God is spirit, and whatever is attributed to Him must be spiritual. His unity, therefore, is a spiritual, not a physical unity. No man, if he reflects on the essential nature of Deity, can for a moment imagine that God, who is love, could ever have existed as a unit. Love, a giver, implies Love a receiver. Love has no existence, it would be most irrational to suppose that it could have an existence apart from an object of affection. It would be unknown to itself. And the object of love must be worthy of the subject. Deity as a *unit could not be Love*. Deity as *unity must be Love*. No doubt there are difficulties in this view of the question, but difficulties do not necessarily imply contradiction in terms, or irrationalities. The difficulties arise from mistaken ideas of spiritual unity and of the essential nature of sonship. Physical unity is one thing, spiritual unity is another. In a material marriage, husband and wife are two; in a spiritual union, they are no more twain, but one, for each is the perfection of the other. In the most perfect freedom, both have one heart and one will. There is but one perfect love, power, will, and life, in the spiritual universe, and there never can be two.

But the confession or denial of the absolute divinity of the Perfect Man involves much more, it involves the right of every man to his true inheritance. The denial is something more than saying—This is the heir, let us cast him out of the vineyard that the inheritance may be ours. It really means, let us cast him out that we may have no inheritance. It is as if the eldest brother of a family were pleading at the bar for the rights of his brothers as identical with his own, and as if they for whom he pleads should exert their influence to set aside his claims on his and their behalf. Here is also the weak point in Trinitarianism as usually set forth. It is supposed that the divinity of Christ may be more emphatically maintained by virtually denying the divinity of humanity. Such, certainly, is not his own teaching, nor is it the teaching of his first disciples. "I go," he said, "to my Father, and to your Father, to my God and to your God." He prayed that all his brethren might be one *even as* He and the Father are one; and enjoins them to be perfect *even as* their Father in heaven is perfect. "Both he," says an apostle,

"Both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Every man in his inmost being is the offspring of God—the Son of God. There is no essential difference between the nature of the Perfect Son and the inmost nature of every man born into the world, but there is a very great material difference. Accepting the doctrine of the Incarnation as revealed in two of the Gospels, and received by the Christian world generally, that fact, it seems to me, makes no *essential* difference between the Sonship of Jesus and the Sonship of His disciples, since, as St. John declares, of as many as receive Him, "They are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Thus the Son of God in every man is an incarnation, an immaculate conception. The speciality of Christ's conception has more relation to the problem of evil than to the question of Divine Sonship. He has attained his majority. We are sons in embryo merely. Sonship is in us germinally, but we have not outwardly attained to that perfect union with each other and with the Father that constitutes absolute spiritual oneness with Deity. Nothing less than this, however, is the inheritance of every man born into the world, and nothing—not even his own unbelief, theoretical and practical—can ultimately deprive him of that inheritance. If we, being evil, would give the best gifts in our power to our children, shall not the All-good and Perfect Father give the best to His sons and daughters. He must mean *the absolute best* for every one. He cannot, being God, mean anything less than the best, and the best is Himself. If any more glorious destiny can be imagined for the sons of God than such absolute union with each other and with the Father that each shall inherit the fulness of the Divine goodness, wisdom, and power, with such special difference as shall constitute individuality, then God must intend that better thing, or something still more glorious than human heart can conceive. But he has revealed, not merely to faith, but to reason, that absolute union with each other in Himself is the destiny of humanity. He has revealed that the kingdom of heaven, which in potency is within every man, is in its realised fulness a perfect spiritual community in which the central external life so flows through every member of the body, that every individual, while possessing the fullest consciousness of freedom, not merely shares in, but has all the life of every other member—yea, even of the Father of all, in his own person. The kingdom of heaven is a community in which

"Each does for all what he only does best."

Separate from the perfect body no man is anything, not even a man—united he is everything. Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Ah! that question betrays its inferior origin, it is an earthly, not a heavenly question. "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon

them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you let him be the younger; and he that is chief as he that doth serve." As every one in such a community of love must regard his brother more than himself, each will say not merely "My Father, but my brother, my sister, is greater than I."

"Unrestrained by selfish fetter,
Undefiled by sordid pelf,
Angel loveth angel better
Than he e'er can love himself."

Are all equal, then? No; there cannot even be such a thing as the idea of equality in the kingdom of Perfect Love. Its charter is not all men are free and equal, but all are free and One. One God, the Father, in the one body of humanity, the Son, from whom eternally proceeds in all fulness the one outflowing life—the Holy Spirit. This is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb—the heavenly marriage—the manifestation of the sons of God—the perfect union of humanity with divinity—God all in all. The communion of saints is the life everlasting. Amen.